

## STAFF LETTER - KATIE ROBERTSON



It's hard to believe that my first year at Strategies North has gone by so quickly! I am so happy to work with such a fantastic team on a wide variety of exciting and meaningful projects and initiatives for our clients. This year has seen significant changes for our clients as they adapt to the new normal of COVID-19 and has caused us at Strategies North to seek new and innovative ways to continue to offer the highest quality of support to our clients during this time. One way we have innovated in response to these new changes has been establishing an avenue for our clients to continue to facilitate important community engagement initiatives while allowing their members to maintain safe social distance. We launched EngageSN, to provide our clients with a digital town hall

and gathering space for public participation initiatives that their Members can access from home. Beyond providing a space for engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic, EngageSN works to minimize barriers such as geographical distance, physical mobility and scheduling conflicts. Allowing members to participate in their community's engagement whenever and wherever they are. This new initiative is only one example of the many innovative projects I have had the opportunity to be a part of at Strategies North. As September and the school year begins, we look forward to continuing to seek the best solutions to support our clients in their goals!

*Katie Robertson*



*Katie, Anna, and the Strategies North team conducting a community engagement session at Williams Lake First Nation in early 2020*

# CLIENT FEATURE: YUKON ABORIGINAL WOMEN'S COUNCIL

*This month, Lauren spoke with the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council's Executive Director, Claudia Riveros, to learn more about some of their exciting new projects, how they got here, and the support they had along the way.*

**CR:** YAWC started with a handful of Indigenous women who wanted to make change for their people and they thought that by coming together as a society, they might be able to have a stronger voice. It's always been a grassroots organization connecting directly with the women they serve to empower Indigenous women, lift them up and provide services where there are gaps. For a long time, it's been working on a shoestring budget. So that's why it's taken a long time for it to get where it's at.

My role as executive director is a new position and has allowed us to strategically plan for the future. A first step was to complete a strategic plan so that the vision and mission of the organization is solid



*Designed by Strategies North for YAWC's 5-Year Strategic Business Plan*

**YAWC Staff Members**



*Photo Credit: Claudia Riveros*

and is acted on by concrete steps. We also needed a strategy to look for funds to meet our budget needs, so we've engaged SN to facilitate that process.

**LM:** *Our team has also been working with YAWC for the past few months to develop your 5-Year Strategic Plan. What has the process been like for you?*

**CR:** It was a learning process. It was conducive to the work we were doing, so it actually facilitated the work. It was seamless, really, in terms of demand on my time and our staff's time. The process forced us to come together and think about what we've done and what we want to do.

*Interview continues on next page*

## CLIENT FEATURE:

# YUKON ABORIGINAL WOMEN'S COUNCIL

**LM:** Why is the strategic planning process so important for an organization like YAWC?

**CR:** Without having a plan in place, you're spinning your wheels a lot and being pulled in various directions. Having a strategic plan, you're clear on the direction you want to go. So you're the one creating the path, and you're the one choosing the resources that will best suit that.

I think we are in a good position to be in the business we're in, which is helping Indigenous women, because there is a lot of support out there for that. It's just a matter of knowing how to get it and where to go for it. And I think SN has hugely helped with that.

**LM:** So the strategic plan is the first step, now what is your goal for the next five years?

**CR:** Our goal for the next five years is to have greater capacity in terms of staff and programming so that we can reach more Indigenous women and their families

We want to reach all of our First Nation communities. That's a challenge, but we're determined to have an impact in each and every community in our service region. Ultimately, what we want is to have a central space for our staff and clientele, where they can feel comfortable and at home.

**LM:** How has COVID-19 affected your operations?

**CR:** We rely a lot on bringing people together, so we've had to be very innovative that way. More phone calls, more social media contacts, more video conferencing. Our clientele has been very responsive to that, which is encouraging because I think we're going to keep those methods of contact for the long term.

**LM:** If an Indigenous woman, girl, or gender diverse person is looking for support from YAWC, what's the first step?

**CR:** The first step is to either walk in through our doors in Whitehorse or call us and say what they're looking for, where their need is, and what their issues are. We also invite them to come in and make an appointment, because we're monitoring who comes through the doors with COVID-19, so we can make sure that we give them the attention they need.

No one's turned away. Whether they're a man or a woman, Indigenous or not. However, given our focus clientele, we will direct people who are not Indigenous women, girls or gender diverse people to another source of support if we can't help them.

**LM:** What successes have you seen in your time as Executive Director?

**CR:** We moved our office to a larger space and that was a small yet significant success.

*Interview continues on next page*



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It's given us the opportunity to hire more staff and see more clients through the doors. I think the other one is the strategic plan, and also just fortifying the existing programs that we have. It takes time to be able to sit down with staff, explore ways of improvement, and to take time for evaluation and planning. So that's another big success.

