



IPAC Board Handbook

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I. IPAC Overview

IPAC is an Indigenous, national, member-based non-profit organization and a registered charity. Founded in 1991, IPAC has a long history of supporting Indigenous physicians and medical learners through mentorship, advocacy and partnerships.

Our Beliefs and Values

IPAC's beliefs and values originate from communities, our ancestors and the traditional teachings found within our diverse Indigenous cultures. We believe that Indigenous peoples deserve the best health possible. We honour the wholistic view of health (body, mind, spirit and heart) including traditional knowledge and practices. We believe that Indigenous physicians are honoured with positions of trust in the communities and commitment to our responsibilities are reflected in our work.

We value respectful and ethical interactions among all individuals, organizations and groups with whom we work. We hold ourselves to the values and principles that originate from our traditional teachings and we honor the various traditional teachings of all nations across Turtle Island. We guide ourselves, our work and our organization on these teachings through our relationships with each other.

Seven Teachings, commonly held by Anishinaabe, Nehiyaw, and Nakoda peoples

- Love – of people, communities and Indigenous ways of being
- Respect – for knowledge, wisdom, communities and each other
- Courage – to stand up for our ways of being and the application and integration of Indigeneity in all things we do as an organization
- Honesty – among the membership and staff and with the organizations and individuals with whom we work
- Wisdom – use of traditional teachings to approach our way of being and with our work
- Humility – to know our limitations and to seek guidance when necessary
- Truth – to always speak the truth as an organization and to speak the truth to each other



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Gayanashagowa, The Haudenosaunee Great Law of Peace

The Great Law of Peace was written and symbolized through wampum belts alongside the oral stories that were passed down with it. These stories include the Great Peacemaker Dekanawidah and his spokesman Hiawatha as they journey through the five (now six) Haudenosaunee Nations attempting to end war and unify under one confederacy. Dekanawidah and Hiawatha were successful. There are now several versions of the Great Law of Peace, many of which have been translated into English, which, depending on the version, has 117 articles. An excerpt can be found below:

“We uproot the tallest white pine, into the cavity we cast all weapons of war, we replant the tree and with this establish the Great Peace, we declare hostilities shall end between the five nations, and we shall live as a united people.” (Haudenosaunee’s Legendary Founding, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D0elAQYLdfc>)

One version of full text was prepared by Gerald Murphy, the National Public Telecomputing Network and the Constitution Society:

<https://cscie12.dce.harvard.edu/ssi/iroquois/simple/1.shtml>

Inuit Qaujimagatugangit/Principles and Values

- Inuuqatigiitsiarniq: Respecting others, relationships and caring for people.
- Pijitsirniq: Serving and providing for family and/or community.
- Pilimmaksarniq/Pijariuqsarniq: Development of skills through observation, mentoring, practice, and effort.
- Piliriqatigiinni/Ikajuqtigiinni: Working together for a common cause.
- Tunnganarniq: Fostering good spirits by being open, welcoming and inclusive.
- Aajiqatigiinni: Decision making through discussion and consensus.
- Qanuqtuurniq: Being innovative and resourceful.
- Avatittinnik Kamatsiarniq: Respect and care for the land, animals and the environment.



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Dene Laws

1. Share what you have - Ełeghaets'edendih
2. Help each other - Ełets'áts'ęndi
3. Love each other as much as possible - Ełeghęnets'etę
4. Be respectful of elders & everything around you - ęhndah gots'edihchá & godhah ahsıı azhę chu
5. Pass on the teachings - T'ahsıı ots'edihshę gogháts'ırah
6. Be happy at all times - Łáqlıh t'áh gogha gonezų
7. Sleep at night & work during the day - Tedhe ts'ete & dzenę eghálats'ęnda
8. Be polite and don't argue with anyone - Dene ts'ę nahzų gots'ęh thá t'áh dene ahdahndi ile
9. Young girls and boys should behave respectfully - Ts'ęlią gots'ęh denelią ełegedihchá gha góřę

Métis Ways of Knowing and Being

Métis peoples are deeply connected to the wisdom and teachings passed down through generations. Their core values are rooted in respect, education, and self-determination, guiding them to learn, grow, and share knowledge throughout their lives. A central question they ask is, **“Have we learned all we can? Have we taught all we can?”** This reflects a lifelong journey of learning and teaching.

