



wapiwin akinë



(Seeing Collectively)

Released December 2, 2024

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Acknowledgements

CAAN Communities, Alliances & Networks (CAAN) is pleased to present the Visioning Plan, initiated December 2, 2024, and to be reviewed regularly. The vision will support the dismantling of 'settler' or colonial language and structures within CAAN governance documents and systems. The hope is that this deconstruction will decolonize organizational practices and ensure that CAAN exemplifies its values of incorporating ancestral ways of doing. The visioning plan, including its annual review, will support these efforts.

This multi-year vision was made possible thanks to the input and contributions of many individuals and groups across Canada who care deeply about the health of the First Peoples of this land called Canada (First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples).

In addition, acknowledgements are made to the many delegates who participated in the February 14-15, 2024, CAAN-hosted Visioning Gathering, including CAAN Board members (both past and present), and Indigenous communities for their invaluable feedback. The great care, honesty, and openness taken in the articulating visioning priorities were evidenced in the breadth and diversity of engagement. As a result, several individuals and groups collaborated to produce a vision that will be refreshed annually.

CAAN invites you to read and be part of the vision to learn more about how CAAN plans to support and improve the health and well-being of Indigenous Peoples impacted by Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), Hepatitis C Virus (HCV), sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections (STBBI), Tuberculosis (TB), mental health, aging, and related co-morbidity issues.

Board of Directors

CAAN's Board of Directors come from across Canada, each bringing unique combinations of lived and living experience, wisdom, tradition and passion to the work. As of December 2024, the Board consists of the following people:

- Mathew Fleury, Chair of the Board
- Danita Wahpoosewyan, Vice-Chair of the Board
- Gayle Pruden, Secretary of the Board
- Tyler George, Board member
- Edward Wilson, Board member
- Kaylee Sutherland, Board member
- Alana Lamalice, Board member

Preamble

It is a gift to wake up to a new day, filled with the promise of hope and the opportunity for renewal. As a grandmother who lives and exists within this universe, I am grateful for the chance to help guide us forward, drawing upon the wisdom of our ancestors as we embark on new beginnings and chart a new vision for CAAN Communities, Alliances & Networks.

Today, as we reflect on the journey ahead, we must honor those who have come before us, the people we serve in our home fires, our communities, our nations, and places of work and play. But most importantly, we must acknowledge ourselves as human beings—whole beings—and ensure that we are taking care of ourselves in every way: mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually. This is a time to stand in the presence of our ancestors who walk with us, guiding us, and bringing with them the words of life. The good life, the balanced life, is what we all seek each day.

CAAN recognizes the urgency of the global HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C epidemics, which continue to disproportionately affect Indigenous populations in Canada. We understand the profound impact these health crises have on our communities and the need for continued, steadfast action. CAAN is committed to responding to these epidemics with courage and leadership. We believe that to end these epidemics and reduce their devastating social and health effects, we must provide tailored, culturally safe strategies, and evidence-informed resources to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples. By doing so, we empower our communities to heal, thrive, and protect future generations.

As we move forward, it is crucial for CAAN to acknowledge the past, honoring the journeys of those who have gone ahead to the spirit world before us. Their teachings and sacrifices are woven into the fabric of our work. We also commit to visioning for the future, ensuring that the actions we take today will create a foundation for the generations yet to come.

This vision is rooted in resilience, care, and the shared responsibility we carry to one another. We walk together, with the strength of our ancestors and the promise of healing in our hearts, as we lead our communities toward a brighter, healthier future.



*CAAN okimaw Margaret Kisikaw Piyesis, Day Two of February 14-15, 2024
CAAN-hosted Visioning Gathering, Ottawa, Ontario.*

Love for everyone

sakihewin
Margaret Kisikaw Piyesis
Miyotehewin Okihcitaskwew
(Kind-hearted Warrior Woman)

Description of the Organization

CAAN initially stood for the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network. It is now known as CAAN Communities, Alliances & Networks (CAAN). The National Indigenous organization is over 25 years old and at its root is the Human Immuno-deficiency virus. CAAN has over two decades of history as an incorporated non-profit organization whose HIV and AIDS focused mandate now:

1. Provides a national forum to address HIV and AIDS, HCV, sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections (STBBI), TB, mental health, aging, and related co-morbidity issues.
2. Promotes social determinants of health framework through advocacy, committing to youth, and early intervention/prevention efforts.
3. Provides accurate and up-to-date resources on these issues in a culturally relevant manner for Indigenous Peoples wherever they reside (regionally, nationally or globally).

For the past ten years, CAAN has stood as the premier example in Canada of GIPA (Greater Involvement of People Living with HIV and/or AIDS), a fundamental principle of the global HIV response. By placing people living with HIV at the center of its work, CAAN has not only ensured that their voices are heard but has also demonstrated the critical importance of their active involvement in shaping policies and strategies that directly affect their lives. This commitment to GIPA is reflected in CAAN's leadership role in advocating for the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives in the global conversation on HIV.

