



2023

Annual Report

The Indigenous Support Workers Project (ISWP)



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The Indigenous Support Workers Project



Land Acknowledgement

Le Projet de Travailleurs de Soutien Autochtones (PSTA) / The Indigenous Support Worker Project (ISWP) operates on an island known as Tiohtiá:ke to Haudenosaunee, as Mooniyang to the Anishinaabeg, and as Montréal to many others.

This traditional territory of the Kanien'kehá:ka people has also been a historical meeting place for other First Nations, Inuit, and Métis nations. Today, Tiohtiá:ke is home to a diverse population of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis and other peoples. We respect continued connections with the past, present, and future in our ongoing relationships with First Nations, Inuit and Métis and other peoples in our work, and we are grateful to live and work on this territory. The majority of PSTW / ISWP's community members are Inuit and we are grateful for the contributions and wisdom brought to the organization.



Who We Are

Staff

Minnie Annanack O'Connor
Lyn Black
Molly Chamagne
Shirley DeWind
Asher Dion
René Florence
Simon Marchand
Jaimee Kopali
Shania Riche
Alain Roy
Mary Shearman
Melissa Simon

Circle of Wisdom

Anna Aude
Jani Greffe Bélanger
Tealey Kasennisaks
Kitty Partridge

Board of Directors

Sarah Carriere
Amy Edward
Joseph Gabereau
Francois-Xavier Michaux
Rick Qavavauq
Melissa Simon

Interns

Camila Colmenares
Neko Wong-Houle

External Contractors

Ron Amstutz
Jonathan Lebire
Maisha Moon
Mark Phillips
Anna Trowbridge
Allison Reid
Diego Ramirez
Liz Singh



Mandate & Objectives

The mandate of the PTSA / ISWP is to center and support the well-being of First Nations, Inuit & Métis people with lived experiences of homelessness through decolonial advocacy and revitalization practices. PTSA / ISWP is committed to providing wrap-around care and fostering relationships of trust based on wholistic healing and skills development to support our community members' transition to an autonomous and empowered life free from homophobia and transphobia, and other forms of structural violence. This is accomplished by providing:

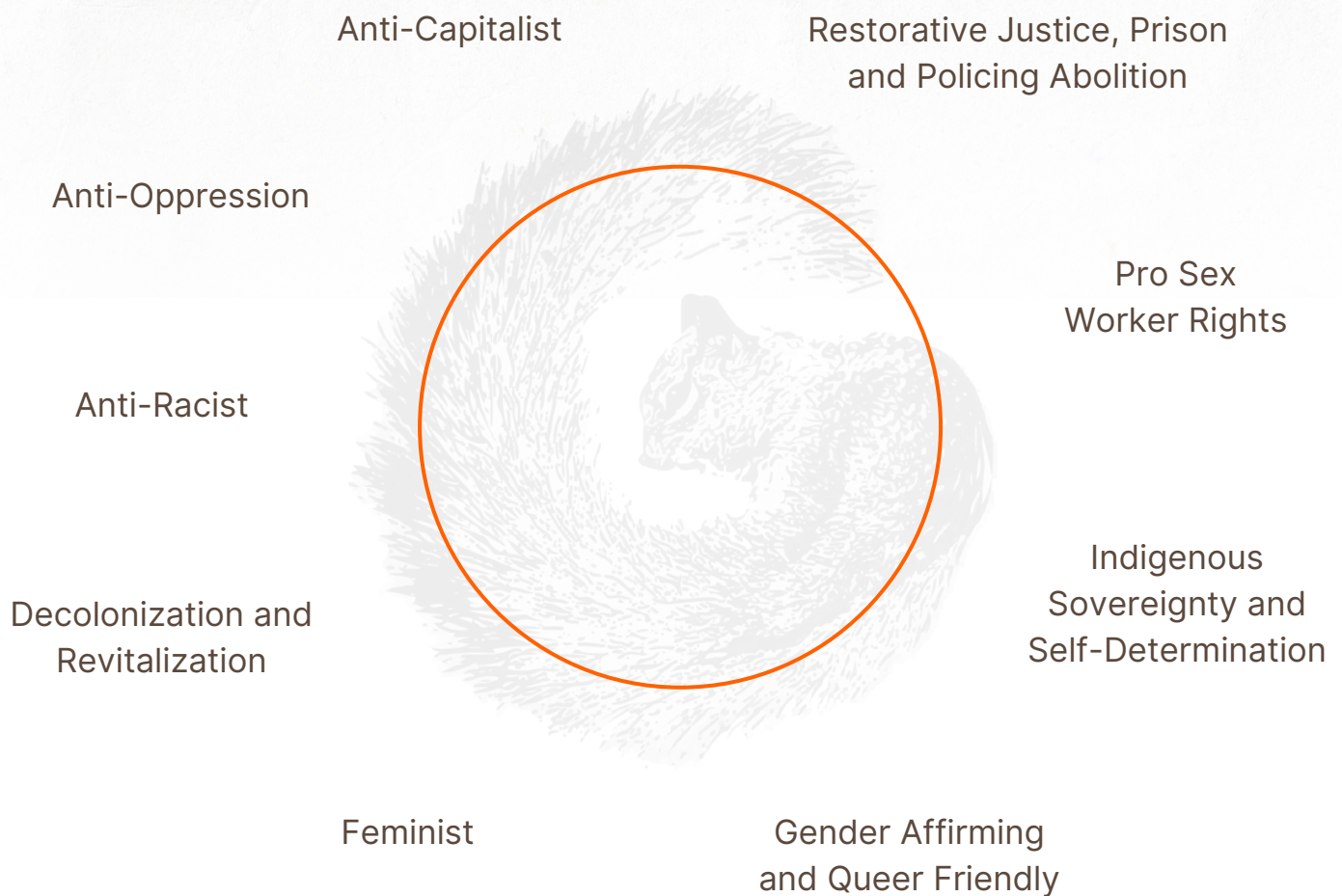
- by-and-for peer services for community members and service users using a rights-based harm reduction approach centring Indigenous ways of being, knowing and healing
- resources in response to community needs
- training and employment opportunities for Indigenous workers with lived experience of homelessness working in the mental health, rights-based harm reduction, support work, street outreach, and/or homelessness-serving sector
- education and training for peer organizations and other groups that serve PTSW / ISWP community members

