



**Miziwe Biik Aboriginal Employment and Training** **AGM 2022**

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Miziwe Biik acknowledges financial and in-kind support and contributions from the following:

ALFDC  
 Indigenous Services Canada  
 Service Canada  
 Employment and Social Development Canada  
 Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development  
 Ministry of Indigenous Affairs  
 Employment Ontario  
 Ontario Trillium Foundation  
 City of Toronto  
 United Way  
 Toronto Foundation

## MIZIWE BIIK BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**President** Krystal Abotossaway  
**Vice President** Michael White  
**Secretary** Jimmy Dick

## MIZIWE BIIK STAFF

### MIZIWE BIIK ADMINISTRATION

*Executive Director*  
 Nancy Martin  
*Human Resources Manager*  
 Lillian Wesley  
*Social Media Communications Specialist*  
 Adam Oakes

### EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

*Employment Services Manager*  
 Vickie Labranche  
*Employment Consultant*  
 Ruby Dreger  
*Data Coordinator*  
 Christine M. Smith  
*Employment Administrative Assistant*  
 Melynda Kakepetum  
*Job Developer*  
 Michael Buckland  
*Employment Advisor*  
 Lisa Shawana  
*Employment Advisor*  
 Ashley McGregor  
*Receptionist*  
 Raiden Laford

### PROJECTS DEPARTMENT

*Project Officer*  
 Ashley Boakye  
*Project Officer*  
 Christy Martin  
*Project Officer Assistant*  
 Denise Kimewon  
**PRE-APPRENTICESHIPS & SKILLED TRADES**  
*Special Projects Manager*  
 Vickie Labranche  
*Special Projects Administrator - Construction Trades*  
 Andrew Robinson

### ESSENTIAL SKILLS PROGRAM

*Coordinator/Facilitator- Training*  
 Brenna Lafrance  
*Facilitator*  
 Katharine Tippenskum  
*Coordinator / Facilitator- Operations*  
 Nicole Hare  
**NGINDAASMIN ACADEMIC UPGRADING**  
*Academic Upgrading Instructor*  
 Tim Millan

## Our Vision

Miziwe Biik is committed to assisting all persons of Aboriginal ancestry to attain a better quality of life. We believe that community needs and aspirations are paramount. We are committed to strengthening the community through partnerships that promote equality and self reliance. We will provide training and employment opportunities in a supportive environment in which people can affirm their Aboriginal identities and develop to their fullest potential. We are committed to the belief that it is through traditional and cultural values, practices and resources that we will reclaim our destiny.

## Our Mission

Our mission is to provide services to the Aboriginal peoples in the Greater Toronto Area; to work with employers to secure employment opportunities; to deliver federal and provincial programs; and, promote Aboriginal entrepreneurship and the development of our economies. We will work with individuals, other agencies and groups to provide these services and achieve our mission.



Jim Windigo, a respected Ojibway Elder gave us our name. Miziwe Biik is like a body of water where a ripple effect has been created; it is the ability to reach out and make positive change in the lives of the Aboriginal peoples across the Greater Toronto Area

167 - 169 Gerrard Street East. Toronto, Ontario M5A 2E4 Tel.: 416.591.2310 Fax: 416.591.3602

Registered Charity No. 863056719RR0001

### COVER

Elder and Board Member Jimmy Dick, visioning a bright future for the community and for Miziwe Biik. The angle design on the right mimics the construction design of the new training institute.



**KRYSTAL  
ABOTOSSAWAY**  
President

Aanii Community members!

We've come to a point when we need to stop and pat ourselves on the back. As a community we've persevered through an unprecedented time in our history. As Indigenous People our cultural practices and traditions have provided us with a strengthened resolve to move forward. More than ever we've come to rely on our family members, our organizations, our co-workers and our partners. I would like to personally acknowledge our clients who have remained confident in our efforts to serve their training and employment needs. I would also like to thank our staff and our Executive Director who have delivered exceptional programs and services under adverse conditions, and our funding partners, such as the Aboriginal Labour Force Development Group (ALFDC) and Service Canada, for their confidence and support.

Despite being held to COVID restrictions in the workplace in order to protect the well-being of our clients and staff, we have maintained successful digital access programs and have begun to introduce in-person client counselling through appointments. Through collaboration and hard work we have arrived at a pragmatic formula for connecting with our clients, engaging with 1,091 individuals this past year, finding employments for 362 of them, and assisting many others who were self-employed or entered training and study programs. The number of clients that we serve is expected to more than double when we move into our additional space in the West Donlands. The Miziwe Biik Training Institute will offer a hands-on carpentry workshop, tutoring classrooms, a business incubator and other multi-purpose training spaces for programming and gatherings, as well as a childcare and family centre.

With strong growth in the residential and commercial building sectors, Miziwe Biik trainees are poised to move confidently into an economy recovering from the pandemic. In the past year, in partnership with the Skilled Trades College, we were able to place a number of students in actual classrooms and on sites, for Electrical/Plumbing and Intro to home Renovation courses. This was one of our first programs to disconnect from an exclusively Zoom training environment.

