



**Written Closing Submissions of  
the Independent First Nations  
to the  
National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women**

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## **Introduction**

1. The Independent First Nations (“IFN”) considers violence against Indigenous women and girls, particularly those who are missing or have been murdered, as an issue of the utmost importance. The life of every single Indigenous woman and girl is sacred and precious, and violence against our women and girls is also violence against our families, communities, and nations.
2. We give these submissions in honour of the Indigenous women and girls who are missing or have been murdered, in recognition of the pain and grief this has caused, and in the spirit of justice, change, and healing.
3. Throughout these submissions, IFN uses the term “women and girls” in accordance with the language used in the name of the Inquiry, and in recognition of the large majority of victims of violence considered by the Inquiry. IFN understands that throughout the Inquiry there has been evidence and submissions regarding or relevant to violence against Indigenous Two-Spirit and trans people and people of gender identities other than woman, girl, boy, or man. IFN cares about these people, honours their places in our communities, and affirms their right to live free from colonial violence. These submissions should be taken to apply, as appropriate, to them as well.

## **The Independent First Nations<sup>1</sup>**

4. The IFN communities are twelve First Nations that have asserted our independence from the Political Territorial Organizations (PTOs), and who have affirmed our right to be self-determining and self-governing and to directly represent our communities' interests at the local, regional, national, and international levels.
5. The IFN communities include:
  - Animbiigoo Zaagi'igan Anishinaabek (Beardmore, Ontario)
  - Bkejwanong Territory (Wallaceburg, Ontario)
  - Bingwi Neyaashi Anishinaabek (Thunder Bay, Ontario)
  - Chippewas of Nawash Unceded (Neyaashiinigmiing, Ontario)
  - Chippewas of Saugeen (Southampton, Ontario)
  - Iskatewizaagegan Anishnaabek #39 (Shoal Lake, Ontario) – Chief Lewis
  - Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug (Big Trout Lake, Ontario)
  - Mohawk Council of Akwesasne (Cornwall, Ontario)
  - Shawanaga First Nation (Nobel, Ontario)

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<sup>1</sup> Much of the information in this section is taken from the documents *The Independent First Nations Preliminary Discussion Paper – Ending Violence in Our Communities: Restoring Pride and Creating Solutions for a Brighter Tomorrow*, 2012, written by Sasha Maracle on behalf of the IFN (“*Ending Violence*”), and “*Independent First Nations Ending Violence Against Indigenous Women Proposal – Family Well-Being Program*” created in December 2016 (“*Family Well-Being Program*”). These documents are internal to the IFN and are not publicly available.

- Temagami First Nation (Temagami, Ontario)
  - Wabaseemoong First Nation (Whitedog, Ontario)
  - Whitesand First Nation (Armstrong, Ontario)
6. A map showing the locations of the IFN communities is attached at Appendix A.
  7. The IFN communities are diverse and distinct from one another, whether socially, culturally, economically, or geographically. We are comprised of three groups of original peoples: the Anishinawbek, the Onkwehonwe, and the *Innuuwug*. Each of these peoples is a Nation. We are peoples of families, extended families, and communities whose relations and connections extend to the earth, creation and our Creator. Each of the IFN communities is sovereign and autonomous, with its own sacred stories, unique history, distinct language, culture and ways of living.
  8. Collectively the combined population of the IFN communities is around 33,000 members, and our territories span northern, eastern, southern and western Ontario.
  9. The IFN communities share an established political protocol, which enables us to work together in an effort to strengthen our positions on issues of common concern.
  10. Violence against our women and girls people is one of these issues. All of the IFN communities have lost women and girls to violence.

**Colonization is the root cause of violence against Indigenous women and girls**

11. When we consider the crisis of MMIWG, there are two numbers that are critical to know.
12. The first is a number that, shamefully, we still do not know for sure: the total number of Indigenous women and girls who have been murdered or gone missing from our communities and across the country. We need to know this number because the life and loss of every one of those women and girls matter.

