

ANNUAL REPORT 2021

Wisdom2Action
www.wisdom2action.org



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Wisdom2Action 2021 YEAR IN REVIEW



OUR TEAM

Members: **11**
(in our core team)

Associates: **8**
(working on projects)

OUR WORK

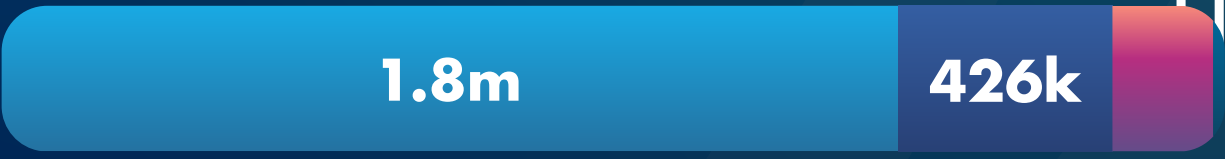
New Projects:
(we're involved in)
35

Events Hosted:
(webinars/co-hosted panels)
80+

SOCIAL MEDIA



Post Views:



New Followers:





From the Leadership Team

On behalf of Wisdom2Action (W2A), we would like to share our heartfelt thanks and appreciation with you, our partners and supporters. 2021 was an exceptional, ground-breaking year for our team. We wouldn't be where we are today without your support, or without the exceptional team whose commitment to the cause and investment in excellence have been integral to our success.

This year, we expanded our scope of work, introducing a new and more comprehensive suite of services. Building on our history supporting knowledge mobilization, youth and family engagement and youth mental health, we've grown and restructured our services to better reflect who we are and what we can offer:

- Capacity Building and Organizational Development
- Community and Stakeholder Engagement
- Research and Knowledge Mobilization

On themes and issues such as:

- 2SLGBTQ+ Rights and Inclusion
- Children's Rights and Youth Engagement
- Mental Health and Substance Use

We grew and restructured our team, from three core members, up to eleven, supported by a variety of part time associates. Our leadership changed as

Lisa Lachance, our Founder and Principal Consultant, was elected as the first openly genderqueer Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) of the Province of Nova Scotia. As Lisa stepped into her new role, Fae Johnstone, Co-owner and Principal Consultant, stepped into the role of Executive Director, alongside Dennis Stuebing, Senior Associate, who shifted into the new role of Director.

We undertook a breathtaking volume of projects this year. We began a 3-year, government-funded initiative to address and prevent gender-based violence (GBV) and its impact on 2SLGBTQ+ youth. We helped 2SLGBTQ+ organizations expand their reach and increase their impact through organizational development and strategic planning. We developed integral resources to support Ontario secondary students coping with anxiety during COVID-19, and played a key role with Nova Scotia Health as the province engaged stakeholders in the creation/continuance of overdose prevention sites. Beyond our direct work with clients, we undertook bold advocacy initiatives, supporting efforts to ban conversion therapy, promote children's rights, improve access to and coverage of gender-affirming healthcare, and increase support for 2SLGBTQ+ communities and community organizations.

Through and through, it was a big year, on every front and in every way. Our capacity has grown, and we've developed new relationships with key partners, government agencies, community organizations and advocates across Canada. As we move into the new year, we cannot wait to work with you to continue to facilitate change and strengthen communities.

Sincerely,

Fae Johnstone
Lisa Lachance
Dennis Stuebing

New Projects

2021 has been a busy year for Wisdom2Action (W2A). We've added new team members and began exciting new initiatives, while building on past partnerships and collaborations. We have supported civil society organizations, community groups and governmental organizations across Canada to facilitate positive change and strengthen communities. The following section provides an overview of what we achieved in 2021. We couldn't be prouder of what we've accomplished, or more excited for the year to come.

Capacity Building and Organizational Development

Quadrangle NL, a 2SLGBTQ+ community organization in Newfoundland and Labrador, brought W2A on board to create their first Inclusion, Diversity and Accessibility Plan, through consultation with local 2SLGBTQ+ community members and key community, health and social service organizations. W2A worked with Quadrangle to develop a comprehensive plan to ensure their commitment to social justice, decolonization and anti-racism was enacted through every aspect of their work.