Like most of you, I am eager to see what the next year will bring in terms of employment and training trends. Regardless of what those might be, Miziwe Biik's staff, Executive and Board will rise to challenges and respond to opportunities.

Respectfully  
Krystal Abotossaway



**NANCY  
MARTIN**  
Executive Director

Good afternoon,

Together we've come through another year of uncertainty, when we've had to proceed cautiously with the delivery of services and programs under sustained COVID protocols. Regardless of the obstacles, the Indigenous community of Toronto remained steadfast in its pursuit of worthwhile employment and career training.

For the first part of the year, most training still happened online, and opportunities to work remotely were favoured. Miziwe Biik continued to provide its clients with the necessary technological tools to remain engaged and connected while transitioning to digital work environments. I have to thank the staff at Miziwe Biik for rising to the challenge of delivering online and in person services during this time, and ensuring that our clients continued to achieve positive work and training outcomes. We are hugely grateful for the services of the Native Men's Residence and Anishnawbe Health, that have provided ongoing testing and vaccination to all of our youth, families, and seniors. Megwetch! They have kept the community healthy and safe, allowing us to continue to pursue our goals and dreams.

One area which seems to be recovering faster is the trades. Some students have returned to on-site training programs and most construction projects in the City have resumed work. This resurgence is timely as Miziwe Biik enters the final building phase of the Miziwe Biik Training Institute.

The ground breaking ceremony for the Training Institute took place on June 21, 2021 (see photo on page 6). Partners from the future Indigenous Hub stood side by side to officially launch the ambitious project that will provide expanded health, wellness and training services to the City's Indigenous community. All levels of government, the United Way and generous donors from the Toronto Foundation have contributed to the site, which will also be the home of a City of Toronto daycare and an Early ON Child and Family program. The new facility will have a state-of-the-art carpentry workshop and comprehensive in-house training programs that will lead to increased employment opportunities.

As we look forward to a bright future, we hope to see all of you back at our Miziwe Biik offices and, soon, at our Training Institute!

In Friendship  
Nancy Martin

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

## Miziwe Biik Aboriginal Employment and Training

Miziwe Biik is overseen by an elected Indigenous Board of Directors with the Executive Director reporting to the board. Our current board members are:



### **KRYSTAL ABOTOSSAWAY**

#### **President**

Krystal Abotossaway is from Aundeck Omni-Kaning First Nations and Chippewas of Rama First Nations. She is an urban Ojibwe Anishinaabe Kwe. Krystal is a well sought after expert, speaker and leader on Indigenous engagement. As Senior Manager at TD Bank, she is currently rotating through the various centre of excellences within the HR function. Providing strategic counsel, execution support, and collaborating across internal teams and external partners. Krystal has successfully completed her Masters degree at York University in Human Resource Management.

As the President of the Indigenous Professional Association of Canada she is helping to redefine the agenda and identify new measures for advancing the opportunities for and the capabilities of Canada's Indigenous Peoples.

Krystal is recognized across Canada--in the media and within the broader Indigenous community--as an expert spokesperson for bridging strategies that will enable more Indigenous youth to achieve their aspirations and dreams. Her

thought leadership in advancing Human Resources knowledge on Indigenous engagement is informed by her academic background and ongoing leadership roles on multiple Boards in the GTA.



### **MICHAEL WHITE**

#### **Vice-President**

Michael White, Bear Clan, M'Chigeeng First Nation. Michael has served on the Miziwe Biik board for over thirteen years. Michael has his Masters of Education in Urban Indigenous Issues from York University and an Honours B.A from the University of Toronto. Currently Michael serves as the Director of First Nations House Indigenous Student Service at the University of Toronto. In his spare time, Michael serves the community as a ceremonial conductor.



### **JIMMY DICK, Secretary**

From Moose Cree First Nation and the community of Moose Factory Ontario, Jimmy is fluent in the Cree language and is a Teacher/Educator on Native Culture and Spirituality. Jimmy has been actively involved in the Toronto Indigenous community since moving to the city in 1975. Jimmy is well known as a member of the Eagleheart Singers drum group who have been based in Toronto for the past twenty seven years. Jimmy has been a community organizer for many years involved in the Native Rights Struggle. He has been a guest speaker and elder at a number of international conferences on Indigenous culture and rights. He is an active volunteer in the Toronto Native Community and served as a board member with various agencies.