13. The second is a number that we do know, all too well: 100% of Indigenous people in this country are impacted by and connected to this crisis. We need to know this number because it reveals the true nature and roots of this crisis, and the only effective way of addressing it.
14. In the IFN communities, the full scope of the violence against our women and girls is not known because of disconnection and silence: sometimes the communities lose touch with our members who live away (by their choice or by force), or people do not talk about the violence for any number of reasons. But we all know that it is happening, and we all carry stories of this violence.
15. As Indigenous people, we may be employed and housed, we may have a good education, and we may be comfortable with who we are, but we will still be impacted by family, community, and systemic violence, because we are all connected and we are all subject to forces beyond our individual or collective control.
16. These forces come from colonization, which has been an attack on the lives, lands, waters, families, communities, relations, cultures, languages, freedom, sovereignty, and very survival of Indigenous peoples across Canada.
17. This attack has been led by Canadian governments and by the British, French, and business leaders who were here before Canada was a country. It has been carried out with the complicity and at times the active participation of much of the Canadian public.
18. This attack has been sustained, systematic, deliberate, comprehensive, and deadly. It has been almost incomprehensible in its devastation. It continues today.
19. Violence against Indigenous women and girls is one of the many terrible impacts and symptoms of this colonization. Violence against our women and girls is not traditional; it is the opposite of our traditions and is a violation of the fundamental truths, values, and ways given to us by our Creator and carried by our ancestors for countless generations. It is colonization that has caused our women and girls to be

dishonoured, dehumanized, and devalued. The only way to understand and stop the violence against them is to understand and stop colonization.

### **Impacts of colonization and key challenges in IFN communities**

20. The IFN communities struggle with the full range of colonial harms and impacts experienced by First Nations across the country. Our people have endured dislocation from and dispossession of our lands; the theft of our children through residential schools and the child welfare system; the racist and sexist impacts of the *Indian Act*; ongoing violations of our treaties; the targeting of our cultures and languages; the disruption of our ways of being in family and community; the exploitation and extraction of our “resources” and violation of our sacred places; the oppressions of racism and sexism; the ravages of diseases and alcohol; violations of our right to self-determination; the criminalization and incarceration of our people; and so on.

21. Because of these destructive conditions that have been forced upon us, we are burdened with widespread intergenerational trauma and un-wellness, and our communities live with an overwhelming scale of challenges and not enough resources, supports, or autonomy to address them properly.

22. We know that the Inquiry has received extensive evidence about the harms of colonization, and we will not address them all in these submissions. We will, however, outline some of the most significant issues that impact the IFN communities and that are related to violence against our women and girls.

#### **I. Drugs**

23. Drug addiction, particularly of opiates and methamphetamine, is a serious and growing problem across the IFN communities. These drugs are replacing and in some cases have replaced alcohol as the most significant addiction problem affecting us.

24. In one of our communities, about 60 people out of about 800 are struggling with opioid addiction. With such numbers, it is not possible for a single family there to be left untouched by this crisis.

25. People are often turning to these drugs to achieve a sense of numbness and escape from their conditions of their lives that result from colonization. Therefore, however we address this drug misuse, we must do so with compassion and understand that, as destructive as it is, for some people it may be the only way they feel able to live.
26. There is a direct connection between drug misuse and violence against women and girls.
27. Violence is being committed by those who harm those around them while they are using drugs; by people who steal to support their addiction; by people who sell drugs, and who threaten and harm our community members; by people who sexually exploit our girls and women who are struggling with addiction; and by people who harm themselves through drug misuse.
28. The efforts to address this drug problem are often not working.
29. Policing responses are too often not accompanied by appropriate health and social responses. For example, in IFN's questioning in the Calgary hearing on services, we noted that a drug bust in one of our communities abruptly cut off the drug supply there and led to a widespread, unanticipated, and unsupported withdrawal of many community members.
30. The criminalization of drug use itself pulls people into racist legal and prison systems that too often do more harm than good.
31. There are few treatment centres in the north, meaning that people often have to leave home and access treatment in a potentially dangerous place like Thunder Bay, away from their family and community supports, and in a foreign and racist cultural context.
32. The wait times to get into treatment are often months long. For people with addiction issues, this length of time can easily mean life or death.
33. The drug programs are not always culturally appropriate, are often not paired with adequate mental health services or supports for related issues like sexual exploitation,



and they target drug use as an individual rather than a family and community problem that is rooted in the harms caused by colonization.