W2A has worked with **Capital Rainbow Refuge** throughout the year to reimagine their brand and communications strategies. We helped them develop a new organizational logo, brand guide, and business tools (business cards, newsletters, powerpoint slides, etc.). Together, we created a new website and strengthened their communications efforts across the organization in fundraising, volunteering, and for use on social media.

Over the course of 2021, we worked with **the Enchanté Network** to review and strengthen their programs and internal structures, and guided the

development of their new strategic plan, developed through deep consultation with their membership and key stakeholders across Canada.

Alongside **Out Niagara**, we conducted a Community Needs and Strengths Assessment (CNSA), to better understand the current state of 2SLGBTQ+ communities in the Niagara region, and inform strategic directions to address the unique needs of local 2SLGBTQ+ people. As the CNSA comes to a close, we, alongside **Decolonize Now**, have begun supporting Out Niagara as they develop a new strategic plan.

Our team has also begun working with the **MacPhee Centre for Creative Learning**. The MacPhee Centre is located in downtown Dartmouth and is guided by a mission focused on empowering youth between the ages of 12-19 by connecting passion with purpose through the arts. With the MacPhee Centre, we are supporting the development of a new and revitalized strategic plan to guide future efforts to support children and youth in their region.

We have worked with the **Champlain Regional Planning Table for Gender Diverse Health Services** through system planning support with the goal of improving transition-related health services in the Ottawa area. We supported the development of a new website and a new community advisory table, and engaged with physicians, social workers and other key stakeholders to improve knowledge and competence on gender-affirming healthcare.

In support of **Children First Canada (CFC)**, W2A evaluated the implementation of its Youth Engagement Strategy in 2021. Representatives of CFC's Youth Advisory Council (YAC) were engaged in the process and stakeholders consulted included representatives of the Board, staff members, as well as Youth Ambassadors and YAC members.

Community and Stakeholder Engagement

Atelihai Inuit, Wabanaki Council on Disability, and the Mawita'mk Society Whycomomagh (We'koqma'q) First Nation hired W2A to undertake community-based research to better understand the impact of COVID-19 on Inuit with disabilities in the Maritime provinces. The project included data collection through surveys and interviews, the preparation of a

report and info-graphic, and an online social event with the Inuit community in New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia. The final report and infographic were distributed to stakeholders to help promote the knowledge generated by the project.

With support provided by **Frayme**, W2A has engaged Black and African Nova Scotian youth in a survey on their experiences of anti-Black racism in social services and the impact that has had on their mental health and resilience. A Youth Advisory Council was created and is contributing to the leadership of the project including analyzing the findings of the survey. Knowledge translation products will be created and promoted to mobilize what is learned from the project. The final report and other knowledge translation tools will be created and distributed in 2022.

At the end of the year, **Recreation Nova Scotia (RNS)** and W2A developed a plan to engage RNS' stakeholders in a consultative process to create an Anti-Racism and Anti-Discrimination Charter for the recreation sector in Nova Scotia. The project will be implemented over a duration of ten months and will seek to include a wide range of individuals and organizations.

Research and Knowledge Mobilization

Given the COVID-19 pandemic, our role facilitating and planning events shifted to the virtual world. We worked with numerous partners, including **the Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women, the Enchante Network, Horizon Ottawa, the Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity**, and a range of other partners, to convene virtual knowledge sharing events on key topics, including Shared Decision Making in Youth Services, Creating Safer Cities for Trans Folks, Advancing Trans Inclusion in Feminist Spaces, and more.

With the **Canadian Public Health Association**, Wisdom2Action completed an environmental scan of knowledge translation tools aimed at service providers to reduce stigma. Through a review of grey literature and existing services and supports in place on the front lines, we developed a report outlining the current state of knowledge translation tools for service providers focused on sexually-transmitted and blood-borne illness (STBBI) stigma reduction.

On behalf of **Dignity Network Canada (DNC)**, Wisdom2Action conducted an environmental scan of government and non-government funding for Canadian Civil Society Organizations interested in international SOGIESC (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression and Sexual Characteristics)-related human rights work. We conducted a document review, database scans, and interviews which informed a presentation and final report for the DNC and its membership.

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, we began a new initiative with **School Mental Health Ontario**, wherein, working alongside Ontario secondary students, we designed social media shareables and other knowledge mobilization resources to support student anxiety management during the pandemic, and build capacity on equity, diversity and inclusion in relation to COVID-19.