**LM:** *This is an exciting time for YAWC, despite recent challenges. What are you most excited about moving forward?*

**CR:** I'm excited about the potential of this organization. It's ripe for big things to happen. It's going to be a lot of work, so we just have to make sure that all the pieces are in place to make sure that the potential becomes a reality in a measured way. We are setting ourselves up to really succeed and be sustainable in where we want to go.

We are always trying to lift our Indigenous women and girls and gender diverse people up. We are always trying to promote their talents and support their talents, and one of the ways we do that is we try to hire the people we serve. We have a mentoring system in place where if a

non-Indigenous person is hired, like myself, the plan is always to replace that person with an Indigenous person who is fully qualified.

There's just so much untapped talent out there, so part of our job is to make sure those barriers are always addressed and make sure that the organization is run by Indigenous women for Indigenous women. ●



*Designed by Strategies North for YAWC's 5-Year Strategic Business Plan*

## A NEW LOOK



**YAWC**  
YUKON ABORIGINAL  
WOMEN'S COUNCIL

*In developing their 5 year Strategic Business Plan, Strategies North supported YAWC to create a new look, including a logo and website (to be launched soon!)*

# YUKON ABORIGINAL WOMEN'S COUNCIL

EMPOWERING INDIGENOUS WOMEN • ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE • CELEBRATING SUCCESS

## MISSION

WORKING TOWARDS A VIBRANT AND RESILIENT INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY BY EMPOWERING INDIGENOUS WOMEN, GENDER DIVERSE PEOPLES AND THEIR FAMILIES THROUGH CULTURALLY INCLUSIVE ADVOCACY, HEALING, LEARNING, AND SHARING.

## VISION

TO ADVOCATE ON BEHALF OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN, GIRLS AND GENDER DIVERSE PEOPLE IN THE YUKON AND NORTHERN B.C TO ENHANCE, PROMOTE, AND FOSTER THEIR SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, CULTURAL, AND POLITICAL WELL-BEING. WE AIM TO EMPOWER AND CELEBRATE INDIGENOUS WOMEN, EMBRACE THEIR ROLES IN COMMUNITIES, TERRITORIES AND LANDS AND TO PROVIDE SUPPORT AND RESOURCES TO PROMOTE & FOSTER LEADERSHIP ROLES, SUPPORT AND ENFORCE THEIR INHERENT, CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS, AND RECOGNIZE AND PRESERVE THEIR CULTURES AND VALUES.

## MANDATE

TO BUILD STRONG RELATIONSHIPS AMONG INDIGENOUS WOMEN, GENDER DIVERSE PEOPLES, ORGANIZATIONS AND PARTNERS ACROSS OUR SERVICE AREA WITH A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH. PROVIDING RESPONSIVE, EFFECTIVE, AND EMPOWERING RESEARCH, ADVOCACY, OUTREACH, ACCESS TO RESOURCES, AND PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AT THE TERRITORIAL, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVELS.



## SEPTEMBER 30TH - ORANGE SHIRT DAY

Orange Shirt Day is the legacy of the St. Joseph Mission residential school commemoration event held in Williams Lake in the spring of 2013. It grew out of Phyllis's account of losing her shiny new orange shirt on her first day of school at the Mission, and it has become an opportunity to keep the discussion on all aspects of residential school happening annually. Orange Shirt Day is also an opportunity for First Nations, local governments, schools, and community agencies to come together in the spirit of reconciliation and hope for generation of children to come.

*Join us in honouring this important cause by wearing orange on September 30th*



*Photo courtesy of orangeshirtday.org*

## BUILDING COMMUNITIES THROUGH ARTS AND HERITAGE

Canadian Heritage's **Building Communities Through Arts and Heritage** (BCAH) Fund was established to help celebrate community -- both its past and present. The program increased opportunities for local artists, artisans, heritage performers or specialists to be involved in their community through festivals, events, and projects. BCAH offers funding through three streams:

- Local Festivals (up to \$200,000)
- Community Anniversaries (up to \$200,000)
- Legacy Fund (50% of eligible project expenses up to \$500,000)

Applications to the Local Festivals and Community Anniversaries streams are due September 30, 2020.

*For more information about this funding opportunity or others, please contact us!*

## KEY DATES

### Sept 15: United Church - Healing Fund

Deadline to apply

### Sept 30: Canadian Heritage - Community Anniversaries

Deadline to apply

### September 30: EvaBC - Emergency Sexual Assault Response

Deadline to apply

### Northern Health - Imagine Community Grant

Fund opens this month

### Oct 1: Canadian Gov - Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program

Deadline to apply