



# ABORIGINAL SPORT CIRCLE



**Amplifying Indigenous  
Voices in Sport**

2022 – 2023 Annual Report

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# A Memorable Year

## Message from President



Dear Members and Friends of the Aboriginal Sports Circle,

I am pleased to share some of the highlights of the past year for our organization. It has been an productive year, full of opportunities to reconnect following COVID, and to promote Indigenous sport, physical activity, and recreation.

A highlight this year was the National Aboriginal Hockey Championships, which we hosted in Mi'kmaq territory in May. The event was a tremendous success. It brought together Indigenous athletes from across the country to showcase their skills and celebrate their cultures. I am proud of the hard work and dedication of all who made it possible.

In February 2023, lacrosse was included in the official Canada Games program for the first time since 1985. This was a significant step. Incorporating this traditional Indigenous sport will help promote Indigenous participation in the Games, and will allow us to showcase our culture, athletes, and coaches on a national stage.

Our staff and members were also able to reconnect this past year. We visited member Provincial/Territorial Aboriginal Sports Bodies to discuss issues of importance to their regions, and we held our Annual General Meeting in Treaty 7 territory in Calgary, Alberta. We were also honoured to support a delegation of 19 Indigenous women from 11 regions, who attended the 8th IWG World Conference on Women and Sport in New Zealand.

On the policy front, we have been working hard to develop the National Strategy for Indigenous Sport, Physical Activity, Recreation and Traditional Practices. We have engaged extensively with our members and stakeholders. We are confident that this Strategy will guide our work, as well as that of federal, provincial, and territorial governments for years to come.

I want to thank everyone who has worked so hard this year to make these achievements possible. I am proud of what we have accomplished together.

Sincerely,

Rob Newman  
President, ASC

## Message from the National Office

Dear Friends and Supporters of the Aboriginal Sports Circle,

As you'll see throughout this report, the Aboriginal Sport Circle (ASC) has been working hard on several initiatives. We had a successful National Aboriginal Hockey Championship in Membertou, Nova Scotia on May 7-13, 2023. We've been working on getting the Aboriginal Coaching Modules (ACM) to include an online delivery component, working to transition the Indigenous Long-Term Participant Development program to the ASC and working to improve some current processes in administration and communication.

The ASC has reached an important milestone, as we develop our first-ever National Strategy for Indigenous Sport, Physical Activity, Recreation, and Traditional Practices. Our programs, services, and work plans are now aligned with our strategic plan as outlined in this annual report. In Summer 2022, the ASC gained renewed funding for our Indigenous Youth in Sports Program. We now have guaranteed funding through to 2027. This was excellent news for us and as well as our PTASB members. We are now actively seeking sustainable funding for our Indigenous Youth in Sports Program.

ASC is the co-chair of the new Federal-Provincial-Territorial Sport Committee Standing Working Group on Indigenous Sport Development together with Sports Canada. This Working Group, which we co-chair together with Sports Canada, is an important means to influence sports policy across the country. As our National Strategy is completed, we will use the Group to ensure that the Strategy gains traction with government.

The ASC has made great progress this year. Together with our members, we are expanding our reach and amplifying the voice of Indigenous Peoples in sports. We continue to build the organization by strengthening our role as a national organization. We would like to thank everyone who has supported the ASC this past year. It has been a rich and varied year of transition, and an honour for all staff to accompany the ASC on this journey.



# 2022/23 At A Glance



Tom Longboat Awards  
Connor Church & Leah Miller



Award Recipients, 2022/23  
Aboriginal Apprenticeship Coaching Program



National Aboriginal Hockey  
Championships – May 9 to 14, 2022



8th IWG World Conference on Women and Sport  
in New Zealand – November 14 to 18, 2022

# Our Circle

## History

The Aboriginal Sport Circle (ASC) is a member-based, not-for-profit organization that exists to support the health and wellbeing of Indigenous peoples and communities through participation in sport, physical activity, recreation, and traditional practices.

The ASC was founded in 1995 by Provincial/Territorial Aboriginal Sports Bodies (PTASBs) to provide a centralized, national voice for Indigenous Peoples in sport.

## Mission and Vision

We exist to support the health and wellbeing of Indigenous Peoples and Communities through participation in sport, physical activity, recreation, and traditional practices.

The ASC accomplishes our work directly with ASC member organizations and through strategic partnerships.