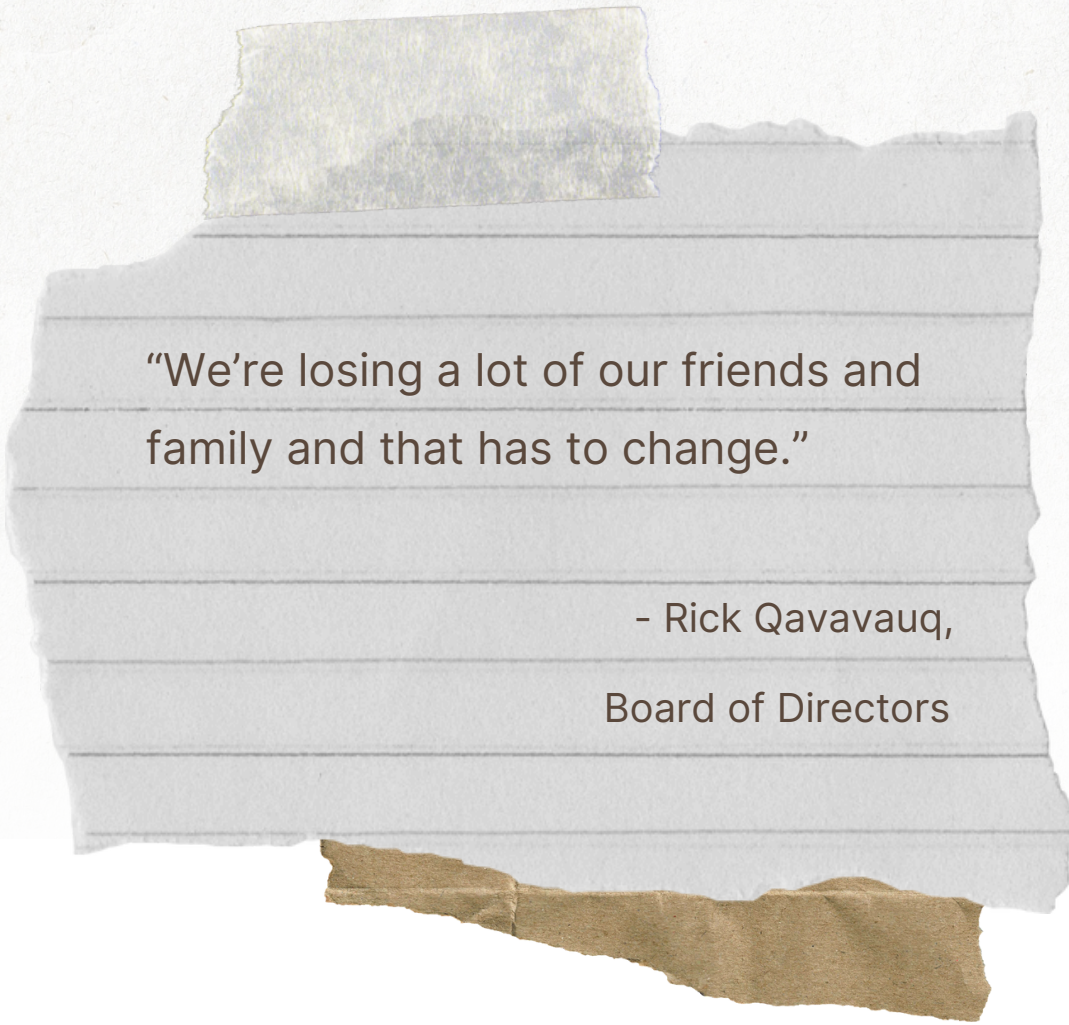


Approach & Values

PTSA / ISWP continues to draw inspiration from the collaborative spirit of Plateau Mont-Royal, and most importantly, directly from community members. Our work focuses on outreach to First Nations, Inuit and Métis community members who are at risk or in precarious situations through the presence of street-workers.

Our work aims to employ the following values:





"We're losing a lot of our friends and family and that has to change."

- Rick Qavavauq,
Board of Directors



Our Story

Founding

PTSA / ISWP was founded in the autumn of 2019, emerging from the Homelessness Committee of the Montréal Indigenous NETWORK. Two street workers and a part-time supervisor, working on weekends and after hours to provide **physical and emotional first aid** when no other services were available (September 2019).

First Project

Our first community based project was the Handwashing for Homeless stations that were operated by a network of community volunteers during the pandemic. At the time, these were the only way First Nations, Inuit and Métis people experiencing homelessness could **access hand washing facilities** while most places were closed.

COVID-19 Pandemic

During the first lockdown of the COVID-19 Pandemic, PTSA / ISWP staff were one of the few organizations that stayed open and active on the streets. In particular, demands around the winter holidays shifted PTSA / ISWP's focus to a more **peer-based approach**.

Peer Crews

Due to the staffing crisis and COVID-19 restrictions, PTSA / ISWP **employed peers** to provide **services to the community**. This included a peer clean-up crew and an outreach crew. The staff team grew to around 17 employees at this time.

Community Space