Red Works Photography

## PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

### Career and Employment Counselling Services:

- Resume/Cover Letter Writing
- Interviewing Skills
- Mock Interviews
- Job Board
- Self-Assessment Tool
- Personality Dimensions

### Employment Resource Centre Services:

- Virtual one-on-one with Employment Specialist
- Employment Advisor In Person Meetings By Appointment Only (Booked in Advance)
- Local Community Information Services
- Educational Information and Supports
- Computers/Internet
- Toronto Labour Market Information
- Second Career Information Sessions

### Employment Placement Services:

- Job Board
- Local Indigenous Organization postings
- National Indigenous Employment Opportunities
- Referrals to Employment Opportunities
- Canada Ontario Grant Program (COJG)
- Employment Insurance Work Placements
- Summer Career Placement
- Personal Support Worker Program

### Funding Services:

- Service Canada/Employment Ontario
- Client Driven Training Projects
- Community Project Training Available
- Advocacy for Employment, Education, Housing
- Ontario Works

167 GERRARD ST. E. TORONTO, ONTARIO M5A 2E4 • (416) 591-2310

[reception@miziwebiik.com](mailto:reception@miziwebiik.com)

From left: Pete Keshane, Healer; Andre Morriseau, Chair, Anishnawbe Health Foundation (AHT); Stephen Diamond, Chair, Waterfront Toronto; Mayor John Tory, City of Toronto; Joe Hester, Executive Director, AHT; **Nancy Martin, Executive Director, Miziwe Biik**; Marian Jacko, President, AHT; Parliamentary Assistant MPP Robin Martin; Ken Tanenbaum, Vice-Chair of Kilmer Group.



**ERC Department** L-R Melynda Kakepetum, Ashley McGregor, Raiden Laford, Lisa Shawana, Christine M. Smith, Michael Buckland (see page 32), Ruby Dreger (absent)



**Essential Skills Program** L-R Brenna Lafrance, Nicole Hare, Katharine TIPPENESKUM

# EMPLOYMENT RESOURCE CENTRE SERVICES ERC

The Miziwe Biik Employment Resource Centre (ERC) is the first stop for First Nations/Inuit/Métis clients in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) to access a wide range of employment and training services, resources and supports. The ERC was extremely busy throughout 2021 despite its employees continuing to work remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and has remained active.

We welcomed Raiden Laford as our new receptionist, Mike Buckland has moved from an Employment Advisor to the Job Developer position here in the ERC, and Ruby Dreger is continuing at Miziwe Biik as a facilitator/consultant.

Our services have continued to be in high demand and the Employment Advisors caseloads of clients looking for and/or obtaining work continues to grow from month to month. We provide effective career exploration tools that increase one's employment skills knowledge as well as assist with career decision making. Some of the services we offer to our more self-sufficient jobseekers are monthly workshops through the Employment Ontario Program.

Despite the ongoing pandemic, the ERC still offers a hybrid mix of online workshops. These workshops include Mental Health First Aid, Food Handlers and First Aid/CPR. We now also include Microsoft training in Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Web Design.

Our job seekers have skills that are in demand and adding new training workshops and programs has helped Miziwe Biik become even more important to the Indigenous community of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).

Through the ERC, Miziwe Biik runs the Canada Ontario Job Grant Program which is an employer

driven program offered by Employment Ontario This is a cost share program that assists employers from different job sectors to enhance the skills of their existing staff and/or incumbents. Alongside the ERC Manager Vickie Labranche, our Data Coordinator Christine M Smith was able to support a diverse group of employers and their employees with acquiring new skills, that will help further their skills in their current positions.

Here in the Employment Resource Centre, everyone would like to congratulate all of our clients who have taken the opportunity to enhance their skills and have taken the opportunity to register and complete our online workshops and webinars. We also congratulate all clients who were able to obtain employment despite the obstacles that were presented to us all over the last two years of COVID-19, including summer students who obtained positions with a variety of organizations in the GTA.

In the ERC, we are slowly moving back to work in the office but when the office becomes open to the public, we will all be excited to see everyone in person again!

## **Essential Skills Program**

Our newly launched Essential Skills Program has been really successful. This training program provides the tools and resources to assist participants with the Nine Essential Skills which include Reading, Document Use, Numeracy, Writing, Oral Communication, Working with Others, Digital Technology and Continuous Learning.

As soon as a participant completes the twelve week training program, they have the opportunity to apply for an Administrative Trainee position with the City of Toronto.

# PRE-APPRENTICESHIP AND SKILLED TRADES

## CARPENTRY PRE-APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING PROGRAM

The Carpentry Pre-Apprenticeship Training Program provides unemployed and underemployed Aboriginal people extensive training in General Carpentry to meet and surpass the trades' requirements. They receive certification in health and safety which include First Aid & CPR, WHMIS and Working at Heights. Clients will complete the 12-week Intro to Home Renovation Program with Skilled Trades College of Canada. Finally, the client will complete an 8-week paid work placement.

## CONSTRUCTION CRAFT WORKER PROGRAM

In partnership with LIUNA Local 183 Training Centre, Miziwe Biik offered an 8-week program in October 2021. The Construction Craft Worker Program is an extremely versatile program that offers the trainee the capacity to work in a variety of sectors and construction fields. The program covers a broad base of skills, including form setting, scaffolding and

concrete placement. Some of the tasks completed by CCW trainees included erecting and dismantling concrete forms, scaffolding, ramps, catwalks, shoring and barricades, all of which are present on small and large construction sites.

## ELECTRICAL / PLUMBING / INTRO TO HOME RENOVATIONS PROGRAMS

In partnership with the Skilled Trades College of Canada, Miziwe Biik offered apprentice training in Electrical, Plumbing and Intro to Home Renovations. The programs offered both theory and hands on installations and processes.