The ASC strives for:

- **Healthier, more active** Indigenous People in vibrant communities that are fully engaged in sport, recreation, physical activity, and traditional practices.
- **National systems** that systemically include Indigenous Peoples and organizations in strategies, initiatives, programs and services.
- Provincial/Territorial and local **capacity development** that serves the unique needs of Indigenous Peoples at the community level.
- **Adequately resourced** sport, physical activity and recreation systems that are culturally appropriate and enable Indigenous Peoples to achieve success from playground to podium.
- A **positive impact on broader sector agendas** including, but not limited to, economic development, physical and mental health, environment, and justice.



## Member PTASBs

The Aboriginal Sports Circle is a member-based organization. Each of our member Provincial/Territorial Aboriginal Sports Bodies (PTASBs) has the mandate to represent the grassroots interests of Indigenous Peoples in their jurisdiction. Collectively, they ensure that our Circle brings representation from coast to coast to coast.

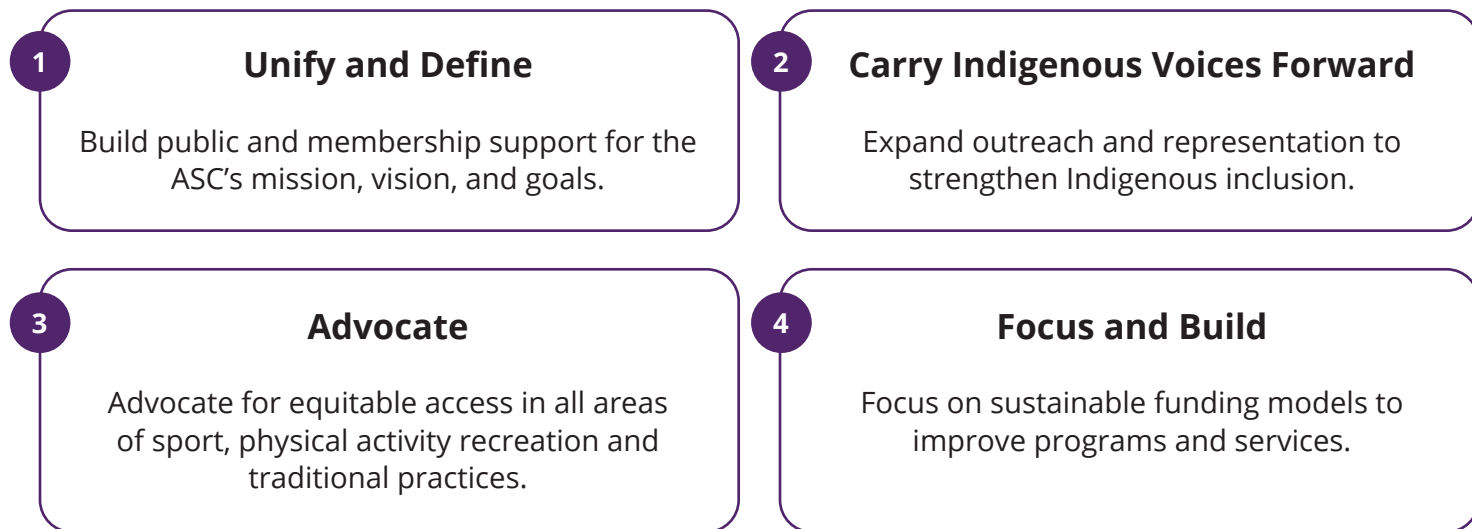
Their regional voices guide the direction of the ASC and establish its national priorities.

P/T Region	Member Organization
Yukon	Yukon Aboriginal Sport Circle
Northwest Territories	Aboriginal Sports Circle Northwest Territories
Nunavut	Sport and Recreation, Nunavut Government
British Columbia	Indigenous Sport, Physical Activity & Recreation Council
Alberta	Indigenous Sport Council of Alberta
Saskatchewan	Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations
Manitoba	Manitoba Aboriginal Sports & Recreation Council Inc.
Ontario	Indigenous Sport & Wellness Ontario
Quebec	First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission
New Brunswick	Aboriginal Sport & Recreation New Brunswick
Nova Scotia	Mi'kmaw Sport Council of Nova Scotia
Prince Edward Island	Prince Edward Island Aboriginal Sport Circle
Newfoundland and Labrador	Aboriginal Sport & Recreation Circle of Newfoundland and Labrador

# An Evolving Strategy

## Strategic Plan 2021–2026

The ASC developed its current strategic plan in 2021. The four-pronged planning process included robust planning, discovery, analysis, and delivery phases. By collecting information and engaging key stakeholders, we identified four strategic goals directing us to our desired future state.



