

We Matter

ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT

January 2019 to May 2020



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Letter from our Founders

2019/20 was a big and exciting year for We Matter, where we settled into our mission and the core projects we hope to continue to develop and lead well into the future.

The previous year showed us an incredibly successful launch of our We Matter Toolkits, where we were able to expand our outreach to communities and support many more Indigenous youth indirectly with these resources. Building on the development and success of these Toolkits, and by shifting our efforts to growing the capacity of Indigenous young people, our path led us to the creation and launch of our National Ambassadors of Hope program.

The first pilot year of this national program was an overall success, where we were able to engage and mentor a select number of Indigenous youth changemakers over a longer period of time, creating ripple effects in communities across the country. In addition to the launch of this program, and with a growing team capacity, We Matter continued with our core efforts of community and youth outreach through workshops and presentations, connecting youth and youth allies with support and resources, amplifying positive and hopeful messaging through our national We Matter Campaign, and connecting and learning through our Ontario Support Network.

This past year has given us incredible learnings and insights into how to do this critical decolonizing work in a good way. Our young team of dedicated folks has been continuing to find accessible and innovative ways to put power into the hands of Indigenous youth and remind them over and over and over, how much they really do matter.

Although the beginning of 2020 threw a wrench in many of our organization's plans due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, this did not stop us from finding ways to support Indigenous youth, and we were able to adapt and shift our efforts in order to continue to do what we can.

Through partnerships, community support, and the amazing extended family of Indigenous youth leaders, we are continually reminded of the importance of this work. Step by step, we truly believe we can help shape a future where Indigenous youth have opportunities, platforms, networks of support, representation, and the hope to live another day.

We want to thank everyone who has continued to support our work, and who believes in a world where Indigenous youth know their power. We ask that you take the time to reflect, celebrate, and learn from this past year with us. The journey of undoing many generations of hardship is difficult, but not impossible. We hope that you continue to stand with us, as we are all stronger together.

Mársi cho / Thank you,

Tunchai Redvers, Co-Founder & Executive Director





Our Mission

As our reach and work has continued to grow and evolve, in 2019 We Matter spent time reflecting on how we see ourselves moving into the future. This led to a slight change in our mission statement, meant to account for our efforts in creating spaces of support for Indigenous youth, rather than directly supporting Indigenous youth with their mental health. We see ourselves being a part of creating resources to facilitate important conversations on Indigenous mental health, creating opportunities for Indigenous youth to step into their power, and creating spaces where Indigenous youth see themselves represented positively.

Our mission is to communicate to Indigenous youth that they matter, and create spaces of support for those going through a hard time while fostering unity and resiliency.

We Matter provides a forum for people across the country to share messages of hope and positivity. By sharing stories, words of encouragement, and authentic messages of hope and resilience, we help to make a community and nation stronger.

*We remind youth that I Matter. You Matter. We Matter.
We prove that we are all #StrongerTogether.*

We work to:

- Connect Indigenous youth with positive messages of hope, culture, wellness, healing, mental health and life promotion;
- Gather and amplify Indigenous and Indigenous youth voices;
- Create space and opportunity for Canadians to celebrate and honour the voices and experiences of Indigenous youth;
- Create and distribute materials and resources designed to empower Indigenous youth; and
- Build Indigenous youth capacity in schools and communities by implementing Indigenous youth-led projects and enabling peer-to-peer support.

About Us

We Matter launched on October 18, 2016. We are a national Indigenous youth-led organization with charitable status that is dedicated to Indigenous youth support, hope and life promotion. Our founding project is the We Matter Campaign - a national multi-media campaign in which Indigenous role models and allies from across Canada submit short video, written and artistic messages sharing their own experiences of overcoming hardships, and communicating with Indigenous youth that no matter how hopeless life can feel, there is always a way forward.

Our Core Messages for Indigenous Youth:

*You are
not alone*

*You carry
your own
strengths*

*You have the
capacity to
make change*

*Being
Indigenous is
awesome and
something to
be proud of*

*There are
coping skills
you can use
during difficult
times*

*You have
skills and
knowledge
that can help
yourself and
others*

Our Reach

Year at a Glance

Between January 2019 and May 2020...