34. There is not always enough funding for people to complete treatment programs, and even when people do successfully complete a program, all too often they come home to a situation where there are no transition or longer-term support services, and where they are surrounded by the same conditions that led them to drug use in the first place. Unsurprisingly, many are using again within a short time.
35. For those who do want to seek help, it is not always safe to do so, particularly if they have children. In one of our communities, the drug counselling office is attached to the child welfare office, which makes people scared to seek help for fear of their children being apprehended.
36. With respect to the drug-related problems in our communities, we make the following recommendations:
  - A. Open more drug treatment services and centres, especially in the north.
  - B. Invest sufficient resources to reduce wait times for accessing drug treatment.
  - C. Make drug treatment programs more culturally appropriate and nourishing for Indigenous people, beyond a pan-Aboriginal approach.
  - D. Make drug treatment programs more responsive to the nature of drug addiction in Indigenous communities, including its basis in historical and intergenerational trauma, and its impact on entire families and communities.
  - E. Make significantly better investments in community-based transition and long-term recovery supports for those who have completed their initial drug treatment.
  - F. Ensure that drug treatment programs are informed by and paired with other essential companion services such as mental health services and sexual exploitation/trafficking services.

G. Ensure that policing organizations proactively coordinate with health and social agencies around their drug-related interventions, in a manner that reduces inadvertent harm.

H. Reconsider legal and policing responses to drug possession and use that result in Indigenous people being criminalized and penalized for things that are better addressed through a health and healing approach.

## II. Policing

37. Policing is another major issue for our communities.

38. IFN supports the submissions from other parties that have emphasized the need to fundamentally transform the way we achieve whatever legitimate functions of policing are worth retaining for our communities.

39. A foundational purpose of the Canadian policing system and the law it enforces was repressing Indigenous people in support of colonial expansion, and it continues to support that purpose today. It is not surprising then that police themselves are sometimes the ones committing violence against our Indigenous women and girls.

40. Several of the IFNs rely on the work of primarily non-Indigenous police forces with which they have harmful and distrustful relationships. As highlighted in the report *Broken Trust - Indigenous People and the Thunder Bay Police Service*<sup>2</sup> that was recently released by the Office of the Independent Police Review Director, these non-Indigenous police forces have too often been systematically racist and negligent, including in their responses to the disappearances and deaths of Indigenous people.

41. Some of the IFN communities rely on the work of primarily Indigenous police forces. These forces are grossly under-resourced, underpaid, and understaffed relative to non-Indigenous police forces.

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<sup>2</sup> This report was released on December 12, 2018. It is available at <http://oiprd.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/OIPRD-BrokenTrust-Final-Accessible-E.pdf>.

42. Officers in these Indigenous police forces also typically deal with extremely high levels of stress and trauma because of the intensity of problems, the challenging working conditions, and the need to police their own communities and families. The police force that serves one of our communities along with 27 other communities has just 80 officers, 15 of whom are currently on stress leave.
43. For those IFN communities that do not have 24-hour police presence, the response times for calls to police are appalling, with waits of up to 8 hours. This encourages violence, and in some cases almost ensures impunity for it. It also leaves it to community members to try to handle violent situations without the assistance of trained and equipped people, which is often dangerous, unfair, and unsustainable.
44. With respect to policing, we make the following recommendations:
- A. Ensure significantly better cultural, anti-racism, and anti-sexism training that is mandatory and assessed for all police officers, beginning with their basic academy training and continuing with community-specific training that corresponds with an assigned officer's location, existing level of understanding, and role. This training should be developed and regularly reviewed and updated in partnership with Indigenous people and communities, who should be compensated for their time and efforts.
  - B. Ensure equitable funding, staffing, and resourcing for Indigenous police forces and any other police forces serving primarily-Indigenous communities. Resources should reflect the relative demands, risks, and needs, of the communities being served, and the need to significantly improve the quality of policing services for First Nations.
  - C. Ensure better supports for the safety and mental health of police serving First Nations. This should not be taken as a recommendation for anything that would further militarize these police forces or compromise the rights and safety of community members.

- D. Shift control of relevant policing policy, law, services, and funds into First Nations control in a way that allows communities to transform policing services in a manner that suits their needs and cultures.
- E. Ensure civilian oversight of all police forces in Canada that applies to allegations of sexual violence, and ensure that the oversight systematically includes the perspective and voice of Indigenous people.
- F. Review the *Broken Trust - Indigenous People and the Thunder Bay Police Service* report and consider seconding the recommendations therein as appropriate.