The Electrical Program outlines: Basic Electrical Theory, Intro to Electrical Safety, Code, Intro to Blueprint Reading, and Residential, Commercial & Condominium Installations.

The Plumbing Program outlines: Intro to Plumbing Code, Intro to Blueprints, Fixture Installation, Maintenance Repair & Procedures, and Installation

Procedures for Different Types of Pipes.

Intro to Home Renovations outlines: Work Site Safety, Intro to Concrete and Forming, Framing, Insulation and Drywall, Electrical and Plumbing, Flooring Installation, Tools Measurements, Prints and Intro to Ontario Building Code.

Graduates of these programs receive the skills, training and experience needed to make them the most sought-after apprentices in their field. Graduates are viewed as qualified, competent and accomplished with the practical hands-on training they needed. There were numerous clients who completed all 3 of the programs-Electrical, Plumbing, and Intro to Home Renovations.

## PERSONAL SUPPORT WORKER PROGRAM

In partnership with Marca College, Miziwe Biik offered three cohorts of the 32-week Personal Support Worker Program (PSW). The PSW Program provides clients with skills and competencies in a variety of clinical and interactive areas required for employment in the health care field. The program is completely online for 24 weeks of the program and the remaining 8 weeks there is a Practical Job Experience and Internship Placement at a health care facility. In order to graduate from the PSW program, students must successfully pass the National Association of Career Colleges Board Exam.



Pre-Apprenticeship and Skilled Trades L-R Vickie Labranche, Andrew Robinson



Miziwe Biik Graduates from Skilled Trades College. Some of the Graduates designed and made their own Ribbon Skirts for the special day.



# NGINDAASMIN

## Academic Upgrading Program

The academic upgrading department at Miziwe Biik has continued to support clients with academic services from our Ontario College of Teachers certified secondary school teacher throughout the pandemic.

Supports include: helping clients prepare and register for the General Education Development test (GED); intake of clients seeking their high school diploma; assessing transcripts and registering clients for Independent Learning Centre (ILC) high school credit courses required to graduate; supporting clients' academic needs as they work through the course material; liaising with ILC and advocating for clients' individual and unique needs for both the GED test and ILC courses; helping parents with resources to support their children's learning during the pandemic; academic support for clients who are enrolled in trades and college

programs. Throughout the year, clients have also been provided with the tools they need to be successful including laptops, cell phones and textbooks.

In the last year almost half of clients who register with Miziwe Biik and are seeking academic support have come to us with the goal of getting their credits to graduate high school. This is an increasing trend that has continued since Miziwe Biik began offering this service just before the start of the pandemic.

As we safely transition back to supporting clients' academic needs in person with limited office hours of 10 am to 3 pm Monday to Thursday clients can continue to seek support online 8:30 am to 4:30 pm Monday to Friday through our online academic support portal

## Employment Essentials Program

In partnership with the City of Toronto (Ontario Works) Miziwe Biik offers a six-week program that will provide tools and resources to assist participants with job searching, career exploration, resumes and cover letters, and finding their next steps. This program covers True Colours and

Essential Skills, Communication Skills, Career Exploration, Life Skills and Self-Management, Job Search Tools, and Career Awareness and Research. Two cohorts have completed the program so far and the next program will take place in October 2022.

## Self-Employment and Entrepreneurship

The Self-Employment Program is for individuals looking to gain insight into building their own personal business. In this program, clients are guided by a business mentor as they navigate the process of writing a business plan. They will have

various workshops on Self-Employment Readiness as well. This program is offered quarterly. Three cohorts have completed the program and the next program will be in October 2022.

# MIZIWE BIIK ADMINISTRATION

The administrative department functions internally at Miziwe Biik as a support to all departments which include the Employment Resource Centre, the Projects Department, Academic Upgrading program and Carpentry Pre-Apprenticeship and Skilled Trades Program.

Their primary responsibilities include:

- Maintaining and fostering positive, productive and respectful working relationships within Miziwe Biik
- Supporting and promoting the goals set out by Miziwe Biik's mission and vision statement
- Ensuring that the goals and objectives of the organization are adhered to
- Ensuring the growth and success of Miziwe Biik

**Executive Director.** The Executive Director manages the overall operation of Miziwe Biik. Under the direction of the Board of Directors,

the ED manages the operations in a manner that promotes and fosters positive relations within the organization.

**Human Resources.** The Human Resources Manager is responsible for providing support in various functions, which include recruitment, staffing, training and development, wellness, safety and performance monitoring. Human Resources also oversees all aspects of the practices and processes that contribute to the efficient operation of Miziwe Biik.

**Finance.** The Finance Manager ensures that the financial health and well-being of the organization is maintained. The Finance Manager administers the organizations annual budget and ensures compliance with spending guidelines by all staff. They are responsible for overall financial planning and cash flow and financial management of Miziwe Biik. They prepare all financial documentation for the Annual Audit and Annual General Meeting.