CAAN's influence extends well beyond Canada's borders, as it has played a pivotal role in several international HIV initiatives, gatherings, and conferences. Every year, CAAN contributes to global dialogues on HIV, strengthening partnerships and advocating for the needs of Indigenous peoples living with HIV. CAAN's historical engagement with major international organizations, including the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB & Malaria, the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), the World Health Organization (WHO), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), UN Women, and the International Labour Organization (ILO), underscores its position as a respected leader in global health and human rights advocacy.

Through its ongoing participation in these international forums, CAAN has helped shape policies and programs that are more inclusive and reflective of the needs of Indigenous populations, ensuring that the voices of Indigenous peoples living with HIV are heard at the global level. CAAN's work continues to be instrumental in advancing the GIPA principle worldwide, and its efforts remain a key driver in achieving meaningful progress in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Executive Summary

In 2019, the leadership began a journey with a vision to foster a thriving, resilient community that would be rooted in the teachings, wisdom, and ceremonies of the First Peoples of the land now called Canada. We envisioned a future where Indigenous knowledge, traditions, and values guide our collective journey towards healing, empowerment, and sustainability. By embracing and honoring our ceremonial practices, sacred teachings, and cultural heritage, we will strengthen the bonds of communities, ensure the well-being of our people, and promote the stewardship of the land and water for future generations.

Through this collaboration, respect for the land, and the teachings of our Elders and spiritual leaders, our organization will serve as a space where Indigenous ways of knowing are celebrated, upheld, and integrated into all aspects of life. In this vision, we recognize that our strength comes from the unity of our people, the wisdom of our ancestors, and the ongoing responsibility to care for all creation in balance with the natural world.

We will strive to create a vibrant future, informed by the values of respect, humility, courage, and love, where our communities are empowered to reclaim their cultural practices, preserve their languages, and protect their lands, all while ensuring that our future generations walk proudly in the footsteps of their ancestors. This vision called upon the spirit of our traditions and the teachings passed down through the generations, as we rebuild, reconnect, and reclaim our rightful place in a harmonious and just society.

CAAN began the visioning planning process and in the spirit of respect, tradition, and cultural sovereignty, the naming ceremony took place and was a significant and sacred moment in our journey. The name we carry will not only reflect our mission and purpose but will also honor the wisdom of our ancestors, the teachings of our Elders, and the deep connection to the land, water, and all living beings. This ceremony was a way of grounding our work in the values, ceremonies, and spirituality of the First Peoples of this land, recognizing that name hold power, meaning, and responsibility. CAAN Communities, Alliances & Networks was created through ceremony.

The name chosen reflected who we are, where we come from, and where we are going. It will serve as a reminder of our commitment to the communities, to the alliances, to the networks, to the land, and to the generations that will come after us. This was an act of renewal, empowerment, and connection. It was a sacred affirmation of the work we are undertaking, grounded in the heart of Indigenous knowledge and tradition, with the strength of our ancestors guiding us every step of the way.

As we embarked on the beginning of a vision for CAAN, our journey again began with deep respect for the teachings of our ancestors, the sacredness of ceremony, and the wisdom of the land. To honor this profound work, we begin our visioning process with a Sunrise Ceremony—a time for renewal, reflection, and connection to the natural world. This ceremony is rooted in our cultural traditions, symbolized a new beginning, the return of light, and the promise of healing. As we gathered at dawn, we invoked the spirit of our ancestors, seeking guidance from our Elders, and asking for the strength and clarity needed to guide our collective efforts.

In this sacred space, we acknowledged the challenges our communities have faced and continue to face with HIV, while also recognizing our resilience, our ability to heal, and our deep commitment to one another. Through this ceremony, we reaffirmed our dedication to the principles of respect, inclusion, and love while grounded in Indigenous values—holistic care, community wellness, and cultural safety—where individuals affected by HIV are supported in a way that honors their identity, their history, and their inherent dignity.

We understand that the journey ahead will be one of collaboration and learning, and that it requires the wisdom of the land, the guidance of our Elders, and the collective strength of our communities. By beginning this visioning process with the Sunrise Ceremony, we invite the teachings of the Earth and the spirits of our ancestors to guide us as we lay the foundation for an organization that will work to support Indigenous people living with HIV and create a future of healing and hope.

CAAN began the journey of meetings with the Board members, staff, membership, council members, partners and individuals across the land. A national visioning gathering took place in Ottawa on February 14-15, 2024, involving over 75 delegates most who participated in person and a few, virtually.

CAAN's vision is an organization that lives by the fundamentals of Indigenous thought and worldviews, including the prioritization of land, language, Elders and youth, and 2-Spirit individuals. It will remain meaningfully connected with its grassroots membership base in a way that effectively supports the membership in its direction and leadership.