WE DISTRIBUTED

480

Toolkits nationally to every single province & territory*

WE MAILED

664

#HopePact bracelets to groups across the country**

WE MATTER ENGAGED OVER

2200

Indigenous youth in-person

The We Matter Team facilitated workshops and presentations in over

20 events & communities***

319 and **106**

people in support worker roles

people in teaching roles reached out to us for support and resources

OUR SOCIAL MEDIA GAINED



4000

NEW FOLLOWERS

OUR WEBSITE RECEIVED



24000

VISITS

**this only includes Toolkits mailed and does not include materials circulated at workshops, events, gatherings, and through the Ambassadors program*

***this only includes #HopePact bracelets mailed and does not include materials circulated at workshops, events, gatherings, and through the Ambassadors program*

****this does not include Ambassador of Hope engagements*

We Matter Campaign

Our We Matter Campaign is an ongoing multi-media campaign which predominantly lives on social media. Through filmed and submitted video messages, art and stories, photo series, callouts, articles, and custom content, we share positivity, love, hope, and support with Indigenous youth nationally.

Due to some internal team shifts and a larger focus on building out programs, we were not able to spend as much time dedicated to our campaign outreach which reflects in some lower engagement numbers. That being said, the We Matter Campaign continues to be the glue and platform for all of the work we do, and this past year saw some amazing submissions and content we feel very proud of. We're always accepting message submissions, and this means you can submit your own message, or encourage others to submit, a message to Indigenous youth too!

34 new We Matter videos were filmed and submitted

Our Top 5 most watched We Matter videos in 2019 were:

1. *Anna Lambe* - 41,000
2. *Lorne Cardinal* - 22,000
3. *Theo Fleury* - 18,000
4. *Kelly Fraser* - 11,200
5. *Nadia Metuq* - 8,300



We Matter in the Media

[CBC Manitoba: Mental health advocate wants you to know how to survive suicidal sadness](#)

[CBC Kids: 'You matter': Messages of hope for kids in crisis](#)

[CBC Unreserved: Where some see Indigenous communities in crisis, We Matter sees hope](#)

One of our highlights from this last year was our second **#IndigenousYouthRise** portrait series. Nadya Kwandibens of Red Works Photography photographed over 30 of our National Ambassadors of Hope, where we then launched these stunning portraits alongside inspiring messages from these young role models. The **#IndigenousYouthRise** series was started as a way to break through the often negative, stereotypical and harmful media surrounding Indigenous young people, and instead offer the representation Indigenous youth want to see.



Activities

Toolkits

In 2018, we developed and launched a set of Toolkits for Support Workers, Educators, and Indigenous youth in order to better support important conversations on hardship, hope and healing to take place within communities.

The Toolkits use over 200 We Matter Campaign videos as a foundation for facilitating conversations and knowledge on challenges Indigenous youth face, intergenerational trauma, self-care, coping, identity, hope and so much more. 2019 saw an immense uptake in the Toolkits, as our outreach and connections deepened across various regions. With the launch of our National Ambassadors of Hope program, we were able to train Indigenous young people themselves to be able to connect these resources to schools, centers, and groups within their own communities and regions. These Ambassadors, as well as the We Matter team facilitated conversations and sessions on how to use the Toolkits.

We Matter gets tons of requests from folks working with Indigenous youth in their areas, and rather than pushing our resources onto communities, we promote our materials and engage with support people or communities when we are invited to do so.

Between January 2019 and May 2020, We Matter was able to distribute:

2,160

INDIGENOUS YOUTH TOOLKITS

1,125

TEACHER TOOLKITS

1,400

SUPPORT WORKER TOOLKITS

At the start of 2020, we launched a brand-new website making it much easier for people to access our Toolkit resources. As of January, anybody can download 4 different Toolkits directly from our website, and access all of the corresponding videos organized by the steps outlined within them. **In only 4 months of launching this new feature, we had over 300 Toolkit downloads!**

Adult Supports who used our Toolkits said:

"I really believe your campaign model and youth advocates spreading the awareness, peer support and culture through positive visibility on social media videos has an impact on many youth. The toolkits are amazing and so beneficial to those who might otherwise be afraid to start these conversations."