### **III. Sexual violence and exploitation**

- 45. Sexual violence is also a significant problem, both historically and today. IFN communities are dealing with the legacies of unhealthy, shame-based colonial conceptions of sexuality, repression of traditional gender and sexual norms, and sexual violence perpetrated in residential schools and by authority figures in other contexts.
- 46. This violence has caused trauma that manifests in relationship problems, sexual dysfunction, abuse, and homophobic and misogynist violence, and also affects subsequent generations and the rest of the community.
- 47. In one of our communities, a priest who lived and worked there for several years abused dozens of our boys and girls. Some of the abused boys had internalized homophobia and shame as a result of this abuse, and later tried to assert their heterosexuality and masculinity through violence against women and girls. Some of the children of these people who were abused now struggle with drug addiction and other symptoms of intergenerational trauma.
- 48. There is also a problem of girls and women being sexually exploited and trafficked. The IFN's former anti-human trafficking coordinator has observed that the most common age of entry into trafficking for girls from our communities is between 15

and 18 years old. We do not know the extent of this problem, but we know it is typically connected to addiction, gangs, poverty, lack of housing, abuse, and the isolation that results when our girls have to go to cities for school or other services.

49. There is a culture of silence, shame, and impunity around these issues, a widespread lack of understanding of the dynamics and impact of exploitation and trauma and even how to recognize it, a lack of specialized services for dealing with sexual trauma in the particular contexts of exploitation and trafficking where there are multiple perpetrators causing the harm, and a failure of services like drug treatment to address the experiences of sexual exploitation that often accompany those problems for our girls and women.

50. Our former anti-human trafficking coordinator has pointed to two worrying developments with respect to this issue. One is the growth of mines and other development projects in some IFN areas, which will be accompanied by increases in the number of outsider men and man camp-type environments. We know that this will put our women and girls at risk, and in one of our communities we have proactively approached the leadership of two new mines to try to ensure the safety of our women and girls.

51. The other is the pattern of outsider men, often from the United States, who come to Ontario to hunt and have girls brought to the hunting lodges in the bush for sexual purposes. There may be as many as dozen men staying at one of these isolated lodges, and they are armed with weapons. We have heard that they are sometimes brutal and rough with the women and girls.

52. There is a major need for services and interventions aimed at sexual exploitation and trafficking specifically, as well as restoration of culturally rooted sexual health and wellbeing for individuals, families, and communities.

53. We make the following recommendations with respect to sexual violence:

- A. Ensure the availability of specialized support services for those who have been sexually exploited and trafficked, and ensure that they are accessible in a

streamlined way with other services that address frequently-related problems, such as drug treatment, family violence, shelters, and rape crisis support.

- B. Challenge the culture of shame, misunderstanding, and silence around sexual violence and exploitation, by promoting awareness and constructive discussion.
- C. Invest in culturally relevant and Indigenous-led sexual health and wellness initiatives for people of all ages.
- D. Hold offenders accountable for their participation in sexual violence and exploitation. While restorative justice and non-penal options should always be considered as an alternative to the prison system, the victims' sense of value and safety in their homes and communities must be given high priority.
- E. Challenge the homophobia, transphobia, and toxic gender norms that too often accompany sexual violence and exploitation, including through culture-based education about healthier gender traditions in our cultures.
- F. Prioritize sexual trafficking and exploitation supports and services for those communities with major highway access, as these communities typically have a greater presence of drug dealers and others who engage in sexual exploitation and trafficking.
- G. Do not assume that services that are not specially designed for victims of sexual violence and sex trafficking will be sufficient for meeting their needs.
- H. Develop educational and awareness tools to increase community and frontline worker understanding of sexual violence and exploitation of Indigenous girls.
- I. Incorporate sexual exploitation and trafficking risk assessments and prevention strategies into major resource and business development projects.