Ceremonial practices like the Sundance and the Pipe Ceremony are integral to their spiritual connection with the Creator, offering tobacco as a sacred gesture. These ceremonies honour kinship with all living beings and recognize the interconnectedness of all things.

Family and community are central to Métis life, with an emphasis on truth, acceptance, and mutual care. Métis values guide individuals to act with honesty, respect (Kishchiitaytamic), love (Shaakihwayhk), sharing (Taashkinikayen), and caring (Pishkaymitook), while striving for balance (Balaans), strength (La fors), courage (Kooraaazh), and patience (Pa iksitt).



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While these values may be expressed differently, as Métis peoples are diverse, they all share a deep connection to Mother Earth (Ni maamaa la tayr) and a strong commitment to their ancestors' teachings. Each Métis person follows their own path, but the guiding principles of community, respect, and shared responsibility remain constant.

Our Operating Principles

The following principles guide us; they become the lenses through which all IPAC activities are considered and implemented:

- Indigeneity is maintained and respected throughout all IPAC activities
- IPAC is well funded to conduct its business successfully
- IPAC's staff, board members, and members work together in a healthy team environment of wholistic wellness
- IPAC members are actively engaged in IPAC activities
- IPAC conducts all activities within its mandate and within its capacity to ensure focus and momentum

Our Vision

Healthy and vibrant Indigenous nations, communities, families and individuals – supported by Indigenous physicians and others who are contributing to the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being of our people and having a positive impact on the social determinants of Indigenous health.

Our Mission

As Indigenous physicians and students who are diversely rooted in our traditional teachings and our respective communities, IPAC members embrace and commit to collaboratively use our skills, abilities and experiences to advance the health of our nations, communities, families and individuals. IPAC provides knowledge for communities, national Indigenous organizations and health care providers; advocates for Indigenous peoples' health; and acts as a support mechanism for Indigenous physicians and students.



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II. Our Organization

As a national, member-based non-profit organization and a registered charity, IPAC is made up of members, governed by a Board of Directors (BOD). Our day to day operations are the responsibility of the Executive Director who oversees a team of staff members.

Strategic Priorities

1. Advance the health of Indigenous lands including its' nations, communities, and individuals.
2. Support current and future Indigenous physicians, residents and medical students.
3. Strengthen the Association and build relationships.

Members

We have 4 types of membership:

1. Indigenous Physician
2. Indigenous Resident/Fellow
3. Indigenous Medical Student
4. Associate

IPAC Board Composition

1. Physicians Directors (5) - Three (3) year term, maximum two (2) consecutive terms
2. Resident Director (1) - One (1) year term, no maximum terms
3. Student Director (1) - One (1) year term, no maximum terms

IPAC Executive Composition

After the election, the board meets and comes to a consensus on who will fill the following roles. These roles are filled by physician directors. There is no minimum or maximum number of years that a physician director can be in a role, but good practice is 2-3 years, allowing for mentorship and succession planning.

1. President
2. Vice President
3. Treasurer
4. Secretary



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Current Staff (Organizational chart in the appendix)

1. Executive Director - Melanie Osmack
2. Finance & Human Resource Manager - Kayla Knelsen
3. Membership and Communications Manager - Stacey Chicoine
4. Events & Administrative Coordinator - Rochelle Mathieu



Staff Members Left to Right: Stacey Chicoine, Rochelle Mathieu, Melanie Osmack, Kayla Knelsen.



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III. Roles and Responsibilities

All Board Members

- Attend monthly board meetings via Zoom. Last Wednesday of each month, 7:00-8:30 pm ET
- Attend onboarding with the Executive Director (1-2 hours)
- Commit to board/governance training as needed.
- Attend and volunteer at the Annual IPAC Mentorship Gathering and AGM (June 4-7, 2026 in Thunder Bay, Ontario)
- Attend the Annual Board and Staff Development In-Person (October 18/19, 2025 in Vancouver, B.C.)
- Attend the IPAC Partner Dinner and Indigenous Physician Health Ceremony (February 26, 2026 in Ottawa Ontario. Optional)
- Represent IPAC on at least one external committee or working group
- Communicate and attend to action items between board meetings (1-4 hours/month)
- Engage with members
- Fundraise for events, programs and capacity building



2024/2025 IPAC Board Members Left to Right: Shelley Young (Student Director), Dr. Brent Young (Treasurer), Dr. Jamaica Cass (Secretary), Dr. Ryan Giroux (Physician Director), Dr. Tina Nash (Resident Director), Dr. Ojistoh Horn (President), Dr. Alexa Lesperance (Vice President).