The mission of CAAN is to provide a national forum to address HIV and AIDS, HCV, STBBI, TB, mental health, aging and related co-morbidity issues in a culturally relevant manner with and for Indigenous Peoples.

CAAN has five strategic priorities noted as follows:

- Resources and operations to address health issues
- Addressing generational trauma and lateral violence caused by centuries of colonialism
- Decision-making with agencies
- Strengthening our membership
- Knowledge mobilization, research, and evaluation

CAAN philosophy is deeply rooted in Indigenous values and teachings that emphasize the interconnectedness of all things. We believe in the inherent strength and resilience of Indigenous peoples, and we are committed to a culturally safe, community-driven approach that supports those living with HIV. Our work is founded on respect for traditional knowledge, the sacredness of life, and the importance of healing not just the body but also the spirit, mind, and community. We honor our Elders, the teachings of the land, and the power of ceremony, and we are dedicated to creating spaces where individuals feel seen, heard, and supported.

Introduction

On February 14-15, 2024, in Ottawa, over 75 delegates participated in a Visioning Gathering hosted by CAAN. This gathering began with a sacred ceremony, deeply rooted in the traditions and spiritual practices of our people. It involved the powerful and healing expressions of singing, drumming, and dancing, all of which hold profound significance in our culture. As part of the ceremony, many delegates wore their traditional regalia, which is not only a symbol of identity but also a sacred expression of our history, heritage, and connection to the land. The regalia served as a living representation of the strength, resilience, and wisdom of our ancestors. The songs, beats of the drum, and movements in dance created an atmosphere of unity and reverence, reminding all present of our collective responsibility to honor and protect our culture, community, and the generations to come. This ceremony was a moment of healing, renewal, and solidarity, reinforcing the power of ceremony in shaping our future while staying grounded in the teachings of the past.

CAAN's vision of a grassroots organization that lives by the fundamentals of Indigenous thought and worldviews to support the health and well-being of all Indigenous Peoples is supported by its mission. The mission is for CAAN to provide a national forum to address HIV and AIDS, HCV, STBBI, TB, mental health, aging and related co-morbidity issues in a culturally relevant manner with, and for Indigenous Peoples. This requires CAAN to build capacity across Indigenous leaders, organizations and communities, and others, which are formed through strong trusting relationships. CAAN will realize capacity and relationship building through meaningful partnerships honouring Indigenous Peoples' right to self-determination. CAAN's program planning, research and action plans will be based on the philosophy statements, strategies, critical success factors, and implementation and measurement activities outlined in this strategic plan.

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SpiritWolf Singers, Day One of Feb. 14-15, 2024 CAAN-hosted Visioning Gathering, Ottawa, Ontario.

Values

The CAAN vision and mission guide our actions to build meaningful partnerships that are rooted in respect for Indigenous Peoples and their inherent right to self-determination. We are committed to honoring and preserving Indigenous languages, which are vital to our cultural identity and strength. In everything we do, we hold deep reverence for our ancestors, whose wisdom and sacrifices shape the foundation of our work. As we move forward, we are also focused on creating a future of hope and opportunity for our youth, ensuring they are empowered and equipped to lead with strength, resilience, and the teachings of their heritage. Through these guiding principles, CAAN strives to create a world where Indigenous Peoples are respected, their rights upheld, and their communities are thriving for generations to come.

We therefore focus on:

- 1) Respect for the autonomy of Indigenous communities and nations to self-determine their knowledge including their research needs, pathways, and futures.
- 2) Fair, transparent and accountable processes for decision-making and action.
- 3) Build equitable partnerships with Indigenous Peoples, communities and organizations.
- 4) Build capacity within the CAAN system for supporting health, addressing HIV and AIDS, HCV, STBBI, TB, mental health, aging and related co-morbidity issues in a culturally relevant manner.
- 5) CAAN, from an employer standpoint, is also dedicated to offering its employees with a workplace that is culturally inclusive in a manner that embraces Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Doing with a focus on personal wellness, cultural development, and embracement of its diverse workforce who bring their own gifts and expertise.

Vision

CAAN Communities, Alliances & Networks lives by the core principles of Indigenous thought and worldviews, embracing the interconnectedness of all aspects of life. Central to our work is the prioritization of land, language, Elders, youth, and 2-Spirit individuals, as these are the pillars that hold our communities together. We recognize that the land is sacred, the language is a vital vessel for our culture and identity, and the wisdom of our Elders guides us in times of change. At the same time, we are committed to empowering our youth and 2-Spirit individuals, ensuring their voices are heard and their contributions are honored as we move forward together.