#### **IV. Infrastructure and housing**

54. IFN communities have significant problems related to inadequate infrastructure and housing, which are directly connected to violence against women and girls.
55. As in many First Nations, there are serious housing shortages, and those houses that are there are often not in good condition. This causes in overcrowding, unhealthy living environments, inability to move easily, a reliance on stop-gap measures like couch-surfing, and inability to move new service providers into the communities.
56. This is dangerous for women and girls living in abusive situations, as it can trap them in homes with or close to their abusers. It also undermines the ability of our communities to address the service and staffing gaps we face. Further, it has a particular impact on our youth and young adults, who may have to leave the communities in order to find housing when they leave their family home. This harms their connection to home, and we know that when young people leave to go to urban centres, even for opportunities, there are risks to their safety and wellbeing.
57. Housing and other First Nation buildings and communities are also not always accessible for those with mobility challenges, which can leave some seniors and people with disabilities more isolated, vulnerable, and unable to access resources, live fulfilling lives, and participate in their communities.
58. In and around some of our northern and relatively remote communities there is also a lack of adequate cell phone coverage that puts people at risk. One of our communities is at the end of a rarely-used northern highway, where there is a long stretch with no cell service. If someone gets stranded on that road, it can be many hours before someone comes by (and there is no guarantee that the person coming by is safe). This creates risk for women and girls traveling on that highway, and also dissuades outside service providers from coming to the community during the winter when the challenging unpredictable weather could leave them vulnerable.
59. Similarly, there is a lack of adequate high-speed internet coverage. We have heard about potentially promising solutions to service provision challenges, such as tele-

health initiatives that allow remote access to some services. However, as we raised at that hearing, some of these solutions require sufficient high-speed internet and electricity, which not all IFNs have. One of our communities was given thousands of dollars worth of equipment for such a service that it cannot use because it lacks the infrastructure.

60. There are also major challenges with transportation for those who do not own a vehicle and who live on their First Nations. We have heard in this Inquiry about the risks, barriers, and vulnerability it creates for women and girls when they are reliant on others for transportation.

61. We offer the following recommendations with respect to housing and infrastructure:

- A. Develop an ambitious national First Nations housing strategy with sufficient funding levels reflective of the state of crisis of First Nations housing. Local and regional components of this strategy must be developed in partnership with local First Nations, which must have decision-making authority with respect to their priority housing needs.
- B. Make investments into infrastructure necessary to ensure that all First Nations communities have cell and internet coverage comparable to that of other Canadians at an affordable cost. Make further investments adequate to meet any special additional infrastructural needs required for remote service delivery.
- C. Invest in other infrastructure (eg. lighting, roads, sidewalks) as needed to bring all First Nations up to an agreed minimum acceptable level of safety and accessibility, in accordance with each community's wishes and needs.

## **V. Inadequate access to services**

62. Another major problem for our communities is the lack of sufficient access to services in-community, particularly services related to intergenerational trauma, violence, grief, mental health issues, addictions, palliative care, and crisis services.



63. In some IFN communities, people need to leave and go to cities to access services, or can only access them maybe once a month when someone comes in from another place.
64. The services that are available are often not culturally appropriate, and often force people to identify single “issues” that must be resolved within a set number of weeks regardless of the actual depth and complexity of their needs, a practice that risks opening up and aggravating wounds that it cannot heal.
65. With those services that are available in community, there are major privacy and confidentiality concerns. Services are also burdened with bad and non-integrated data systems that require people to tell their stories again and again.
66. IFN communities have also identified a need for men’s shelters, and places where perpetrators of family violence can go so that victims are not forced to leave their homes and communities.
67. There are huge issues of turnover and burnout with staff providing services. It is common to see chronic overwork and practices that likely violate labour legislation because sometimes there is simply no other option given the resources we have. These working conditions are unsustainable and inhumane. They endanger the health and wellbeing of our staff members who are important members of our communities, and undermine the quality of services that our people can access.
68. This situation is totally insufficient. These services are so important for addressing the acute and chronic needs in our communities. It is obvious that a failure to address these needs will only lead to further violence, pain, loss, and trauma as the unhealthy cycles continue.
69. We offer the following recommendations with respect to services:
  - A. Invest more in Indigenous shelters, including men’s shelters. Funding for men’s shelters should under no circumstances justify a decrease in funding for women’s shelters.