Until March 2022, PTSA / ISWP was invited by the City of Montréal collaborating with Wapikoni Mobile to host an outdoor space for community members. Located near Mont-Royal station, this trailer became a site of connection and gathering and for **disseminating harm reduction supplies**. Other projects operating out of the trailer included:

- Soup social, now Sunday Brunches
- Warming terrasse for community members
- Providing clothing and outdoor gear

Incorporation

May 10th, 2022 PTSA / ISWP officially incorporated as an Indigenous non-profit with an explicit commitment to **decolonizing its governance structure** and practice.

First AGM

July 30th, 2023, PTSA / ISWP held it's first official annual general assembly with a focus on making it **dynamic and accessible**. An overview of the proposed bylaws was presented for feedback from the community followed by elections, food and games!

Launch of the Evening Shift

In response to deadly overdoses on September 10, 2023 and requests from the community, PTSA / ISWP launched a weekday evening peer outreach shift in October to provide more **harm reduction education** and supplies on the street when most other services closed.



Board Report

PTSA / ISWP's first elected board began their terms after the first AGM held on July 30, 2023 in Jeanne-Mance Parc. It was a fun-filled afternoon of food, games, and community building. Joseph Gabereau and FX Michaux were re-elected after sitting on PTSA / ISWP's founding board. New elected board members were Sarah Carriere, Amy Edward, Melissa Simon (staff representative), and Rick Qavavauq. Sarah Carriere resigned before the first board meeting and we wish her all the best on her next adventures.

In early September a Board Orientation was held for both new and old board members to build a sense of cohesion in the group. Staff and other community members attended this session as well. Big thanks to Emily from the Centre for Community Organizations (COCO) for facilitating this session and all the support they provide behind the scenes regarding PTSA / ISWP's governance.