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Additional roles and Responsibilities of the Executive

The President and Vice President

- Represent IPAC at the National Level
- Lead the IPAC Board
- Alternate chairing monthly board meetings in accordance with IPAC policies
- Represent IPAC on an additional 1-2 forums/committees/working groups
- Communicate regularly with the Executive Director (2 meetings/month)

The Treasurer

- Reviews monthly financial reports with the Finance and Human Resource Manager and Executive Director before each board meeting
- Provides the financial report at the board meeting
- Reviews the audited financial report with the Finance and Human Resource Manager and Executive Director in preparation for the AGM and brings it to the IPAC Board for approval
- Reviews the annual budget with the Finance and Human Resource Manager and Executive Director before the February board meeting
- Co-presents the annual budget with the Executive Director to the board at the February Board meeting for approval
- Communicates regularly with the Executive Director

The Secretary

- Ensures that accurate minutes are taken at board meetings
- Takes minutes at the AGM
- Communicates regularly with the Executive Director

Additional Duties of the Resident and Students Directors

The Resident Director

- Provides a voice for IPAC Resident Members and liaises with national resident organizations.

The Student Director

- Provides a voice for IPAC Student Members
- Represents IPAC on the Indigenous Medical Students Association of Canada (IMSAC) circle.



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The Executive Director (staff)

- Represents IPAC at the national level
- Builds strong relationships with partners and members
- Attends monthly board meetings via Zoom. Last Wednesday of each month, 7:00-8:30 pm ET
- Reports to the IPAC Board President
- Provides IPAC Board support and development
- Commits to board/governance training as needed
- Ensures compliance and best practices
- Oversees fund development and budgets
- Oversees programs and advocacy
- Oversees events
- Ensures our work falls within our strategic priorities
- Leads and mentors staff
- Directs human resources
- Aligns employees with organizational mission and values
- Fosters a culturally safe workspace which values equity, diversity and inclusion

IV. Communications

Internal Communication

Most formal communication among Board members and the Executive Director is via email. There is a Board and staff contact list in the appendix. If your information changes, please notify info@ipacamic.ca. As everyone is working or studying full-time, we rely on email to collaborate and make decisions between meetings. Please do your best to respond to emails from fellow Board members and IPAC staff within two business days.

Calendar Invites

Calendar invites, also called schedulers or meeting invites, are used regularly. Please respond promptly to these invites, so they are in your calendar and you do not miss important meetings. They can easily get buried in your inbox. You can always make changes to your response later.



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Attention to Duties

All members of the executive are expected to attend to their executive duties throughout their term. If there will be periods of time when the members of the executive are unavailable to do so, they should bring this to the attention of the Executive Director at their earliest convenience so that time-sensitive tasks can be completed ahead and your duties can be assigned to a fellow board member.

Website

Board members should be familiar with our website. Key pages to be familiar with are membership, events and mentorship. Board members should have a strong understanding of our types of memberships, how to become a member, upcoming events and the mentorship program. <https://ipacamic.ca/>

Media

IPAC is contacted for media interviews regularly. These requests are usually time-sensitive, with little or no notice, but we always do our best to make the most of the opportunities. If you are contacted by the media to speak on behalf of IPAC, please notify the Executive Director before responding to the request.