The ASC concluded our strategic plan before beginning work on the National Strategy for Indigenous Sport, Physical Activity, Recreation and Traditional Practices. The current plan was also developed prior to the renewal of the Canadian Sport Policy, which direct governments, institutions, and organizations to realize the positive impacts of sports.

As such, our plan is transitional, guiding the organization through a 5-year period of refining our mission, vision, and structure. Once the National Strategy is completed, we will have the ability to adapt our strategic plan to align with the National Strategy.



## Achievements in 2022-23

The 2021–26 Strategic Plan envisages certain key objectives to help achieve each strategic goal. Some can be executed by the management team; others require active participation by the Board of Directors and membership.

As foreseen in the strategic plan, our emphasis in 2022-23 was on Strategic Goals 1 (Unify and Define) and 4 (Focus and Build). We will be bringing forward Goals 2 (Carry Indigenous Voices Forward) and 3 (Advocate) after we have further refined our purpose and built our organization.

Strategic Goals plus Objectives for 2022-23		Progress
<b>1. Unify and Define: Build public and membership support for the ASC's mission, vision, and goals</b>		
Work to refine the purpose of ASC, ratifying or changing the mission, vision and mandate as required		Will adjust on completion of the National Strategy
Continue the transition to a new governance model and organizational structure to support refinements		Initiated governance review, restructured organization
Build political voice and credibility, in part by recruiting a recognized change maker to represent ASC		Recruited and hired new CEO, enhanced communications
<b>2. Carry Indigenous Voices Forward: Expand outreach and representation to strengthen inclusion</b>		
<b>3. Advocate: Seek equitable access in sport, physical activity, recreation, and traditional practices</b>		
<b>4. Focus and Build: Focus on sustainable funding models to improve programs and services</b>		
Lead development of a national strategy for Indigenous sport in Canada		Completed first two phases of development

## **Governance Review**

The ASC issued a request for proposals for a full and comprehensive review of ASC bylaws, governance, policies/procedures, structures, and roles and responsibilities. The Governance Coach was retained to undertake the review, which will begin in May and conclude in November 2023.

## **Organizational Restructuring**

As foreseen in the strategic plan, the ASC made several organizational changes to improve delivery of programs and services to members. The Circle hired a CEO in May 2022, developed a new organizational chart, and hired several new staff members to fulfill the ASC's various functions. With increased capacity, ASC has improved our communication, and our planning and delivery of programs, services, and supports to our members.

## **National Strategy for Indigenous Sport**

Led by our Circle and its members, the National Strategy for Indigenous Sport, Physical Activity, Recreation, and Traditional Practices will help our peoples realize their right to self-determination, including the right to create environments that advance their cultures and identities. Informed by Indigenous stories and voices across the country, the National Strategy will help both Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations foster Indigenous participation.

Anticipated outcomes of the National Strategy are to:

- Provide direction for culturally appropriate engagement with Indigenous People and communities, related policy development, and systemic changes.
- Create support, including the administration of a publicly accessible, online repository of data, information, and resources.
- Serve as a framework to connect parties and build alliances, share best practices, and build operational capacity.

In April 2022, the ASC began work on a multi-year, Indigenous-led project with MNP. With a completion date in 2024, the ASC undertook a planning phase and assessment of the current state of Indigenous sport, physical activity, and recreation in Canada using in person sessions, virtual sessions, surveys, and one on one interviews. Further phases include visioning, a gap analysis, and development of the strategy. The development process features a robust engagement that includes ASC members, interested Indigenous people or groups, and non-Indigenous institutions involved in planning, delivering, and supporting sport practices.

Please visit [indigenoussinmotion.ca](https://indigenoussinmotion.ca) for more information regarding the National Strategy.



# Awards, Events & Programs

## Tom Longboat Awards

The Tom Longboat Awards is an annual recognition program that celebrates Indigenous athletes in Canada who have demonstrated excellence in sport. Named after Tom Longboat, an Onandaga distance runner from the Six Nations of The Grand River, the awards were established in 1951. In 1999, the award was transferred to the ASC. The award remains one of the most prestigious awards for Indigenous athletes in the country. It recognizes not only athletic performance, but also leadership, sportsmanship, and community involvement.