2SLGBTQ+ Rights and Inclusion

In 2021, we delivered over 80 workshops, webinars and other public education events focused on 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion, sexual and reproductive rights, inclusive workplaces and/or addressing gender-based violence.

W2A and the **Canadian Public Health Association (CPHA)** developed a suite of resources on trans inclusion in response to an identified gap in resources for service providers working in health and social services. Developed during the COVID-19 pandemic, these resources sought to address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on trans people, and particularly to address negative experiences accessing healthcare. Created alongside trans community members and service providers, these resources provide concrete practices and implementation strategies for better serving and supporting trans and gender-diverse communities.

Our team worked with **YWCA Halifax** to support fulsome and organization-wide implementation of trans inclusion. Through training, resource development and policy review, we have continued to support the YWCA Halifax team to build their knowledge and confidence in trans inclusivity. We also developed a new onboarding video with YWCA Halifax to orient new employees to trans and gender diverse inclusion, and designed two unique resources for YWCA Halifax, one focused on supporting parents of trans and gender diverse youth, and one focused on the intersections of gender, sexuality and faith.

Over the course of 2021, we led over 50+ unique sessions on 2SLGBTQ+ and trans inclusion with a wide range of partners from different sectors across Canada. We provided training to community foundations across Canada through **Community Foundations of Canada**, we hosted 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion workshops for various departments in the federal public service, including the **Canadian Food Inspection Agency**, the **Public Health Agency of Canada**, and the **Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada**, to name a few.

This year, we've also begun working with the Utilities sector in Ontario, to build their capacity on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, with a focus on 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion and creating more inclusive workplaces. From **Kitchener-Wilmot Hydro** to **Utilities Kingston**, we're excited to see real progress on 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion and DEI in male-dominated industries.

Our executive director, Fae Johnstone, provided keynote addresses on 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion to the **Government Services Union** national conference, the **Nova Scotia Physiotherapy Association** Annual General Meeting, and numerous other audiences across Canada.

Children's Rights and Youth Engagement

In collaboration with the **Canadian Practitioners Network for the Prevention of Radicalization and Extremist Violence** (CPN-PREV), W2A has been working with young people from across Canada through the Youth Engaged in Prevention Project (YEPP). YEPP provided participating youth with knowledge and access to experts on preventing violent extremism and violent radicalization through five workshops. The participants were also provided with information and support on how to design and implement their own projects to address violent extremism and violent radicalization in their communities. The project is on-going with a Canada-wide sub-project currently in development.

W2A in partnership with a group of 2SLGBTQ+ youth from across Canada (known as the Youth Advisory Council or YAC) and **Access Open Minds**, the **Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity** (CCGSD), the

Enchante Network (TEN), Gris MTL, Kickstand, Kind Space, Elder Blu, and YWCA Halifax, is implementing a three-year project entitled Safer Access For Everyone in the Rainbow (SAFER). SAFER has been made possible due to the generous support provided by the Women's Program at **Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE)**. SAFER will train 2SLGBTQ+ organizations and youth-serving organizations on ways to engage 2SLGBTQ+ youth, and prevent and address the gender-based violence they experience. SAFER will also conduct regional and national public education campaigns to address and prevent gender-based violence against 2SLGBTQ+ youth including public harassment.

The **Promoting Relationships and Ending Violence Network (PREVNET)** partnered with our team to support youth engagement and resource development to address teen dating violence. Working with a national youth advisory committee, we have begun developing podcast episodes, and have created new resources on the warning signs of teen dating violence, how to reach out for help, and other pertinent topics.

At the end of the year, W2A was selected by the **Nova Scotia College of Social Workers (NSCSW)** to lead a stakeholder consultation and develop a policy paper on what it would take for every child in Nova Scotia to realize their rights and to live in a home and a community free of poverty, violence and harm and that allowed them to reach their full potential. Most project activities will take place in 2022.

Mental Health and Substance Use

W2A was selected by **Nova Scotia Health, Public Health** to engage a wide range of stakeholders as it launched a selection process for the creation and/or continuation of overdose prevention sites in Nova Scotia. The stakeholder engagement took a harm reduction approach to the issue of substance use and supported potential applicants in better understanding a diverse range of perspectives in the Halifax Regional Municipality and the Cape Breton Regional Municipality.