CAAN remains deeply connected to its grassroots membership, ensuring that our work and leadership are aligned with the needs, aspirations, and values of those we serve. By maintaining these meaningful connections, we create a strong foundation of support that fosters self-determination and growth for Indigenous peoples. Our direction and leadership are guided by the voices of our community members, ensuring that their lived experiences and unique needs inform the strategies, initiatives, and advocacy we pursue. In all that we do, CAAN is dedicated to supporting and uplifting Indigenous peoples in a way that is rooted in respect, culture, and the collective wisdom of our communities.

Mission

CAAN's mission is to provide a national forum dedicated to addressing HIV and AIDS, as well as Hepatitis C (HCV), sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections (STBBI), tuberculosis (TB), mental health, aging, and other related co-morbidity issues, in a culturally relevant manner for and with Indigenous Peoples.

We are committed to ensuring that the health and well-being of Indigenous communities are prioritized through approaches that honor and respect their cultural values, traditions, and ways of knowing.

By fostering collaboration, sharing knowledge, and advocating for policy change, CAAN works to address the unique challenges faced by Indigenous peoples in relation to these health concerns, while supporting their right to self-determination and healing.

CAAN aims to accomplish its mission through:

- Providing accurate and up-to-date information (including relevant, current research) about HIV in Indigenous communities, STBBI and the various modes of transmission as well as, mental health and other social determinants of health.
- Providing opportunities for leaders, advocates and individuals in the HIV/AIDS movement to share their issues nationally by building skills, conducting education/awareness campaigns, and advocating for harm reduction techniques.
- Facilitating the creation and development of regional Indigenous HIV/AIDS service agencies through leadership, advocacy and support.
- Design Indigenous material specific to education and awareness at a national level. Distribute and make these materials available wherever possible to lessen the resource costs of underfunded regional agencies.
- Advocating on behalf of Indigenous people living with HIV and AIDS (IPHA), HCV, STBBI, TB, mental health, aging, and related co-morbidity issues by giving them forums in which to share their experiences and providing opportunities for meaningful engagement within CAAN.
- Facilitating the development of healing and holistic strategies among the Indigenous population.
- Building partnerships with Indigenous and non-Indigenous agencies which address the issues of Indigenous Peoples across jurisdictions, thereby improving the conditions in which Indigenous Peoples in Canada live through a continuous and focused effort.

Strategic Priorities and Related Strategies

This strategic plan outlines five strategic priorities that focus on:

1. Resources and operations to address health issues
2. Addressing generational trauma and lateral violence caused by centuries of colonialism
3. Decision-making with agencies
4. Strengthening our membership
5. Knowledge mobilization, research, and evaluation

As part of CAAN's strategic planning process, related strategies, critical success factors, and implementation and measurement activities have been outlined to ensure the success of our priorities. A key aspect of this approach is the application of a distinctions-based methodology when developing and executing these strategies. By recognizing the unique needs, cultures, and priorities of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples, we ensure that our work is both culturally relevant and effective in addressing the distinct experiences of each group.

The strategic planning process for CAAN began at the February 14-15, 2024, CAAN-hosted Visioning Gathering. During this gathering, it became clear that there is a vital need for CAAN Communities, Alliances, & Networks to reconnect with and embody the fundamentals of Indigenous thought and worldviews. Central to this is the prioritization of land, language, Elders, youth, and 2-Spirit individuals through our work, ensuring that these pillars are not only recognized but also actively integrated into all aspects of our initiatives.

This visioning process was crucial in shaping the critical success factors that will guide CAAN's work moving forward. These factors focus on the foundational elements of Indigenous self-determination, knowledge sharing, and capacity building. While specific strategies and implementation plans may vary depending on the strategic priorities, a common thread runs through all of them:

Capacity Building: We will create opportunities to build capacity among Elders and youth by developing training platforms and leadership opportunities. This will ensure that Indigenous leadership is empowered and that both Elders and youth play a key role in driving the work forward.

Self-Determination: CAAN is committed to supporting Indigenous communities in asserting their own needs and leading community-based research. This ensures that the voices of the communities are at the forefront in determining the direction of health initiatives and other areas of focus.

Knowledge Sharing: Supporting knowledge mobilization activities that are accessible to communities will allow for the sharing of resources, best practices, and traditional knowledge. This will ensure that Indigenous communities are equipped with the information and tools needed to support their own health and well-being.

These guiding principles will shape the organization’s work as we move toward a future that is rooted in Indigenous values, self-determination, and the collective strength of our communities. CAAN remains dedicated to creating meaningful partnerships and taking actions that are culturally relevant, community-driven, and sustainable.



Past CAAN Board Member Donald Turner, and CAAN Vice-Chair of the Board Gayle Pruden, Day One of Feb. 14-15, 2024 CAAN-hosted Visioning Gathering, Ottawa, Ontario.

