



2024

Annual Report

Indigenous Support Workers Project

Dedication: In Memory

As an organization, we would like to acknowledge the hit our community has taken in this last year. Many beloved community members were lost but they are not forgotten.

Our hearts are broken for the community and we stand together in living remembrance of our family and community.

Indigenous Support Workers Project

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“ For so long, so many of the decisions that dictate how we’re going to deal with anything were decided from the outside. Like how we deal with drug use, how we deal with everything. And in the community, there’s agreement that it’s better to make these decisions ourselves. ”

– Anonymous Community Member in ISWP’s Overdose Prevention Team’s Baseline Report



Land Acknowledgement

The Indigenous Support Workers Project (ISWP) lives, works and loves in Tiohtiá:ke, as it is know to the Haudenousaunee, 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 ISWP's community members are Inuit and we work together to uplift each other's contributions and wisdom brought to the organization.

“ I’m starting to smudge now. Yeah, it helps. It helps a lot. I learned from my elder, who helped me to smudge, take showers, cry in the shower, yell. And a lot of crying. ”

– Anonymous Community Member in ISWP’s Overdose Prevention Team’s Baseline Report

“ I like to help out anytime :)
I want to thank you guys for everything. Helping me and helping out. ”

– Anita Nayassit, Peer Worker

Who We Are

Peers

There are too many peers to name individually but thank you to all of the many peers that have worked in the last year.

Staff

Minnie Annanack-O'Connor
Lyn Black
Chris Brown
Molly Chamagne
Kody Crowell
Shirley DeWind
Asher Dion
René Florence
Jaimee Kopali
Ali Lemire
Melissa Simon
Simiuni Nayua
Virginia Ribeiro
Mary Shearman
Raven Jack
Amely Therrien

Médecins du Monde Nurses

Amy Low
Lucie Vicat-Blanc

Board of Directors

Amy Edward
Joseph Gabereau
Annie Kilabuk
François-Xavier Michaux
Akeeshoo Sataa
Crystal Sharky
Melissa Simon

Interns

Fern Marmont
Neko Wong-Houle

External Contractors

Ron Amstutz
Maisha Moon
Rachelle Perron
Mark Phillips
Diego Ramirez
Allison Reid

“ ...like they'd be like, oh people experiencing homelessness can't come to these tables, can't come to these meetings because it's too racist and they'll be traumatized. And I'm like, why don't you just stop being so racist... support the person in that moment. Most backwards thinking I've ever heard of. ”

– Anonymous Community Member in ISWP's Overdose Prevention Team's Baseline Report

Mandate & Objectives

The mandate of the 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. 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 ISWP's community members