"We work with Indigenous youth and families and have three teams in particular who are dedicated to do so. I had very positive feedback about this campaign and the toolkits from staff working with youth."



"In the end, there was a wonderful cultural exchange with the Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff and students, along with performances."

Workshops & Presentations

Although We Matter shifted our focus from delivering workshops and presentations to mentoring and supporting Ambassadors of Hope to deliver presentations, we have found that engaging with youth and those who support them in-person has had a significant impact. With this, we were able to support a number of Indigenous youth-focused engagements as well as a couple specialized We Matter School Workshops for communities in-need.

Through Indigenous Youth Engagements, We Matter is able to facilitate basic introductions to conversations surrounding hardship, hope and healing, as well as share materials and resources, and connect with Indigenous youth more personally.

Here are some highlight events!



Dehcho Youth Conference - Fort Providence, NT

We Matter connected with both students and their teachers and support workers.

Alert Bay Youth Gathering - Alert Bay, BC

This gathering brought together Kwakwaka'wakw young people from across the island.





***Wolastoqey Tribal Council AGM -
Fredericton, NB***

We talked hope, culture and strength with Mi'kmaq youth, one of which eventually went on to become a National Ambassador of Hope!

Through specialized We Matter Workshops, We Matter is able to spend time with smaller groups of students covering topics such as inter-generational trauma and healing, supporting mental health, culture as strength, creative-based coping, and creating self-care plans.

Here are some highlight visits!

***Opeongo High School -
Pikwanagan First Nation, ON***

We spent three days in Opeongo High School having lots of discussion on supportive conversations and using the sacred fire to let go of heaviness.



Sheshatshiu Innu School - Sheshatshiu, NL

In 2019, the Innu community of Sheshatshiu declared a state of emergency due to the drastic number of attempts after a completed suicide. We reached out immediately and were able to spend four days in the school, connecting with youth and together sharing healthy ways of coping.



Although We Matter had a number of engagements and school workshops scheduled into 2020, all of these were cancelled or postponed as a result of COVID-19. We hope to be able to connect back with these communities and groups, as soon as we're able.



Hope Council

Out of the first ever #HopeForum in 2018, the We Matter Hope Council was established. The Hope Council was created to be an advisory group of Indigenous youth leaders ages 16-26 behind the ideas, content, and vision of We Matter, providing ideas, review, consultation, and feedback on We Matter's social media content, materials and resources, and activities.

After having been active for two years, the Hope Council was dissolved in March 2020. As with any youth programs, you have to be willing to try things, whether or not you know they will work, and remain open to the learnings they have to offer. The national youth council structure was not one that ended up working best for We Matter or the youth involved, so rather than focusing resources on a model that was not working, we made the decision to divest the roles of the Council into other forms of youth engagement moving forward. We will continue to explore these innovative forms of engagement to make sure diverse Indigenous youth needs are represented. A great first step was recruiting one of these original Hope Council members to become a member of We Matter's Board of Directors, to stay involved at the governance level.

Some challenges for us included:

- Engaging hope council members monthly - finding times for members to connect together for meetings proved challenging due to busy schedules and lives.
- Many of the original Hope Council members had to leave the council due to personal schedules and lives, and this impacted the council as a whole.
- With the launch of the National Ambassadors of Hope program, there was confusion and overlap in roles and responsibilities between Ambassadors and Hope Council members.



- The youth council model, although successful for other groups, does not work for all; and as an Indigenous young person-led organization, we felt there were more innovative and impactful ways of engaging diverse Indigenous youth nationally in our work - including the National Ambassadors of Hope program.

All being said, the Hope Council was active throughout 2019, and was still able to connect with Indigenous youth and communities in their areas, as well as support other We Matter efforts.