The 2022 Tom Longboat Awards were presented at the induction ceremony for the Canada's Sports Hall of Fame, which were broadcast nation-wide. The recipients were Leah Miller, a rower from Pimicikamak Cree Nation in Manitoba and Connor Church, a wrestler and member of the Manitoba Metis Federation. The two athletes will now be added to the Indigenous Sport Heroes Digital Book maintained by the Canada's Sports Hall of Fame. Profiles of the winners can be found on the ASC's website.

## National Aboriginal Hockey Championships

The National Aboriginal Hockey Championships (NAHC) is an annual hockey tournament that brings together Indigenous hockey players from across the country. First held in 2002, the NAHC has since become one of the most important Indigenous hockey events in Canada.

The tournament features both male and female divisions and provides a platform for Indigenous hockey players to showcase their skills and compete at an elite level. With funding from Sport Canada, the ASC, Host Society and with support from the PTASB, work together to organize and deliver the tournament each year.

In 2022, the first National Aboriginal Hockey Championships following Covid took place in Membertou, Nova Scotia. A total of 13 teams played at the event, bringing together 400 athletes, coaches, trainers, and team staff. The tournament was a great success, with Team Manitoba taking home gold for the Females, and Team Ontario taking home gold for the Males.

2023 will be a big year for the tournament as it will be the 20th anniversary of the National Aboriginal Hockey Championship. We are looking forward to it being hosted in Winnipeg, Manitoba.



# North American **INDIGENOUS GAMES 2023**

HALIFAX • NOVA SCOTIA

## North American Indigenous Games (NAIG) 2023

The North American Indigenous Games (NAIG) is a multi-sport event that brings together Indigenous athletes from across Canada and the United States. The Games are designed to promote physical activity, healthy living, and Indigenous culture and identity. They also offer a platform for Indigenous athletes to showcase their skills and compete at a high level. The Games feature sixteen sports and highlight the traditional sports of archery, canoe/kayak, and lacrosse. First held in 1990 in Edmonton, Alberta, the NAIG has since become one of Canada's largest international sporting and cultural events. The last Games were held in 2017 in Toronto.

The North American Indigenous Games 2023 will be held July 15 to 23, 2023 in Kijipuktuk, Nova Scotia on the traditional homeland of the Mi'kmaq People. Throughout 2022, the ASC supported the NAIG Executive Council and host region in organizing the Games. This year, 21 venues with 3,000 volunteers will host 5000 athletes from over 756 Indigenous Nations across North America.



## Aboriginal Coaching Program

The Aboriginal Coaching Program (ACP) seeks to increase the number and quality of Indigenous coaches in Canada. Established in 2002, the ACP provides Indigenous coaches with the knowledge, skills, and resources they need to coach effectively and provide leadership in their communities. The program promotes the positive impact of sports and physical activity. It is based on the principles of cultural safety, which encourages coaches to incorporate Indigenous values and teachings into their practice.

### Aboriginal Coaching Modules (ACM)

The Aboriginal Coaching Program features the Aboriginal Coaching Modules (ACM), which are professional development training tools for all coaches who coach Indigenous athletes. The ACM provides certification and training for Indigenous coaches and is comprised of three learning modules: Holistic Approach to Coaching, Dealing with Racism in Sport, and Individual and Community Health and Wellness.

To increase accessibility, the ASC is working to develop renewed modules that can be delivered online. In December 2022, we hired an external Indigenous consultant to explore the viability of virtual delivery of the ACM. After the consultant determined that virtual delivery is feasible, ASC hired an independent reviewer to establish the adaptations required for virtual delivery. ASC is now proceeding with the adaptations and is preparing to pilot delivery of the Virtual ACM in June 2023.

The ACP is also continuing to run ACMs in person through the current PTASB processes, and is reviewing the Master Coach Developer and Learning Facilitator training models in a hybrid format for the fiscal year 2023-2024. In addition, the ASC will begin a review of the ACM curriculum in 2024-2025.

### Aboriginal Apprentice Coach Program (AACP)

The Aboriginal Apprentice Coach Program (AACP) is a partnership of the ASC, Provincial/Territorial Aboriginal Sport Bodies (PTASBs), Provincial/Territorial Coaching Representatives, the Canada Games Council, and the Coaching Association of Canada. The program provides the opportunity for each province and territory to send two coaches of First Nations, Metis, or Inuit ancestry to the Canada Games in apprentice coach roles.