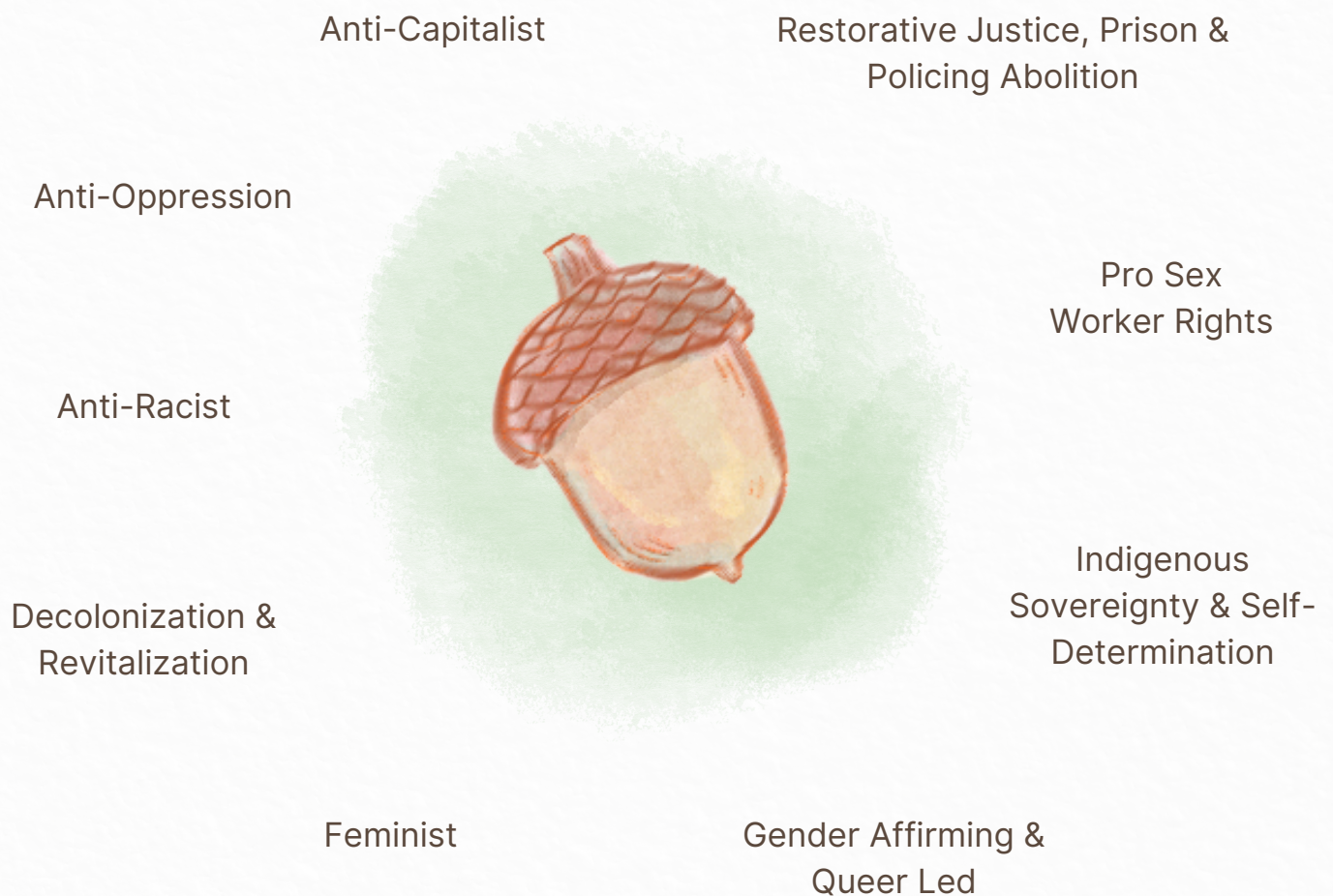
“ Street nursing alongside ISWP workers helps build trust, to meet community members where they are and to provide accessible, culturally informed health care. ”

– Nurse Lucie, Médecins du Monde

Approach & Values

ISWP continues to draw inspiration from the collaborative spirit of Plateau Mont-Royal, and most importantly, directly from community members. Our work focuses on working with 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:



Our Story

- **Founding**

ISWP was founded in September 2019, emerging from the Homelessness Committee of the Montréal Indigenous Community 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.

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

- **Peer Crews**

Due to the staffing crisis and COVID-19 restrictions, ISWP **employed peers** to provide **services to our 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, 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 Lunches
- A warming terrasse for community members
- Providing clothing and outdoor gear

• Incorporation

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

• First AGM

On July 30th, 2023 ISWP held its 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!

• Community Garden

In Summer 2023, the community space evolved into a collective garden where ISWP participants planted traditional medicines, herbs and vegetables alongside other partners such as Salade Solidaire.

- **Launch of the Evening Shift**

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

“ Working with ISWP brings you closer to the community. You get to witness firsthand challenges and the difficulties the population faces. Yet it also gives you the opportunity to experience the resilience and support each member can provide to one another. There is rarely a dull moment working with the team, as their creativity and flexibility demonstrate a genuine commitment to keeping each other engaged, supported and building a stronger community together. ”

– Nurse Amy, Médecins du Monde

Board Report

ISWP's fiscal year started off on April 1, 2024 with reflections on how to best serve the peer community on bureaucratic bodies such as municipal and provincial committees. ISWP serves to fill the gap in understanding of the lived experience of Indigenous people experiencing homelessness.

Later, on July 21st, 2024, we held the Annual General Meeting in Square St. Louis. We were grateful to have catering provided by Chef Swaneige and enjoyed throat singing performance by Nina Segalowitz and her daughter, Sierra Segalowitz-Clabaux. Games were played and fun was had by all!