# Miziwe Biik SUCCESS STORIES

## 2022



# STACEY bowe

Stacey Bowe is an Ojibwe woman who grew up primarily in Toronto's Regent Park. She remains connected to the community, despite relocating to nearby Moss Park during the process of tear-down and revitalization which began over 15 years ago. The diverse areas in which she grew up and the one in which she now lives have a large Indigenous population. In the summer, when she is able, she visits her home community of Sucker Creek First Nation for family get-togethers.

Stacey has many interests, and she credits Miziwe Biik with helping her attain her goals. Though her primary interest is to become a Personal Support Worker (PSW), she has taken a wide range of courses to guide her forward.

Stacey has worked in a variety of jobs. She has done customer service, been a taxi dispatcher, has worked as a cashier at Sobeys, and has cleaned offices. Miziwe Biik workshops gave her the opportunity to expand on her skill set even further. She has taken CPR, WHMIS, SmartServe, and Food Handlers. She has also participated in resume and cover letter workshops at Miziwe Biik.

Most recently, Stacey enrolled in the Employment Essentials program and obtained an administrative job with the City of Toronto as a Waste Management Trainee. When her contract ended with the City, she applied right away for a position at the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto (NCCT) She was successful and accepted a position at the Centre's busy reception desk, which greets a variety of visitors and program attendees, community and government representatives attending meetings, and shoppers looking for craft and cultural items at the Cedar Basket gift shop.

Stacey believes that by attending cultural events such as socials, she is helping to educate herself more about the history and culture of Toronto's urban Indigenous community and its families. This in turn will enable her to eventually help and guide others in a process of discovery and well-being. Central to achieving this goal is the landing a more permanent job in the Personal Support Worker (PSW) field. To make that happen, she will be taking a 7-month PSW course at Medix College, once her contract ends at the Native Centre in March of 2023.

Stacey is very grateful for the help she has received through Miziwe Biik and other community agencies.





# MICHAEL skura

Michael Skura is Métis and can trace his ancestry back to St. Boniface, Manitoba, the historical centre of the French-Canadian and Métis communities in Western Canada

Since 1991, he has resided north of Toronto, travelling into the city on practical and experiential journeys in pursuit of his educational and personal interests.

It was while taking a course called "Prospects and Perils of the 21st Century", that he became interested in Disaster and Emergency Management. Though an introductory course, it opened his eyes to the disastrous effects of global warming and climate change. He had glimpsed at our future environment and, eventually, a passionate career path.

Michael's interest in global warming and climate change motivated him to explore the field in more depth. He successfully applied to York University, eventually earning a Bachelor degree in Disaster and Emergency Management. Michael was intrigued to approach disaster and emergency management from the perspective of Indigenous peoples as the caretakers of Creation and the environment. He was particularly interested in the application of Indigenous traditions and social protocols in relation to emergency response planning and crisis communication.

On his education and work journey, Michael connected with Miziwe Biik through referrals from his four older siblings, who have all accessed services at the centre. Miziwe Biik provided Michael support in a number of different areas, including a new job start up, which provided financing for clothes, shoes and equipment relevant to subsequent work positions. Michael also received post-secondary bursaries and apprenticeship support and training in the skilled trades.

Beyond its practical programs, Michael also relied on Miziwe Biik for its other less quantifiable services. According to Michael: "It was a good place for me to visit while in school because it was a safe haven that provided me with support and reassurance in my weakest of times." He also sought cultural support through community events, where he was inspired by the successes and the perseverance of other Indigenous people.

Michael is now living his dream and is working at Emergency Management Ontario in the Indigenous Emergency Management Programs Unit. It is the type of position that, despite his earlier efforts, seemed unavailable to him after he graduated from York. After filling in time in a factory position, and learning new skilled trades, he was able to obtain important inter-governmental affairs work at Metrolinx and the Métis Nation of Ontario. He believes that it was that added level of experience that made him a more desirable candidate for advanced employment.

In his current position, Michael has had the opportunity to learn about the challenges of creating plans and responses specific to First Nation communities, who are often under-resourced. Michael would like to continue to advance in his position and arrive at the point where he can share his skills and knowledge, and pay forward the support that he has received over the years. He wants to be part of a new narrative that focuses on Indigenous prosperity, success and opportunities in Ontario and Canada.

# CHRISTA enever

Christa Enever is Ojibwe - her grandmother's home community was Whitefish River. Christa happened upon Miziwe Biik Aboriginal Employment and Training when she was driving along Gerrard Street with a friend, noticing the building with the distinctive Indigenous mural and logo.

Christa is a high school graduate who loves to do jigsaw puzzles in her spare time. That same level of concentration and patience served her well in her previous work as a front-end cashier for Loblaws. During that period, she also worked as a relief caregiver for the Catholic Children's Aid Society.

According to Christa: "I spent half of my life in a system where society felt that I wouldn't amount to anything because I was a foster kid. These days my only goal is to be better than the day before, to always be the best version of myself and, no matter what work I do, that I always give 110%."