Each member was able to access \$2,500 to put towards Hope, Culture and Strength in their own community; Council members played an active helping role during the National #HopeForum Training in May 2020; and were able to come together for a two-day Hope Council gathering in Kananaskis, AB.

We send our thanks to former Hope Council members: Matthew Bombardier, ON; Jaylene Delorme-Buggins, NT; Jaime Fortin, ON; Adriana Suzanna, NL; Dakota Laliberte, SK; Jukipa Kotierk, NU; Josh Crawley, ON; Taylor Behn, YT; Chelsea Currie, AB.



Hope Council Highlights:



Film screening and discussion in
Chapleau Cree First Nation, ON
facilitated by Jaime Fortin



Youth day-gathering in
Yellowknife, NT facilitated by
Jaylene Delorme-Buggins

"My time as a Hope Council member helped me to grow as an individual and allowed me to feel active as a Mi'kmaq woman. I connected with so many amazing individuals, many of whom remain close to me and for that I am forever grateful."

- Adriana Suzanne, Hope Council member 2018-2019



National Ambassadors of Hope

The National Ambassadors of Hope program was created in response to the high and increasing demand and need for We Matter's Indigenous youth-specific mental health and life promotion workshops, presentations and resources. As a small team, We Matter did not have the capacity to be continuously travelling cross-country to deliver in-person sessions while maintaining our day-to-day operations and general outreach. We also wanted to be able to train, support and amplify the incredible young Indigenous changemakers across the country to be the ones sharing messages of hope, culture and strength with their own peers and communities. This led to the development of a mentorship program, completely focused on strengths-based Indigenous youth-to-Indigenous youth support. 2019/2020 saw the launch of the first National Ambassadors of Hope program pilot year.

National Ambassadors of Hope are First Nations, Inuit and Métis youth ages 16-26 who share messages of hope, culture and strength within their own community and surrounding region.

Using We Matter Toolkits, and with support from the We Matter team, they deliver presentations on hardship, hope, and healing across schools and communities. They live by example in order to inspire and connect with other Indigenous youth, break mental health and suicide stigma, and promote healthy communities.

National Ambassadors of Hope

- Attend a week-long National #HopeForum Training in order to equip them with the skills, knowledge, confidence and support needed to become We Matter Ambassadors;
- Deliver presentations and sharing sessions in communities, schools, centres, and gatherings within their region;
- Encourage others in becoming comfortable to use We Matter Toolkits to start discussions on hardship, hope and healing;



- Are equipped with the materials, resources, swag, and support from We Matter needed for sharing messages of hope, culture and strength;
- Participate in regular check-ins and Monthly Meetups throughout the year;
- Connect, share, and build relationships with each other;
- Are active and visible helpers, leaders, and changemakers; and
- Are mentored throughout the year, staying in touch regularly with the We Matter team and fellow youth Ambassadors



2019

The first year of the National Ambassadors of Hope program was a huge success, with amazing connections made nationally. A timeline of the year was as follows:

March 2019

National callout for the first cohort of Ambassadors received 46,000 views

03

April 2019

34 Indigenous youth ages 16-26 from almost every region (provinces & territories) were selected as the first Ambassadors of Hope

04

May 2019

34 Ambassadors travelled to Winnipeg, MB for the 5-day We Matter & Facebook #HopeForum: National Ambassadors of Hope Training where they got to know each other and participate in over 20 reflection, workshop and training sessions

05

June 2019 through March 2020

32 Ambassadors continued to stay connected, with 20 extremely engaged Ambassadors leading Hope, Culture, Strength Sessions across the country

06

2020

March 2020 through May 2020

Due to COVID-19, Ambassadors shifted from in-person engagements to supporting outreach and positive messaging online

03

May 2020

A year-end reflection and wrap-up celebration took place via Zoom, thanking non-returning Ambassadors for their commitment to the past year

04

05

Impact

35

presentations and workshops delivered by National Ambassadors of Hope across 28 communities

OVER

1,100

youth reached nationally through Ambassador engagements



ADDITIONAL

500+

students reached in We Matter School Workshops supported by Ambassadors with 2 communities in crisis

Ambassador Successes

"The organizer wants me to come back for more presentations and invited me to attend the class' graduation!"