Strategic Priority #1:

Resources and operations to address health issues

At CAAN, we believe that the foundation of our work lies in the relationships we build and nurture with Indigenous communities, partners, and allies. These relationships are essential to advancing our core values, vision, and mission, which are centered around health, empowerment, and self-determination for Indigenous peoples.

Our philosophy emphasizes the importance of cultivating trust and respect in all relationships, ensuring that they are grounded in the principles of reciprocity, mutual support, and collective responsibility. By fostering authentic and meaningful connections, we can work together to address the unique health challenges facing Indigenous communities, including HIV/AIDS, mental health, and co-morbidities, while also strengthening cultural resilience.

A key aspect of our relationship-building approach is mentoring and supporting the next generation of Indigenous leaders. We are committed to creating spaces where youth, Elders, and 2-Spirit individuals can share knowledge, learn from one another, and grow into roles of leadership within their communities. This mentorship is not only about passing on wisdom but also empowering the next generation to take ownership of their future, ensuring that Indigenous communities are resilient, self-determined, and thriving.

As we continue to build and develop relationships, we remain dedicated to upholding the values of respect, collaboration, and inclusivity. These values guide our work, ensuring that we remain aligned with the principles of Indigenous worldviews, which emphasize interconnectedness, holistic well-being, and the importance of community. Through these relationships, CAAN will continue to lead with compassion, honor, and a steadfast commitment to the health and prosperity of Indigenous peoples, today and for generations to come.

Strategies (1-2 years to initiate)

- Review the CAAN Strategic Plan annually.
- Incorporate innovative approaches to support human resources and engage Elders, youth and other key groups to address health issues (e.g., HIV, HCV, STBBI, TB, mental health, aging). These include the following:
 - Requiring youth representation on the Board.
 - Establishing a youth council separate from the board and warrior societies to provide job/volunteer experience and skills in governance.
 - Inclusion and on-going recruitment of members to the warrior societies (IPHA, Indigenous people living with Hepatitis C, and Voices of Women) that convene separately and report to the Board.
 - Recruit and retain qualified staff to work at CAAN and implement professional development opportunities such as Indigenous leadership institutes.
 - Provide mentorship opportunities that pair experienced staff with newer employees to advance transfer knowledge and build relationships within the organization.
 - Provide continuing education opportunities on various STBBI and TB to ensure everyone has current knowledge on infectious diseases they address in their populations.

- Build diverse relationships with funding organizations and partners at all levels; local, regional, national and international.
- Review of CAAN's position concerning national and global initiatives (e.g., the Canadian STBBI Action Plan, the 95-95-95 HIV goals for 2025, ending AIDS as a public health threat by 2030, and the United Nations General Assembly political declarations on TB, HIV, and pandemic preparedness).
- Ensure processes are agile and adaptable to changing priorities, community needs and new technologies.
- Ensure that processes are inclusive and involve relevant staff and community members in decision-making to ensure changes reflect their needs and priorities.
- Ensure that quality assurance within CAAN includes conducting risk assessments, business line reviews, financial assessments, etc.

Critical Success Factors:

- Meaningful engagement with membership, especially with Elders and youth.
- CAAN working to become an employer of choice with a focus on personnel wellness and cultural nourishment.
- Continue to improve internal operations and structures, staying up to date with relevant legislation, and balancing CAAN's work from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives.

Implementation and Measurement Activities

As an internal review process, monitor and evaluate the implementation of the strategic plan by conducting regular surveys on program effectiveness, successes and challenges, and financial evaluation. Ensure that communities, partners, stakeholders, and staff validate all review, research and evaluation efforts.

Specifically, through measuring:

- Number and quality of engagements with Elders and youth.
- Assessment of risk, control and accountability at CAAN.
- Staff retention rates.
- Staff satisfaction scores, including qualitative evidence of satisfaction.
- Meaningful engagement during annual and probationary period review sessions that follow best human resource practices.
- Ability for staff to be empowered in the work that they do whilst bearing a high standard of accountability.
- Foster a working culture that focuses on results and well-being. Staff that are appreciated and are given time to focus on their well-being will yield positive results for CAAN's partners and affiliates.

Strategic Priority #2:

Addressing generational trauma and lateral violence caused by centuries of colonialism

At CAAN, we recognize that the impacts of generational trauma and lateral violence are deeply ingrained in the history of Indigenous peoples. These wounds, passed down through generations, have affected the mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being of communities. Addressing these issues is a central tenet of our philosophy, as we strive to heal and create lasting change within Indigenous communities, organizations, and within CAAN itself.

Our philosophy is built on the understanding that the effects of generational trauma and lateral violence are not only a historical reality but continue to affect relationships, health outcomes, and community dynamics today. We believe that healing begins with awareness, education, and active engagement at all levels—from leadership and staff to membership. As an organization, we are committed to supporting each level of CAAN in understanding the root causes of generational trauma and lateral violence, how they manifest in our work, and how we can work together to address and heal these harms.