Miziwe Biik entered Christa's life when, after 15 years, she finally left her cashier position. She simply had enough playing with the same puzzle pieces every day, so to speak. Following that decisive break, she did everything she could to remain in the workforce, as social assistance was not an option for her. She started off by diving into the many training programs that the Centre offers, including food handling and forklift operation. The real excitement began when she found out that she was eligible for the Carpentry Program in 2019. With its upgrading classes and the hands-on trades experience, she was well on the way to a new career.

Upon completion of the Carpentry Program, Christa entered a placement at the Furniture Bank. The Furniture Bank is a social enterprise which redistributes gently-used furniture and housewares from donors in the community to families and individuals experiencing furniture poverty. After the 8-week placement was completed, she was hired on full-time.

Christa is now the workshop Supervisor at the Furniture Bank and is being trained as its Director. She is in the process of completing challenging in-house administrative programs in preparation for her exciting promotion. We wish her all the best!



# AMBER salmond

Amber Salmond is Métis and Cree from the Michel First Nation located in Treaty Six territory in Alberta. She came to Toronto 20 years ago in a whirlwind romance with her late partner. He worked as music agent and together, they had the privilege of working with many talented Indigenous artists. Her interests in art, culture and music have helped her to stay grounded in tradition and connected with her heritage. Providing service to the community and improving the lives of other Indigenous people are projects she finds equally important while she follows her own path and defines her career aspirations.

Amber's most recent career was as a sales manager at a local winery, but when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, she was laid off and forced to explore other employment options. Miziwe Biik Aboriginal Employment and Training came into her life at a fortunate time. Accepted into its Essential Skills Office Administration Program in October 2021, she excelled in the confidence and skills building program.

Amber believes the skills and knowledge she acquired through the intensive program were instrumental in her obtaining a challenging position with the City of Toronto. She was able to secure a role with the Office of The Chief People Officer, People and Equity Division, which is entrusted with the City's people services/human resources, equity and human rights functions.

Amber enjoys all of the opportunities available in a large city like Toronto, but she tries to attend as many cultural events as she can because she also finds it difficult being away from her home community and family. She says, "having cultural supports and access to ceremony help keep me grounded and inspired."

Future goals for Amber include continuing to represent Indigenous voices and ideals through her public service with the City of Toronto. Through meaningful positions and good work, she aspires to foster a future of reconciliation, prosperity and respect for all citizens.



# EDIE LYNN

## assinewe

Edie Lynn heard about Miziwe Biik Aboriginal Employment and Training from her mom, who had previously accessed services through the centre. Miziwe Biik has helped Edie Lynn with monthly transportation support, books and supplies, a post-secondary bursary, and start-up funding. Miziwe Biik also funds student positions at various Indigenous organizations and government offices and Edie Lynn was able to participate in a City of Toronto Sports Leadership Program. Through the Program, she was able to secure finances allowing her to focus on her education. Added benefits were, as she stated, "a chance to gain valuable leadership skills and an opportunity to connect with the community in a meaningful way."

Other work experiences that Miziwe Biik facilitated for Edie Lynn included funded positions at Aboriginal Legal Services, ENAGB Indigenous Youth Agency, and the Native Canadian Centre's Cedar Basket gift shop. In addition, she has completed three summer internships at TD Insurance, and is currently in the Marketing Associate Program at TD Bank. Always busy, she is completing the TD Program while operating a small creative business, Assinewe Jewelry, with her twin sister ([assinewejewelry.ca](http://assinewejewelry.ca)).

Edie Lynn believes that attending community cultural events has helped her to strengthen her connections to community and gain traditional knowledge. According to Edie Lynn: "Since I started my small business, attending community cultural events as a vendor has been vital. It helps me to not only connect with the community, but also allows me to sell my products and network with other community members and artists. At some of the events, I am able to learn new skills (e.g. beading, mukluk making), which builds my artistry, but also helps me with my mental health and well-being."

Edie Lynn's future goals include gaining full-time employment in the Marketing Department at TD and continuing to grow her small business.





# ANNA eagle child

Anna Eagle Child comes from a mixed background, but affiliates herself with the Blood Tribe (Kainai First Nation) from southern Alberta. Her mother is Kainai and her father is from Vietnam. Though she was born and raised in Toronto, she says “growing up, we spent lots of summer vacationing and spending time with relatives in my home community.”

Anna’s educational background includes graduating with honours in 2012 from Seneca College with her Early Childhood Education diploma. She then worked with several child care centres, helping her gain important experience in the field. She has worked for Native Child and Family Services of Toronto at their child care centres, and has run parenting programs and worked as a family home visitor for the agency. Anna has also worked with Aboriginal Head Start, a community culture-based early intervention program.

After a year away in Calgary, Anna returned to Toronto to work as an Early Childhood Education supply teacher, until she had her son. Reflecting on the state of things with the arrival of the pandemic and gleaning all that she had learned from her child care work, she decided to prioritize her son over career advancement. Once she was ready to transition back to work, Anna reached out to Miziwe Biik, which she had heard about through Toronto’s Indigenous community.