"When looking at people they were listening, and emotional and I could tell that I had their attention."



"The students welcoming me into their space and respecting me, they don't get presentations much like the school it meant a lot that they welcomed me in and trusted me."

Ambassador Areas of Growth

"Having more engagement with the different topics, encouraging more dialogue and conversation with the youth instead of preaching or talking at them."

“Thinking about the youth and their comfort levels. Didn’t realize how uncomfortable they might be with the age ranges for example. What is more comfortable with us vs what’s more comfortable for them.”

“Looking into the community beforehand, asking questions about the community, community strengths and supports. Making the time afterwards for discussion and to stay back and talk to people or answer questions.”

Indigenous youth connecting with Indigenous youth!

Had an amazing time in Winnipeg with amazing people! **We Matter** that was a life changing week. I got to meet so many indigenous youth who are so proud to be who they are and their culture. I got to learn about other indigenous traditions and how important our mental health is. I was so sad I had to leave during the photos and I wanted to leave quietly because I would of cried saying bye to everyone ahaha

This week has been an internal spiritual awakening for me, I no longer feel so lost and drained. Was losing sight of who I was, what I wanted to be, and where I wanted to go in life. I’ve made many new relationships with strong minded youth who all think alike. I’m excited to continue and strengthen our work for our indigenous youth. I wanna thank all the Hope Ambassadors for making this experience a new beginning to a great story, see you all very soon.

Merci ❤️❤️❤️❤️





I'm super grateful to represent my community and to bring hope in my region in Northern Ontario. I met wonderful indigenous leaders here and I am happy that I made friends with them. I want to bring Hope to my community and to help Indigenous youth thrive in life. This is my calling and I am meant to make a difference in people's lives. My goal is to make an impact in everyone's lives. What hope means to me is: There's more to come. Lessons and good stuff ❤️

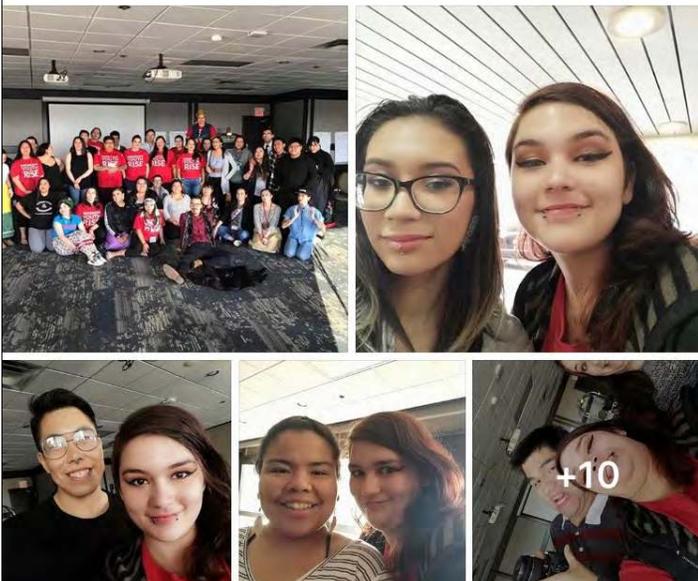
And so the **#hopeforum2019** is over
 This week was more than I had hoped for, the love and compassion that surrounded me was astounding and I'm gonna miss u all so much!! After all the loss and pain we've gone thru in our lives, it's so amazing to now have this community that we built together and know that where ever we go in Canada, we'll have someone there
 This was definitely a huge highlight in my life and a fantastic opportunity. I love my new hope ambassador family, what an unforgettable experience ❤️❤️❤️
#ambassadorsofhope #wematter

This week has been life changing, sitting in circle with such strong brothers and sisters.

To my fellow ambassadors, I love you, thank you for your stories, your knowledge, your friendship, your kindness... ❤️❤️🦋🦋

This week was everything I needed to reconnect with my purpose, you all make me stronger. I pray you all have a safe journey home, stay connected, stay close.... we need each other with what we're taking up.... at times it's going to be a lot but we can do it!