This journey starts with leadership and staff, as they set the tone and example for the entire organization. It is essential that those in positions of influence are equipped with the knowledge and tools to recognize, respond to, and heal the impacts of trauma and violence within their own lives and in the lives of others. Leadership must be proactive in creating a culture of support, understanding, and compassion, where healing is a priority, and where harmful cycles of trauma are addressed with respect, care, and empowerment.

For CAAN's membership, this philosophy means offering resources, education, and support to help individuals identify and understand the impacts of lateral violence, and how to move toward healing and reconciliation. We strive to create safe and inclusive spaces where members can engage in open dialogue, share experiences, and build collective strength.

Our commitment to addressing generational trauma and lateral violence is not only about understanding the past but also about creating a path forward that fosters healthy, empowered communities. We believe in supporting personal and collective healing, strengthening relationships, and building resilience in a way that is grounded in cultural teachings and values. Through this, CAAN will continue to support and guide its members, empowering them to lead with compassion, respect, and a deeper understanding of how trauma affects us all.

Ultimately, CAAN's philosophy of healing, understanding, and addressing generational trauma and lateral violence is about creating a future where Indigenous peoples can thrive—free from the cycles of harm and filled with the promise of well-being, unity, and strength.

Strategies (1-2 years to initiate)

- Providing training on lateral violence and its effects that are specific to leadership, staff and volunteers.
- Providing training on the effects of generational trauma that are specific to leadership, staff and volunteers.
- Providing culturally relevant resource material on generational trauma and lateral violence to membership, ensuring materials are accessible to all members.
- Creating and implementing standard codes of conduct that address lateral violence in collaboration with staff and membership to ensure buy-in and adherence.

Critical Success Factors

- Tangible, positive changes to overall workplace safety and culture.
- Improvement of staff and leadership retention.
- Improvements in relationships, communication, and collaboration among staff and leadership.
- Promoting social harmony and healthy relationships among leadership, staff and membership ensures that staff can build successful working relationships free of bullying, gossip, alienation, or demeaning actions.

Implementation and Measurement Activities

As an internal review process, monitor and evaluate the CAAN Strategic Plan's implementation through regular surveys on training effectiveness, successes and challenges.

- Specifically, through measuring:
- Staff, volunteer and membership retention rates.
- Staff satisfaction scores and qualitative evidence of healthy workplace.
- Number and utility of training sessions conducted.
- Health and safety with a focus on personal wellness.
- Training from a trauma-informed lens.
- Understand the meaning of lateral violence and why it exists.
- Understand generational trauma and how it has been caused by centuries of colonialism and perpetuated by colonial practices today.

Strategic Priority #3:

Decision-making with agencies

At CAAN, we believe that decision-making should be rooted in transparency, inclusivity, and accountability. Our philosophy emphasizes the importance of collaborative decision-making, where all voices are heard, and choices are informed by evidence, lived experiences, and the collective wisdom of our communities.

To ensure that our decisions are well-informed, impartial, and serve the best interests of Indigenous peoples, we are committed to establishing an arms-length, independent advisory body—such as a Senate or Council. This body will be tasked with supporting and advising CAAN in its strategic and operational decisions, ensuring that the organization remains true to its mission, values, and priorities.

This independent body will play a vital role in providing guidance, insight, and recommendations based on sound evidence, expertise, and Indigenous knowledge systems. The mandate of this body will include ensuring that CAAN's actions are culturally relevant, community-driven, and aligned with the needs and aspirations of the people we serve.

The independence of this advisory body is critical to maintaining objectivity, safeguarding against potential conflicts of interest, and upholding the integrity of CAAN's decision-making processes. By working collaboratively with CAAN's leadership, staff, and membership, the advisory body will ensure that the organization makes decisions that are both informed by evidence and reflective of the diverse voices and perspectives within Indigenous communities.

In this way, CAAN strives to create a decision-making framework that is not only inclusive and respectful but also grounded in principles of self-determination, accountability, and evidence-based action. This collaborative, arms-length approach will strengthen CAAN's ability to serve its communities effectively and responsibly, while fostering trust, transparency, and long-term sustainability.

Strategies (1-2 years to initiate)

- Providing transparency on Board policies, by-laws, constitutions and voting rights.
- Ensure that the information is presented in a way that is easily understood by all members, regardless of their familiarity with governance structures
- Support and incorporate innovative approaches to service delivery and partnership for member organizations.

Critical Success Factors

- The membership easily understands board policies.

Implementation and Measurement Activities

As an internal review process, monitor and evaluate the implementation of the strategic plan through conducting regular surveys on program effectiveness, successes and challenges, and partnerships. Ensure that the membership has input into review processes and research and opportunity to validate such outputs.

Specifically, through measuring:

Level of satisfaction with partnerships from both the CAAN and partner perspectives.