External Communications

As a Board member, part of your role is to help circulate information and engage in communications. You can do this by commenting and sharing/retweeting on our social media posts. Please take a moment to like/follow our IPAC social media platforms:

[Facebook](#)

[Instagram](#)

[LinkedIn](#)



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Platform	Audience	Content
IPAC Quarterly Newsletter	IPAC members and partners	IPAC news
IPAC Facebook Group	IPAC members only	IPAC and external
IPAC Facebook Page	IPAC members and partners	IPAC and external
IPAC Instagram	IPAC members and partners	IPAC and external
IPAC LinkedIn	IPAC members and partners	IPAC and external

Relational Accountability

At IPAC, we are committed to transparency and walking with integrity in all that we do. We recognize that how we speak about our shared responsibilities reflects not only on IPAC, but also on the communities we come from, the people we serve, and the partners we work alongside.

In the spirit of relational accountability, we ask our Board members to be thoughtful when discussing IPAC business outside of Board meetings. Clear and respectful communication helps prevent harm that can come from partial or inaccurate information, and ensures we continue to uphold trust — within our circle, and with those who walk beside us.

From time to time fellow board members may share personal information with each other. This is common in sharing circles and as relationships among board members develop. We ask our board members not to share this information with others.



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V. IPAC Events and Meetings

Board Meetings

- Virtual
- Last Wednesday of each month 7:00-8:30pm ET
- Attended by The Board, Executive Director and if directed by the board, an IPAC staff member to assist with minutes

Annual Board & Staff in Person Meeting (Oct 18-19, 2025, Vancouver BC)

- The purpose of this in-person meeting is team building and completing larger tasks related to our strategic priorities.
- Board members are expected to fully attend and participate in all items on the agenda.
- Travel, accommodation, and meals are paid for by IPAC.
- All board activities, including work, cultural activities, team building and group meals are for board and staff only.

Annual IPAC Mentorship Gathering and AGM (June 4-7, 2026, Thunder Bay Ontario)

- Board members are expected to fully attend and participate in all items on the agenda as well as arrive one day early for event preparation.
- Travel, accommodation, and meals are paid for by IPAC.
- All board activities on prep day, including group activities and meals, are for board and staff only.
- If a board member chooses to bring a travel companion to the annual gathering, and wants them to attend as a guest, they must purchase a guest ticket. Guest ticket prices vary from year to year but generally speaking they include all the same meals as registered delegates, cultural activities and events.



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VI. Partners & Memberships

IPAC's strength is in its relationships. As a national organization, we work with the following partners:

Major Funding Partners

- Canadian Medical Association Foundation (CMAF) - Mentorship and capacity
- Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) - Anti-Indigenous racism and capacity
- MD Financial - Annual gathering and events

General Partners (Some also sponsor events and projects from time to time)

- Association of Faculties of Medicine of Canada (AFMC)
- Black Physicians of Canada (BPC)
- Canadian Indigenous Nurses Association (CINA)
- Canadian Medical Association (CMA)
- Canadian Medical Association Foundation (CMAF)
- College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC)
- First Nations and Inuit Health Branch (FNIHB)
- Indigenous Dental Association of Canada (IDAC)
- The Indigenous Pharmacy Professionals of Canada (IPPC)
- Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)
- National Aboriginal Council of Midwives (NACM)
- Resident Doctors of Canada (RDoC)
- Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (RCPSC)

Memberships

- Canadian Medical Forum (CMF)
- Canadian Medical Association (CMA)
- Pacific Regional Indigenous Doctors' Council (PRIDoC)
- National Circle for Indigenous Medical Education (NCIME) Partnership Council



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VII. Committees, Forums and Working Groups

Internal Committees and Working Groups

IPAC is currently undergoing a governance review which will likely result in more IPAC committees in the future.

Committee/Working Group	Current IPAC Representative(s)	Meeting Cadence
IPAC Governance Committee	Dr. Brent Young, Dr. Ryan Giroux, Melanie Osmack (ED)	Quarterly
IPAC Indigenous Physician Health and Joy in Work Team (Formally NCIME working group)	Dr. Brent Young, Dr. Ryan Giroux, Dr. Mike Dumont, Dr. Mandy Buss, Melanie Osmack (ED)	Quarterly

External Committees, Forums and Working Groups

IPAC holds both formal and informal roles on several national committees, forums and working groups. In some cases there is an official representative from the IPAC board assigned. In other cases, one or more of our current board members may already be involved 'as self', acting as an unofficial liaison between IPAC and our partners.