At the first official Board Meeting the BoD approved the draft bylaws which were presented at the AGM in July, small amendments were also approved at the April board meeting.

The transition away from Exeko to autonomous governance and financial management is complete. One significant shift is that we started the 2024/25 year managing all of our own grants.

In total, our 5 board members contributed approximately 100 hours to the organization.

“Look around you and appreciate how much change has happened and how much work we’ve done.”

- Lyn Black

Executive Director,
speaking at the NETWORK’s event
“Eyes Wide Open” April 25, 2024



Core Activities & Statistics

Weekend Outreach Team

- Guided by Shirley, the PTSA / ISWP Outreach Team continues to attend **weekly** Tam-Tam festivals on Sundays in order to support our community and prevent targeted surveillance.
- On average the PTSA / ISWP Outreach Team has **517** unique interactions with community members each month. On a monthly basis, this includes an average of:
 - 26 members of the 2SLGBTQ community
 - 36 crisis interventions
 - 2 overdose support and/or interventions
 - 4 supports around incidents of police violence
 - 44 service referrals
- Notably, September marked an **especially fatal time** for overdoses, with 7 recorded.

Weekend Activities: A Snapshot

While each month and weekend can vary, a weekend snapshot can provide insight into the range of services that PTSA / ISWP provides. Over the weekend of October 20-22, 2023 the street team connected with 121 individuals, out of which:

- 21 identified as male
- 100 identified as female
- 6 identified as 2SLGBTQ



Weekend Activities: A Snapshot (Cont.)

While a majority of interactions were with people who were “just chilling” on this weekend, PTSA / ISWP also provided:

- 12 crisis interventions
- 1 intervention around police violence
- 1 mediation with neighbours
- 22 service referrals to Plein Milieu, the First Peoples’ Justice Centre, Médecins du Monde, the Native Friendship Centre and to street nurses.

Peer Employment Opportunities

PTSA / ISWP is committed to providing employment opportunities for community members and peers. Individuals rotate shifts so that a wider range of people can access both the experience and income.

- The Clean-up Crew consists of 4 people per shift every Saturday.
- The Sunday Outreach Peer Team engages 2 people per shift.
- The Evening Outreach Peer Team comprises 2 people per shift.
- There were **700 unique employment opportunities** for peers throughout 2023.



Harm Reduction Program

Through this initiative, community members can also access harm reduction education and traditional medicines in addition to various harm reduction supplies during every peer-outreach shift. With the expansion of the program, harm reduction supplies are distributed 7 days a week, all year round.

- There have been **365 harm reduction shifts**.
- Supplies include safer sex, safer smoking, safer injection, naloxone.

Organized Activities

Our social animators, Molly and Melissa plan weekly activities for our community members, including Sunday Brunches. This project has been instrumental in building community, having fun, and fostering connection between our peers.

- There have been approximately **75 weekly** organized activities of about **15-20 participants** each.
- Activities included but were not limited to: watching movies in theatres, going to the Verdun beach, hosting BBQ's, going to museums, walking club, festivals, and carving.
- Our Easter Egg Hunt had close to **50 participants!**

Nurse Program

In partnership with Médecins du Monde, PTSA / ISWP hired **two street nurses** in the Spring to provide street based nursing services to community members on weekends.

Navigator Program

There are currently **two navigators**, working between the week and weekend. Dedicated interventions took place with community members of PTSA / ISWP who expressed needs in terms of health navigation. The services included interactions with the healthcare providers, translation, facilitating a culturally safe environment, support during the different procedures related to their specific situation, general support, and counselling.

PTSA / ISWP's navigators provide outreach and health navigation services to community members in 4 languages: Inuktitut, Cree, English, and French.



Acknowledgements

Partners

Centre for Community Organizations (COCO)
CREMIS
Exeko
First Peoples' Justice Centre of Montréal
Inuit Siqinirmiut Quebecmi Ilaijut / Southern Quebec Inuit Association (SQIA)
Montréal Indigenous Community NETWORK
Médecins du monde (MdM)
Native Friendship Centre of Montréal
Native Montréal
Plein Milieu
Projet Autochtones Quebec (PAQ)
Willy Fournier

Funders

City of Montréal
CIUSSS Regional
Concordia University - Office of Community Engagement
McConnell Foundation - Innoweave
Montréal Indigenous Community NETWORK
Secrétariat à la condition féminine



Design by Neko Wong-Houle
Logo by FeCoB

PTSA



ISWP