With a new approach, job development and professional career assistance, Anna successfully applied for a Recruitment and Selection Coordinator position at Teach for Canada. Miziwe Biik’s extensive job board is an incredible resource for youth looking for their first jobs, as well as individuals looking for new careers or returning to the workforce. Through Anna’s new position, she is also contributing to Indigenous education by helping to place qualified educators in communities up North and across Canada. Her first hand experience with Indigenous curriculum and culture makes her an ideal candidate for assessing the qualifications of the prospective teachers.

Anna is grateful for the programs and services that she has been able to access through Miziwe Biik. The Centre has helped her to achieve the skills necessary to advance and make positive changes in her career path.

# Special Programs

## NABET PROGRAM

NABET 700-M UNIFOR is a union of film, television and new media technicians that has serviced the greater Toronto area for over 45 years. The union was formed in 1970 to provide video tape technicians, but later expanded to provide television and film technicians to Toronto's ever growing production industry.

The City of Toronto reached out to Miziwe Biik and NABET in 2021 with the goal of increasing Indigenous engagement in the film industry. Miziwe Biik was more than happy to work alongside NABET to put together a program that would prepare clients for transitioning into the film industry.

The Film Crew Training Program that grew out of the partnership with NABET 700-M UNIFOR and the City of Toronto currently has 10 clients in their program. The purpose of the film crew training program is to introduce clients to working behind the scenes in the Film Industry. The training that clients go through while in the program include Nabetiquette, Working at Heights, Aerial Lifting, Forklifting, Electrical Safety and teaches them how to operate generators, work on elevated work platforms, introduces construction, grip, electric, paint and set decoration and lastly participation in workshops such as First Aid/CPR, Mental Health First Aid, True Colours and Essential Skills.

The goal of the Film Crew Training Program is to offer opportunities to the Indigenous community to play an active role in creating Canadian Media. As part of the program, there has also been a

strong focus on soft skills. It is through learning soft skills that participants in the program learn the importance of punctuality, reliability, communication, teamwork and taking initiative.

Clients within the Film Crew Training Program are required to finish a requisite number of hours that will help them become a part of Permittee and a member of the Nabet 700-M Union. After clients finish 6 weeks of training, they are offered a placement on a film shoot to help them gain real world experience. Currently clients have successfully completed all the required training and are now working on creating resumes and cover letters to assist them with their placement assignments.

NABET covers several different departments within the film industry and allows clients to apply to 1 of 5 entry level positions that include construction-building sets, lighting-setting up lights, cables, power etc, grip-assembling and maintaining support equipment, paint set decoration.

It is upon completion of their placements that clients are eligible to apply for other departments within the film industry-costume, hair, special effects, continuity, labour, makeup, props, sound and transportation. The feedback from clients currently participating in NABET has been immensely positive with many clients enjoying the hands on components of the program and having the ability to develop valuable skills whether they are in the film industry or not.

## POV PROGRAM production assistant training program

The POV's Production Assistant Training Program is a skills-based training initiative delivered in partnership with the DGC that provides Indigenous youth with the practical knowledge and skills necessary for a Production Assistant. The program delivers specialist skills that are directly applicable to gaining employment as a Production Assistant.

The Production Assistant Training Program came about as a partnership with PoV and the City of Toronto. There was a desire to create a more inclusive environment within the film industry and provide equal opportunities for Indigenous participants. The City of Toronto is funding the program in partnership with Miziwe Biik and is coordinated by PoV.

The Production Assistant Training Program trained participants in the technical aspects of filmmaking through commercial, locations, set and office PA modules, and provided support in navigating the industry and the world of work as Indigenous professionals.

Training that is included in the program:

- True Colours
- Essential Skills

- Reading a Call Sheet
- Indigenous Identity in Film
- Grip and Electrical Workshop
- Onset Duties
- Production Paperwork
- Propane Safety
- Working with IATSE (The International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees)
- Building a Mock Set

Miziwe Biik has completed this program once and is currently in its second cohort. Many of the graduates from the first cohort are still working in the film industry and have launched successful careers. Participants have consistently attributed high value to the program, assigning benefits to the unique environment created by a Indigenous cohort. Not only was it important that all participants were Indigenous, the significance of having an Indigenous facilitator and a program format that aimed to centre the worldviews of Indigenous Peoples within a colonial sector was often noted.

# PROJECTS DEPARTMENT

The 2021/2022 fiscal year has brought forward many accomplishments for the Projects Department with clients completing training programs, workshops and securing employment. The Department consists of two Project Officers and an Assistant who work diligently as a team to ensure client needs are consistently met and ongoing budgets are continuously maintained.

We have a Project Officer who works to support individual requests such as Employment Assistance Support Measures (EASM) and Purchase of Training (POT). Through individual requests clients are supported in education, skills development and employment.

Additionally, our Project Officers are designated to building relationships with organizations located within the GTA. In partnership with these organizations, Miziwe Biik is able to support employment opportunities for clients through Miziwe Biik programs (Targeted Wage Subsidy, Self-Employment Assistance and Local Labour Market Partnerships). It is through working together as a community that Miziwe Biik is able to fulfill our vision and prepare clients for their journey into the workforce.