- Level of understanding of board policies and procedures.
- Assessment of program effectiveness, successes and challenges (qualitative or quantitative).
- Impact of these policies on decision-making processes and outcomes.
- Indigenous Methodologies

Strategic Priority #4:

Strengthening our membership

At CAAN, we are deeply committed to being a membership driven organization, where the voices and experiences of our communities' guide our actions, decisions, and initiatives. We believe that the lived experiences of Indigenous peoples, particularly those who are directly impacted by HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C, and other related health issues, must be at the heart of everything we do. We center these experiences because they provide the invaluable insights needed to create meaningful, effective, and culturally relevant solutions.

Our philosophy is grounded in the principles of GIPA (Greater Involvement of People Living with HIV/AIDS) and MEPA (Meaningful Engagement of People with HIV/AIDS). These principles ensure that individuals who are directly affected by health issues are not only included in decision-making processes but are integral to shaping and driving the work forward. We adhere to the core value of “nothing about us without us,” which means that Indigenous peoples—particularly those living with HIV, Hepatitis C, or other co-morbidities—must be at the table in all conversations, planning, and action.

By embracing these principles, CAAN fosters an environment of trust and transparency with our membership. We actively engage with our communities and ensure that their knowledge, experiences, and leadership are respected and recognized. This approach strengthens relationships and empowers individuals and communities to lead their own healing journeys, ensuring that programs and policies are directly aligned with the needs and aspirations of those who will be most affected by them.

Our commitment to being membership-driven and focusing on lived experience also ensures that the organization's work remains relevant, responsive, and deeply rooted in the cultural values and priorities of Indigenous peoples. This philosophy creates a foundation of trust, collaboration, and self-determination, allowing CAAN to truly serve its membership and make lasting, positive impacts in the lives of Indigenous communities.

Strategies (1-2 years to initiate)

- Ensure that the principles of GIPA (Greater Involvement of People Living with HIV and/or AIDS) and MEPA (Meaningful Engagement of People Living with HIV and/or AIDS) are practiced.
- Increase participation and engagement with Elders and youth (as chosen/determined by membership).
- Improve youth engagement with a youth-specific mentorship program, youth council, creating roles for content creation, ambassadors, etc.
- Broaden culture outreach to include Inuit and Métis Peoples and ensure diversity and inclusion in membership to include northern and remote communities.

“Elders hold a very good place in the organization, and engagement is crucial to the livelihood of the organization.” (Visioning Gathering participant, 2024)

Critical Success Factors

- Implemented guidelines for application / membership that are co-created with membership to ensure they reflect the memberships' expressions of community needs and values.
- Guidelines are transparent, easily accessible, and inclusive.

Implementation and Measurement Activities

As an internal review process, monitor and evaluate the implementation of the CAAN Strategic Plan by conducting quantitative assessments, such as regular surveys, and qualitative assessments, like focus groups/interviews on membership needs and priorities. Ensure that the membership validates all review processes and research.

Specifically, through measuring:

- Number of engagements with Elders and youth.
- Assessment of mentorship programs focusing on successes, challenges, barriers, areas of improvement, etc.
- Assessment of outreach effectiveness targeting Inuit and Métis Peoples, remote communities, etc.
- CAAN membership satisfaction survey on, for example, trust, communications, and feedback opportunities.

Strategic Priority #5:

Knowledge mobilization, research, and evaluation

At CAAN, we believe that building and nurturing strategic partnerships is essential to advancing our mission and reflecting the needs and wishes of the communities we serve. Our approach to knowledge mobilization, research, and evaluation is centered on collaboration and mutual respect. We recognize that no one entity holds all the answers, and by working together with community members, Indigenous organizations, academic institutions, healthcare providers, and other stakeholders, we can create solutions that are informed, sustainable, and culturally relevant.

Strategic partnerships in knowledge mobilization allow us to share information, best practices, and research findings in ways that are accessible and meaningful to Indigenous communities. By facilitating the exchange of knowledge across sectors and communities, we ensure that Indigenous peoples have the tools and resources they need to make informed decisions about their health and well-being.

In the realm of research and evaluation, CAAN is committed to ensuring that research initiatives are community-driven, respectful, and reflective of Indigenous worldviews. We prioritize the involvement of Indigenous communities in every stage of the research process, from identifying priorities and designing studies to analyzing results and applying findings. This collaborative approach not only ensures that research is relevant and beneficial but also empowers communities to take ownership of the knowledge that is generated.

Through these strategic partnerships, CAAN strengthens its ability to fulfill its mission of improving the health and well-being of Indigenous peoples. These partnerships also ensure that our work remains rooted in the lived experiences, cultural traditions, and priorities of the communities we serve. By advancing knowledge mobilization, research, and evaluation in a collaborative, inclusive way, CAAN is better equipped to support Indigenous peoples in navigating their own health journeys and driving meaningful change within their communities.