In early September, our annual 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 ISWP's governance.

In February 2025, Annie Kilabuk and Crystal Sharky joined the Board of Directors as well.

Throughout the year, the Board heard community voices and perspectives from the Peer Advisory Committee (PAC). The PAC is made up of our community members and is at the heart of our work. We strive to ensure that our work as a Board is anchored in our community's experience and needs. In the last year, the community had experiences significant loss of loved ones.

Additionally, our members expressed wanting more activities, more support navigating relationships with partner organizations and access to more housing resources. They have appreciated the different employment opportunities from ISWP and would like more!

In total, our Board members contributed approximately 60 hours to the organization.

Sincerely,
ISWP Board of Directors 2024



Core Activities

Weekend Activities

- Guided by Shirley, Jaimee and Molly, the ISWP's Outreach Team continued to attend **weekly Tam-Tam festivals** on Sundays in order to support our community and prevent targeted surveillance.
- Melissa continued to host **delicious Sunday Lunches** served with a whole lot of heart. On any given Sunday, 15-50 lunches were served to community members.

Weeknight Overdose Prevention Team

ISWP's overdose prevention team were on the street to respond to the increasing number of overdoses impacting the community. This endeavor was headed by Shirley, Kody, Simiuni and Chris.

Through this initiative, community members also access harm reduction education and traditional medicines in addition to various harm reduction supplies during every 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 and Naloxone.

Peer Employment Opportunities

ISWP is committed to providing community members with accessible employment opportunities as the entry point to meaningful engagement with community leadership. Individuals rotate shifts so that a wider range of people can access both the experience and income.

- The Saturday Clean-up Crew consists of 4 people per shift.
- The Sunday Outreach Peer Team engages 2 people per shift.
- The Evening Outreach Peer Team comprises of 3 people per shift.
- There were **728 unique employment opportunities** for peers throughout the 2024 fiscal year.

Organized Activities

Our social animators, Molly and Melissa planned weekly activities for our community members, including Sunday Lunches. 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 watching movies in theatres, going to Verdun beach, hosting BBQs, going to museums, a walking club, attending festivals, and carving workshops.
- The group also participated in several Art Hives at Tlachiuk Atelier and attended the Powwow in Kahnawà:ke
- Our Easter Egg Hunt had close to **50 participants!**

Nurse Program

In partnership with Médecins du Monde, ISWP hosted two street nurses to provide street based nursing services to community members on weekends.

Health Navigator Program

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

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

What the Logs Show: An Excerpt from the ISWP's Overdose Prevention Team's Baseline Report

This snapshot captures the evening crew's work from February to April 2025. It's not about judging good or bad but celebrating wins and understanding the starting point for learning and growth.

Evening Crew Outreach Presence:

- 33 documented outreach shifts over the period (monthly average: 13 shifts)
- 82.75 total hours in the community (weekly average: 7.2 hours)
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- 667 community member interactions (monthly average: 267 interactions)
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Life-Saving Supplies Distributed:

- 186 harm reduction kits distributed (monthly average: 74 kits)
- 2 individual Naloxone kits documented in logs
- Regular distribution of essential items like socks, hats, clothing, water, and food

Team Composition:

- 16 core peers identified as “ready to work” based on training, availability and consistency
- 5-6 new peers trained informally

Community Connections:

- Regular presence at Milton Parc Art Hive events
- Important casual connections during team meals – valuable time for reflection and informal planning
- Participation in collective actions like marches for the overdose crisis
- Collaborations with other groups like NFCM’s Ka’wahse team
- Presence at monthly community suppers



Acknowledgements

Partners

Centre for Community Organizations
Comité Citoyen.ne.s de Milton-Parc
Concordia University – Office of Community Engagement
CREMIS
Exeko
First Peoples' Justice Centre of Montréal
Inuit Siqinirmiut Quebecmi Ilaijut / Southern Quebec Inuit Association
Montréal Indigenous Community NETWORK
Médecins du monde
Native Friendship Centre of Montréal
Native Montréal
Plein Milieu
Projet Autochtones du Quebec
SHIFT Centre for Social Transformation
Tlachiuk Atelier

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Montréal Indigenous Community NETWORK
Secrétariat à la condition féminine

PTSA



ISWP