Committee/Working Group	Current IPAC Representative(s)	Meeting Cadence
AFMC Indigenous Health Committee	Dr. Alexa Lesperance, as IPAC representative	Monthly
College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC)	Dr. Jamaica Cass, as self Dr. Ojistoh Horn, as self	Two full-day meetings/year. One in person and one virtual.



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Canadian Medical Association (CMA) Indigenous Guiding Circle	Dr. Ojistoh Horn, as self	Varied
Canadian Medical Association/Foundation (CMA/CMAF)	Melanie Osmack, as Executive Director	Monthly or more as needed
Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CAPE)	Dr Ojistoh Horn, as self	Monthly
Canadian Medical Forum (CMF)	Dr. Alexa Leserpace as IPAC Vice President Dr. Ojistoh Horn as IPAC President Melanie Osmack, as IPAC Executive Director	P/VP one full day, annual in-person or hybrid, April ED one full day, annual, in-person, April as well as three, three-hour virtual meetings/year.
Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons Canada (RCPSC) National Collaborative	Melanie Osmack, as IPAC Executive Director	Four meetings/year



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VIII. Financial Policy

A formal IPAC Financial Policy is currently in draft form. Please refer to the IPAC Bylaws for guidance until the IPAC Financial Policy has been completed and approved by the IPAC Board.

VIII. Board Travel Policies

- Be fiscally responsible. Stay within the travel budget provided.
- IPAC pays for reasonable board members' travel expenses for the Annual Board and Staff In-Person Meeting if the board member can attend and participate in full.
- IPAC pays for board members' travel expenses for the Annual Mentorship Gathering and AGM if the board member can attend and participate in full. This includes arriving one day ahead to prepare.
- IPAC does not pay any expenses for travel companions.
- If a board member is unable to pay in first instance, they should inform the Events and Administrative Coordinator at least 2 weeks prior to the travel so that the appropriate arrangements can be made. Making these arrangements last minute is not always possible.
- Hotel and flight arrangements for the IPAC Annual Mentorship Gathering and the IPAC Board and Staff In-Person Meeting are made by the IPAC Events and Administrative Coordinator.
- Do not book IPAC travel unless requested by IPAC staff.
- Please respond to emails regarding travel details and preferences in a timely manner. If there is no action item required, please reply "acknowledged".
- Please be aware that when board members do not respond to travel related communication it has negative fiduciary impacts on the organization.
- If you have questions about IPAC arranged accommodations, please ask the Events and Administration Coordinator. Ex. Do not contact the hotel directly as it could impact our group reservation.
- If a board member needs to change their travel arrangements for personal reasons (Ex. missing a flight, needing to change a flight due to school/work schedule changes etc), they must notify the Events and Administrative Coordinator as soon as possible because it may impact others.



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- Flight changes for personal reasons (Ex. missing a flight, needing to change a flight due to school/work schedule changes etc) are the responsibility of the board member. IPAC cannot make the arrangements or pay any cost differences.
- Flight changes due to elements out of our control (Ex. airlines, weather) are the responsibility of IPAC. Our Events and Administrative Coordinator or other staff will do their best to rearrange travel but board members may be asked to help if our Events and Administrative is in transit or there is a large amount of time sensitive travel being rearranged.
- Mileage and/or Parking for a personal vehicle can be reimbursed at .70/km if it makes fiscal sense for a board member to drive to the event. IE The cost of mileage and parking is less than the cost of a flight or train.
- Ground transportation may include mileage/parking of personal vehicle, public transportation, shuttles, taxis and or rideshare. When possible please share ground transportation to be fiscally responsible.
- IPAC does not provide rental cars or parking for rental cars for board members.
- If a board member will be parking at a hotel with their own vehicle, they need to arrange this at least one week in advance with the Events and Administrative Coordinator to ensure parking is available.
- Eat meals provided when possible. For all other meals when traveling, our current per diem, with receipt, is \$25/breakfast, \$30/lunch and \$55/dinner inclusive of tax and gratuity.
- Alcoholic beverages will not be reimbursed by IPAC
- Complete and submit a travel expense tracking sheet, with receipts, within 5 business days to the Finance and Human Resource Manager cc Executive Director.



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Appendix A Organizational Chart