ASC worked with apprentice coaches selected for the 2022 Canada Summer Games hosted in Niagara and the 2023 Canada Winter Games hosted in Prince Edward Island. The Games provided coaches the opportunity to gain: coaching capacity within Indigenous communities; experience with domestic multi-sport exposure; professional development and learning opportunities to prepare them for high level coaching; and exposure to elite/high performance coaches.

Sixteen coaches representing seven different sports attended the 2022 Canada Summer Games and 2023 Canada Winter Games. The apprentice coaches were selected by their PTASBs and Provincial/Territorial Coaching Representatives.

## Indigenous Community Coach Apprenticeship Program (ICCAP)

The Indigenous Community Coach Apprenticeship Program (ICCAP) is a partnership of the Aboriginal Sport Circle (ASC) and the North American Indigenous Games (NAIG). The program is geared towards Indigenous coaches who have recently transitioned from being athletes. A new initiative for the ASC, the ICCAP program provides an opportunity for each province and territory to send two coaches of First Nations, Metis, and Inuit ancestry to the NAIG in apprentice coach roles.

Eighteen coaches from 11 jurisdictions are registered in the ICCAP program and will attend the 2023 NAIG games in July. The apprentice coaches were selected by their respective PTASBs and Provincial/Territorial Coaching Representatives.

## Indigenous Officials Mentorship Program (IOMP)

The Indigenous Officials Mentorship Program pilot aims to develop sports officials at the NAIG. The pilot was being led by a staff member that left the ASC in the Fall of 2022. This unexpected vacancy left limited capacity to continue developing this program. After ongoing discussions with NSO partners and the NAIG Host Society, conversations have pivoted to creating an official development program not specifically tied to NAIG.



# Special Initiatives

## COVID-19 Recovery Funding

In 2022/23, nine PTASBs received COVID-19 recovery funding to offset costs of previously postponed and/or safe activities relating to the COVID-19 pandemic. Most applications were for recovery of investments into postponed activities, such as training, camps, travel, and equipment for the National Aboriginal Hockey Championships and the North American Indigenous Games. Some members requested funding to ensure smaller groups, physical distancing, and less sharing of equipment in activities, as well as investments into more cleaning and disinfectants.

## International Working Group Women & Sport World Conference

With support from Sport Canada, the ASC was able to send 19 Indigenous women to the International Working Group Women & Sport World Conference. On November 14-17, 2022, the conference was held in New Zealand. Selected by PTASBs, attendees came from 11 provinces and territories.

For the women, the conference allowed them to share on their issues affecting Indigenous women across the world. Hearing what works and what needs to improve has highlighted issues of gender equity in sport that appear worldwide. Traveling to the Marae to assist in creating the Indigenous Statement on the Call to Action showed that Indigenous voices are valued and appreciated in the IWG space.

The statement can be found here: [IWG Indigenous Statement | IWGIWG \(iwgwomenandsport.org\)](#)

Being present and involved on a global scale will ensure the advancement of Indigenous women in sport. It allows for organizations like the ASC to share the tremendous work that we are undertaking in our country and learn from others across the globe.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Ue4nz2ie2E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Ue4nz2ie2E)





## Indigenous Long-Term Participant Development

The Indigenous Long-Term Participant Development (ILTPD) program aims to provide opportunities for Indigenous youth to participate in sports and physical activities. The program takes a holistic approach, incorporating culture, education, and community to develop long-term participants who will continue to engage in physical activity throughout their lives. For its part, Indigenous Communities Active for Life (ICA4L) promotes physical activity and healthy living in Indigenous communities by working with community leaders and organizations to implement culturally relevant programs.

In 2022/23, Sport4Life began transitioning the ILTPD workshops and materials to the ASC. The organization hired an ILTPD coordinator in September and later delivered nine ILTPD and ICA4L workshops. At the same time, the ASC created a transition plan for PTASBs to manage ILTPD and ICA4L in the future.

The ASC aims to train and certify 13 Learning Facilitators and 4 Master Learning Facilitators for the ILTPD, with a focus on French language in 2023-2024. A complete transition, as well as a review of materials, is expected to occur by fall 2023.

The ASC is collaborating with National Sports Organizations including Snowboard Canada, Lacrosse Canada, Archery Canada, and Softball Canada to create a transition plan to support PTASBs in managing ILTPD and ICA4L in the future. Consultation with the membership will be required for the collaboration. The process began in 2022/23 with introductory meetings with the NSOs and PTASBs.