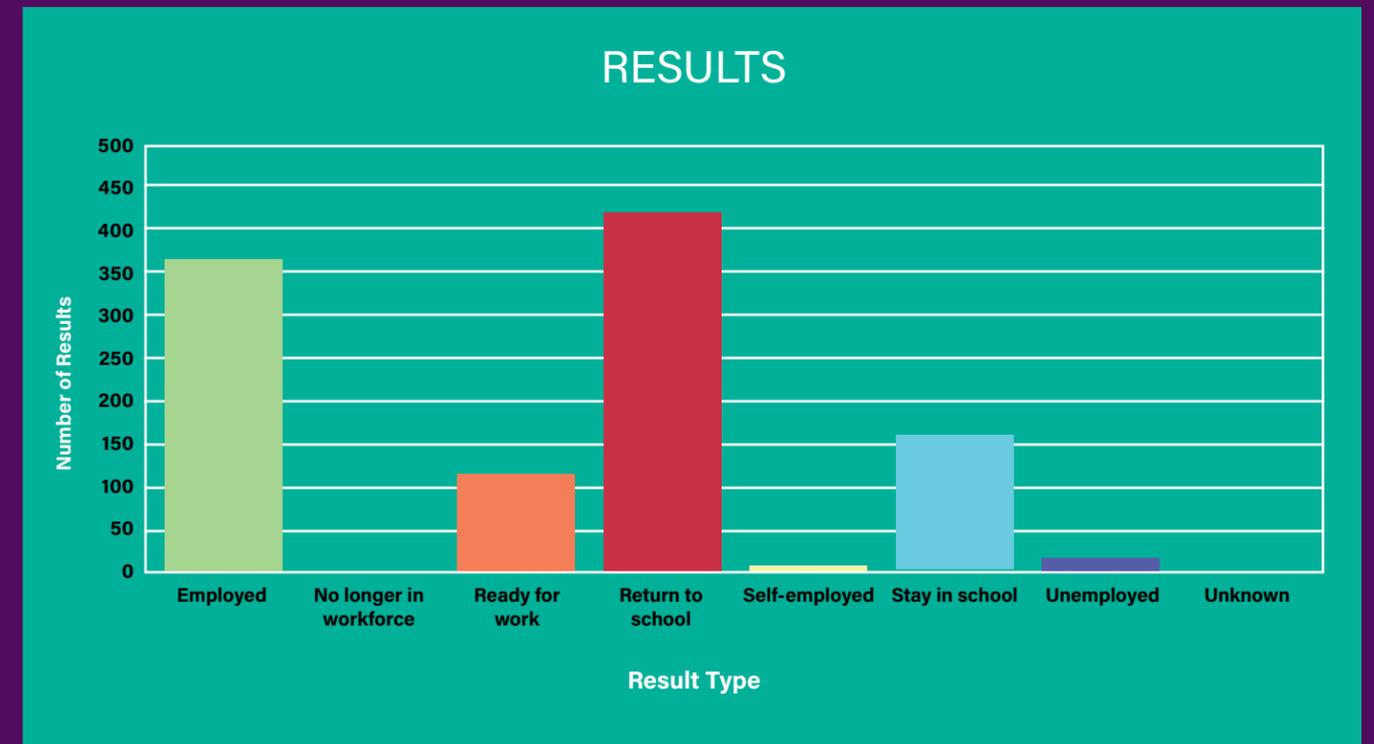
We thank all the organizations we work with, the diverse opportunities presented and training initiatives we successfully fulfill together.

## ISET Results Report 2020-2021

Results	Clients
Employed	362
No longer in workforce	0
Ready for work	114
Returned to School	417
Self-Employed	30
Stayed in school	155
Unemployed	18
Unknown	0



Projects Department L-R Denise Kimewon, Christy Martin, Ashley Boakye



## Miziwe Biik and the Aboriginal Labour Force Development Circle ALFDC

Miziwe Biik is a member of the Aboriginal Labour Force Development Circle (ALFDC).

The ALFDC is an umbrella organization for member First Nations and urban boards.

The ALFDC is the Aboriginal Human Resources Development Agreement holder between the First Nations and the Federal Government.

The ALFDC administers the funding, reports to Human Resources Development Canada, develops programs, policies and procedures for members, and lobbies for funding. The Board of Directors of the ALFDC is made up of representatives of the member First Nations and urban boards. Membership of the ALFDC is comprised of twelve First Nations and two urban boards. The ALFDC is chaired by Steve Williams.

Individual training is eligible to be taken at any recognized training institution/organization or delivered by an employer with on-the-job experience.

The type of programs and services offered are able to be adjusted to local situations and requirements, yet they must relate to both, a) the skills development interest of the individuals and b) current labour market needs.



Michael Buckland, Job Developer

### COMMUNITY OUTREACH

To compliment its online presence and the services of its employment consultants, Miziwe Biik maintains a visible profile in the community through its participation at job fairs, festivals and cultural events. Connect with us when you see us at an outdoor event or at a conference centre, it might be the start of a new training journey or career opportunity for you or one of your family members.

We look forward to seeing you!





**Miziwe Biik**

Aboriginal Employment and Training