Strategies (1-2 years to initiate)

- Increase awareness and national advocacy of CAAN with agencies and individuals across all social determinants of health, but also in providing targeted information and guidance on HIV and Hepatitis C to grassroots communities.
- Learn from other countries and communities across Canada (e.g., cultural exchange program, summits and seasonal gatherings to bring people together from diverse backgrounds).
- Partner with agencies that work at the street levels, and with those who are disenfranchised (e.g., straight men living with HIV, sex workers) to improve knowledge mobilization.

- A centralized hub for resources, including but not limited to interactive maps, and online service information to reduce barriers to access.
- Access to Treatment and Care: Ensuring that individuals living with HIV have access to appropriate treatment, care, and support services, including culturally sensitive healthcare providers and resources.
- Stigma Reduction: Implementing initiatives to combat stigma and discrimination associated with HIV/AIDS within Indigenous communities, promoting understanding and acceptance.
- Peer Support Programs: Establishing peer support networks and programs for individuals living with HIV to provide emotional support, information sharing, and community connections.
- Advocacy for Policy Change: Advocating for policies that prioritize the needs of people living with HIV, including access to healthcare, social services, and rights protection.
- Education and Awareness: Developing educational campaigns and resources to raise awareness about HIV prevention, testing, treatment, and care within Indigenous communities, emphasizing culturally appropriate approaches.
- Advocate for an Indigenous-led health research institute focusing on data preservation and sovereignty with CAAN focusing on HIV, Hepatitis C, and any other relevant research as determined.
- Direct and manage research projects (e.g., identify resources for investigating funding opportunities and critically analyzing the criteria).
- Continue to review and enhance the research unit to ensure it reflects both internal research needs and current community needs; with consideration for how to identify funders that will support membership-driven research initiatives.
- Ensure that safe spaces are created for Indigenous Peoples to share their stories.
- Evaluate research through traditional methods, such as sharing circles, storyboards, storytelling.

Critical Success Factors

- The number and quality of partnerships at all levels.
- Assessment of program impacts, successes and challenges.
- Research efforts are community driven in that they are validated and/or determined by the communities served and used to have an impact.

Implementation and Measurement Activities

As an internal review process, monitor and evaluate the implementation of the CAAN Strategic Plan through conducting regular surveys on program effectiveness, successes and challenges, and partnerships. Collaborate with Indigenous researchers and community members to co-create evaluation methods that reflect the needs and values of the community.

Specifically, through measuring:

- Number of quality partnerships
- Assessment of programs focusing on the successes, challenges, barriers, areas of improvement, etc.
- Assessment of outreach effectiveness with various groups, including grassroots communities, international partners, etc.
- Assessment of the impact of advocacy efforts with various groups, including grassroots communities, international partners, etc.
- Impact of research, particularly in supporting evidence-informed decision-making.

The Way Forward ...

As we reflect on the journey ahead, we are reminded of the strength, resilience, and wisdom of the First Peoples of this land. For generations, our communities have endured the impacts of colonization, systemic racism, and the deeply rooted social conditions that continue to affect our health, well-being, and identity. Yet, despite these challenges, we stand firm in our collective power to heal, rebuild, and reclaim our futures.

At our core, we are grounded in the teachings of our ancestors—guiding principles that have sustained our people for millennia. Our ways of knowing and doing are rooted in the land, in ceremony, in language, and in our connection to each other. These are the foundational tools we carry forward as we seek solutions to the complex issues facing our communities today.

As an Indigenous-led organization, we honor the wisdom of our Elders, the creativity of our youth, and the strength of our families, knowing that true solutions come from within our own communities. Our mission is not to impose external ideas, but to work alongside our people, drawing upon the knowledge and teachings that are ours by birthright, to build a future that is equitable, just, and free from the harm caused by colonial systems.

Together, we commit to looking for solutions that are rooted in the values of respect, self-determination, and interconnectedness. We will work collaboratively, embracing both traditional knowledge and contemporary approaches, to address the health and social inequities that continue to impact our communities. Our solutions will prioritize the collective well-being of our people—recognizing the interconnectedness of our mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual health.

In everything we do, we are guided by the principle of “nothing about us without us.” We will continue to listen to our communities, support our leaders, and ensure that our work remains grounded in the lived experiences and aspirations of the people we serve.

We stand in solidarity with the First Peoples of this land, and we honor the sacred responsibility we must heal from the wounds of the past while forging a path toward a brighter future. A future where our children and grandchildren thrive in a world that acknowledges their worth, supports their dreams, and protects their right to live with dignity, freedom, and strength.

We are here to serve, to listen, and to walk beside you as we build solutions that reflect our shared values, our sacred teachings, and our deep love for the land and each other. Together, we will create a future of healing, self-determination, and collective empowerment for all generations to come.