Thanks to a generous grant from the Canadian Women's Foundation, **SPECTRUM** (Waterloo Region's Rainbow Community Space) partnered W2A to develop a first-of-its-kind Trans Mental Health, Wellness and Suicide Prevention Toolkit. The toolkit synthesizes pertinent knowledge and research

on trans mental health and suicidality in Canada, alongside concrete tools and resources that trans people, friends and families of trans people, and service providers who work with trans communities can put to use. Developed following engagement with local communities in Waterloo region, these resources are grounded in local context but applicable to a wide variety of audiences and stakeholders.

W2A and **RBC Future Launch** conducted a stakeholder engagement process with young people, service providers, family members and other key partners, guided by a youth advisory committee and steering committee, to explore the feasibility, fit, and unique considerations for a Youth Mental Health Apps Database in Canada, which would enable Canadians to search for and find youth mental health apps that best meet their unique needs and circumstances, in essence enabling young people and their families to make informed decisions about the apps that they use.

With funding from the **Public Health Agency of Canada** (PHAC), W2A conducted an environmental scan, youth and other stakeholder consultation, as well as a literature review, to understand gaps in research and knowledge mobilization pertaining to youth suicide prevention. Our report, alongside reports from other community-specific consultations conducted by PHAC partners, were used to inform future federal research strategies on suicide prevention.

In Late 2021, W2A began a new partnership with **UNISON Health and Community Services**, a Toronto-based social service organization, to undertake consultations and engagement with key stakeholders, particularly those who use drugs and BIPOC communities, to understand key considerations, concerns and needs associated with the creation of additional harm reduction and overdose prevention services.

Ongoing Projects

In collaboration with **Children First Canada (CFC)**, W2A supported youth engagement in multiple ways including within the Young Canadians Parliament from 2020 until 2021. W2A led the CFC Youth Advisory Council during that period of time and the development of a Youth Engagement Strategy. The Strategy was subsequently evaluated in collaboration with the Council and with input from CFC Youth Ambassadors, staff and Board members.

For the past three years we have worked with **School Mental Health Ontario** to help support student engagement, leadership and literacy in mental health. In 2019, we came together to launch #HearNowON: Student Voices on Mental Health, a provincial initiative including an online survey and regional forums through which students could directly inform strategic directions and priorities for student mental health and student leadership within mental health. In 2020, we jointly responded to the increased instability, stress and anxiety among students in response to the COVID-19 pandemic through the development of literacy, coping and anxiety management resources for students. We also created resources for students and teachers to better understand and respond to the unique impact of marginalization on student wellbeing, as exacerbated by the pandemic.

Social Enterprise Commitments

W2A is a social enterprise and consulting firm. We are often asked to explain the former and what it means in the work we do. In part, it means that W2A dedicates time to support efforts that are aligned with our organizational values on a pro-bono basis. For more information about that aspect of our social enterprise efforts, please see the Advocacy section below.

Another aspect of our work, connected to our identity as a social enterprise, is the sliding scale we use in project budgets. We acknowledge that not all of our clients/partners are in the same financial position to pay for our services as others. We are able to work with clients/partners to find ways to achieve the most with limited resources. We prioritize the content of work over the bottom line.

W2A has created space for new team members with disabilities and/or who have experienced barriers to employment in other contexts for a variety of reasons. We employ team members and associates with limited levels of professional experience, alongside more seasoned professionals, acknowledging lived experience as an equally valid form of knowledge. We see this as further demonstrating our commitment to diversity and inclusion as well as an incredible strength of our team.

Advocacy Efforts

In partnership with the **Enchanté Network**, we organized a national campaign in support of dedicated funding for 2SLGBTQ+ community organizations through a call to action for a minimum annual investment of \$25M in front-line 2SLGBTQ+ organizations. Through a live-streamed panel, articles in pertinent national media publications and ongoing government relations efforts, we are working tirelessly to address the chronic underfunding of essential 2SLGBTQ+ community services and supports.

As the federal government began development of the first ever LGBTQ2+ Action Plan, our Executive Director was invited to host two of eight national stakeholder roundtables intended to enable community and stakeholder input on the plan.