## Standing Working Group on Indigenous Sport Development

The ASC is a permanent co-chair of the Standing Working Group on Indigenous Sport Development (SWGISD). Established in 2017 by Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers responsible for sport and physical activity in Canada, the Working Group's main purpose is to promote Indigenous sport and physical activity development in Canada. It works in collaboration with Indigenous organizations, communities, and governments to advance the social, cultural, and health benefits of sport and physical activity for Indigenous peoples.

Part of the SWGISD's work is to ensure Indigenous perspectives and practices are integrated into all aspects of sport and physical activity programming in Canada. In 2022/23, the Working Group was recruiting members and developed an application process for it. The ASC made it clear to the Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers that we would be using the Working Group to keep governments abreast of the National Strategy on Indigenous Sport as it develops, and to ensure that they will incorporate it into their own policies and strategies when it is complete.

# Strengthening the Circle

As this Annual Report shows, the ASC has had a busy and exciting year. We have worked hard to strengthen our relationship with our members, further tailored our programming, and taken steps to ensure that the perspectives and practices of Indigenous people are integrated into all aspects of sport and physical activity programming in Canada.

## Events Look-Ahead

Looking ahead, we have exciting events coming this year. The first event will be the National Aboriginal Hockey Championships from May 7 to 13, 2023. We are thrilled to be attending the 20th anniversary of this event, which was first held in 2002 in Akwesasne, Mohawk Territory. The 10th North American Indigenous Games – the first held since 2017 – will take place in July 2023. Bringing together 756 Indigenous Nations from across Turtle Island, the NAIG will be a momentous athletic and tourist event for the entire Atlantic region.

In September, our members will convene for our Annual General Assembly, to be held in Toronto, Ontario. We will gather in-person to reflect on the learnings and successes from the past year and look ahead at opportunities. We will also assess our progress on the National Strategy for Indigenous Sport, Recreation, Physical Activity, Recreation, and Traditional Activities, which the ASC will continue to lead. Work to develop the strategy will wrap up in March 2024.

## Priorities in 2023/24

As we conclude the National Strategy, the ASC wants to be poised to be the most effective advocate and national voice for Indigenous peoples in sports possible. In April, we will begin a comprehensive review of our governance to ensure that we are equipped to do this. The ASC has engaged a specialist to conduct the review. We will also be enhancing our communications, developing a communication plan and issuing a regular newsletter to our members.

A major strategic priority for 2023/24 will be to seek sustainable funding for the ASC and our members. Not simply the funding level, but our agreement needs to be optimized so that we can hire and retain staff and deliver our programs without interruption. The federal government has committed to reviewing the balance between core funding and program funding. Sustainable funding will be a major focus of our advocacy this year.

And finally, the ASC will continue to grow and evolve our programming. A priority next year will be to work further on a National Indigenous Awards event of the highest calibre. The ASC will also engage external expertise to develop a National Indigenous Sports Summit to accompany it.

As we enter 2023/24, another exciting year in Indigenous sport awaits!



# Annexes

## ASC Board of Directors

**Rob Newman**  
President

**Janice Forsyth**  
Vice-President

**Brendon Smithson**  
Director

**Edward (Sonny) Albert**  
Director

**Angella Pinay**  
Director

**Charly Buyck**  
Director

**Robert Henry**  
Director

**Jolyne Watson**  
Director

**Dan Ross**  
Elder

## ASC Staff

**Vanessa McGregor**  
Senior Manager Governance, Communications,  
Human Resources

**Krista Hodder**  
Senior Program and Events Coordinator

**Jacob Ruest**  
Aboriginal Coaching Program Coordinator

**Jaime Carpenter**  
Indigenous Long Term Participant Development  
Coordinator

**Mélissa Simard**  
Office and Communications Coordinator

**Erin Kohli**  
National Strategy Project Coordinator

## Office Address

c/o House of Sport RA Centre  
2451 Riverside Drive  
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, K1H 7X7  
Contact Information

**Phone:** 613-518-8353  
**Toll Free:** 1-855-814-4574  
**E-mail:** [ascoffice@aboriginalsportcircle.ca](mailto:ascoffice@aboriginalsportcircle.ca)

## Social Media Handles

**Website:** [www.aboriginalsportcircle.ca](http://www.aboriginalsportcircle.ca)  
**Instagram:** @aboriginalsportcircle  
**Facebook:** @aboriginalsportcircle  
**Twitter:** @AboriginalSC  
**TikTok:** @aboriginalsportcircle  
**LinkedIn:** Aboriginal Sport Circle (ASC)