**#WEMATTER #HOPEAMBASSADORS
 #HOPEFORUM #INDIGENOUSYOUTHRISEUP**



To learn more about the first National Ambassadors of Hope Program year, [check out the program storybook.](#)

The Grizzlies Partnership

In 2019, We Matter was approached by Hello Cool World on behalf of The Grizzlies movie to partner on outreach to Indigenous youth and communities in a safe way. The movie shares the story of Kugluktuk, Nunavut - an Inuit community that went from having one of the highest suicide rates to one where youth voices came together to create change in the community for years to come, through the power of sport.

With a grant from the Inspirit Foundation, We Matter was able to purchase a DVD for each Ambassador in order to be able to host screenings and discussions with youth, schools and communities. [A special Ambassadors Grizzlies Screening Toolkit](#) was developed in partnership with Hello Cool World, in order to support youth to use the movie to facilitate important conversation on hardship, hope and healing in addition Hope, Culture, Strength Sessions.

11 screenings were hosted between December and March!



Ontario Support Network

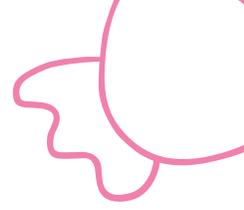
The Ontario Support Network (OSN) was a grassroots pilot program started in 2018 in partnership with the Ontario Trillium Foundation's Youth Opportunities Fund. The OSN built deeper partnerships between us and a select number of northern Ontario communities and deeper relationships between youth and their supports across communities. It was supported by youth-led Community Teams bringing conversations of hardship, hope and healing to their schools and communities and developing mental health and life promotion projects.

The program shifted from a year-long program to a program that supports community teams on a project-by-project basis. We also shifted from distributing \$2,500 on a yearly basis to Community Teams to between \$500-\$2,000 on a project basis. This shift was in response to the realization that the level of crisis that still exists in communities restricted communities to engage in a yearlong program that requires consistent involvement throughout the year. Alternatively, a project-by-project basis allows communities to commit to projects when they are able, setting them up for success.



Community Teams made up of at least two Indigenous Youth Ambassadors ages 15-26 and a Community Guide (adult mentor) applied to implement a life promotion project in their community with the support and mentorship from We Matter. Selected youth-led teams, or Community Teams, then:

- Received funds to lead their project;
- Worked with an adult mentor and community resource who supported them in running the project;



- Connected with other youth-led teams through a Facebook group to share and learn; and
- Had the opportunity to host a We Matter Hope, Culture, Strength Session in their community.

2019 saw visits and connections with Atikameksheng First Nation and Whitefish River First Nation, as well as a partnered gathering with Feather Carriers in Wyebridge, ON. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, the 2019 Community Team projects that were being planned to take place in the Spring were cut short. We Matter also made the decision to halt the Ontario Support Network, in order to transition it into a national grant program where we will be able to have a larger and more sustainable impact. Dependent on the state of COVID-19 across the country, our National Mini-Grant hopes to launch in 2020.

Check out the links here to learn more about the [2018/2019](#) and [2019/2020](#) Ontario Support Network years!



Moving forward

It has been another incredibly busy year of growth for We Matter, as we work to create spaces of support for Indigenous youth to connect with each other, learn from their strengths, and come into their power as role models and changemakers. During this critical time in the world, it is so important that we funnel time, mentorship and resources into shaping generations of young people who know how much they really do matter, to us, and to the future. With greater team capacity and ongoing support, We Matter hopes to transition from the grow and build phase to the sustain phase, where we can continue to adapt, learn, and amplify the voices of Indigenous young people everywhere.

Team & Acknowledgments

We Matter would like to say Mār̄si Cho / Gila'kasla / Chi Miigwetch / Thank You for believing in a world where Indigenous youth live and thrive.



Special thanks to our friends, partners, and sponsors:

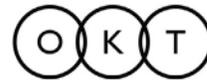
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