During the 2021 federal election, we worked with 2SLGBTQ+ organizations to develop clear policy priorities and called upon all parties to raise the bar on 2SLGBTQ+ issues. [We published a report](#) detailing viable interventions to improve 2SLGBTQ+ community health and well-being, and co-hosted a national debate during the election with representatives from all major political parties.

Recognizing the need for additional funding for 2SLGBTQ+ community organizations, we published a [first of its kind analysis](#) of the 2020 Federal Budget, unpacking commitments on 2SLGBTQ+ issues and highlighting gaps in queer funding.

Recognizing the importance of access to and comprehensive coverage of medically necessary gender-affirming healthcare, Wisdom2Action partnered with Ontario 2SLGBTQ+ and allied organizations to create a provincial advocacy campaign in support of Bill 17, the Gender Affirming Health Care Advisory Committee Act. Through our campaign, we've sent over 1000 letters of support to the Premier, received over 50 endorsements from partner organizations, and helped put trans health back on the provincial agenda in Ontario. Learn more about the ongoing campaign at: www.transhealthontario.org.

In response to growing anti-trans organizing in Canada, due in part to increased organizing by Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminists (TERFs), Wisdom2Action worked with feminist partner organizations across Canada to develop a public statement reiterating the feminist movement's commitment to trans inclusion and trans liberation, [which can be viewed here](#). With more than 50 organizations signed on, this statement was a clear denunciation of TERF rhetoric, and signals a significant shift towards trans inclusive feminist organizing in Canada.

With the introduction of a federal conversion therapy ban in late 2020, Wisdom2Action rallied our partners across the Children's Rights sector to create and disseminate a public statement alongside a submission to the House of Commons reiterating that banning conversion therapy is essential to protecting and promoting the human rights of children and youth in Canada. [The statement can be reviewed in full here](#).

Our Advocacy 2021 impact, by the numbers:



- Guest appearances on 20+ local, regional and national radio shows
- 5+ op-eds in major media publications, including the Toronto Star, Xtra Magazine and the Ottawa Citizen
- Quoted or referenced for our advocacy efforts in over two dozen news articles and publications
- 900+ letters sent to Premier Ford, Minister Elliot and Provincial Party Leaders in Support of Trans Health in Ontario
- Over half a million views on advocacy-oriented social media posts

W2A was active in advocacy through traditional and online media in various ways throughout the year. Within those efforts, team members' Op-Eds were published time and again in 2021, including on issues ranging from Canada's ban on so-called 'conversion therapy' in **the Toronto Star** (electronic and print), Pushing Provinces to Step Up on 2SLGBTQ+ Issues, and Calling for a 2SLGBTQ+ Health Hub in Ottawa, in **the Ottawa Citizen**, and numerous radio appearances across Canada.

2021 also provided W2A the opportunity to reach across borders in support of LGBTQ+ students and their allies through an online presentation to **Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA)** at **The International School of Macao** in December.

Future Plans

As we enter 2022, our team is filled with hope and excitement. 2021 was ground-breaking for our team. We grew the size of our team and the services we provide, developed new partnerships, expanded our advocacy work, and did it all in alignment with our values: a deep commitment to anti-oppression, social justice and community leadership.

We have bold plans for the coming year, with new projects and initiatives already in development that we will be excited to share more about in the coming months.

In 2022, we will be launching the **Wisdom2Action Speakers Bureau**. Through the bureau, organizations across Canada and around the world will be able to book brilliant thinkers, speakers and innovators, with a shared commitment to anti-oppression and social justice, for workshops, talks and panel discussions. Too often, members of our communities are underpaid and underrecognized for their work. We want to push back by helping organizations book diverse and anti-oppressive voices, while we ensure speakers are fairly compensated for their brilliance.

We are also keen to expand our work beyond Canada, to share our experience, expertise and approach with organizations and communities abroad. 2021 allowed us the opportunity to begin exploring ideas with partner organizations, and begin formulating what international work might look like in collaboration with others.

We recognize the challenges that have framed our work, not just this year, but since the global pandemic began. We trust a resolution is forthcoming and hope that those who have been directly impacted, receive the comfort and support they need. We bear in mind the trauma that exists on our team, with our partners, and those with whom we collaborate. And despite this, or perhaps fueled by our desire to strengthen communities during these difficult times, we look forward to the year ahead and to apply what we have learned during 2021.