- B. Invest in non-penal, safe spaces where those who have perpetrated family and other violence, or who otherwise pose an immediate danger to others in their household, can go to ensure that victims of violence do not have to leave their homes and communities.
  - C. Expand funding under the Non-Insured Health Benefits Program for access to mental health services that are appropriate for the needs of people with complex trauma, intergenerational trauma, multiple crises, complicated grief (including grief that is unresolved due to a loved one being missing or otherwise unable to be mourned according to cultural practices), and other conditions that do not align with the current time-limited, “single issue crisis” model of mental health coverage.
  - D. Invest in improving access to a range of methods of service provision, including remote service provision for those who are comfortable with receiving services in this way.
  - E. Invest in the development of more and better culturally-specific tools and services across a range of areas. These should include land-based options where appropriate, and should give proper resourcing and respect to the role of Indigenous peoples’ traditional practices, medicines, knowledge keepers, ceremonies, etc. in service provision and planning.
  - F. Ensure good communication and collaboration among services, to provide seamless collaboration and wrap-around services for families.
  - G. Increase funding for staffing, training, capacity-building, systems and data management, administration, relief, and so on for in-community services. Prioritization decisions regarding funding allocation should be led by the service providers.
70. Canadians must recognize that the rates of mental health issues, trauma, grief, suicide, and so on in our communities are a reflection of the toxic, unjust, and unhealthy conditions of life imposed upon us. In highlighting the harms done to us and calling

for the help to which we are entitled, we reject any framing of ourselves as inherently pathological or as, in any way, the “problem.” The refusal of our bodies, hearts, minds, and spirits to easily adapt to conditions of colonization is not a sickness. It is colonization that is a sickness.

## **VI. Child welfare**

71. As with most Indigenous communities, IFN communities have far too many of our babies, children, and youth involved in the child welfare system.

72. There is no question that the impacts of colonization have left many of our families in need of supports that will help them restore their health, but this is far too often not the role that child welfare agencies are playing.

73. Rather, it has become normal to see:

- i. kids taken away for poverty-related reasons or other reasons that could be addressed in less harmful ways;
- ii. birth alerts that result in babies being taken from their mothers right after birth;
- iii. an over-resourcing of apprehensions and an under-resourcing of support and prevention;
- iv. plans of care that do not involve parenting supports and roadmaps to reunification;
- v. agencies and courts ignoring hard-won legislative protections that were designed to keep Indigenous children in-community and in-family;
- vi. apprehensions resulting in the health of infants, young children and mothers being jeopardized by a lack of respect for their breastfeeding relationships; and

- vii. children being placed far away from home, in frequently unsafe conditions where they are irreparably disconnected from their family, community, and culture.

74. In most cases, our apprehended children are not being cared for in anything close to culturally appropriate and nourishing ways.

75. Further, Crown wards typically get their “care” cut off when they turn 18. This practice that bears no resemblance to the norms of care provided by healthy families in any human culture that we know of, and is grossly inappropriate in view of Indigenous conceptions of life stages, care, and responsibilities, and in view of the increased needs for support of children who have been put into the system.

76. This is causing ongoing trauma, harm, and grief, and is perpetuating cycles of violence and the generations-long legacy of our families being torn apart and our children being alienated from who they are and where they belong. Many of these impacts have been explained well in the submissions of our fellow party with standing, Association of Native Child and Family Services Agencies of Ontario.

77. We know that our children do sometimes need to be removed from their families for a time, and in these cases the lack of in-community foster homes is a major problem. This gap is not there because our community members don’t care. Many of our families are already taking care of many people in overcrowded homes.

78. Some members who would like to help also have past engagement with the legal system that results in them failing the normal checks required for foster parents. Obviously screening is important for our children’s safety, but we believe it is sometimes being done overzealously, and in a manner that may be discriminatory in light of the known and unjust over-criminalization of Indigenous people within colonial legal systems.

79. Another major issue is the duty to report, which creates a barrier to accessing essential services, especially for women and children. The fear of losing their children can put women in an impossible position with respect to accessing things like shelters,

medical care, addiction services, and counselling, and there is no question that for some women and children, this duty is perversely increasing the risk of harm and violence.

80. We give support to the submissions made on this issue by our fellow party with standing, the Association of Indigenous Child and Family Services Agencies of Ontario, and offer the following comments and recommendations with respect to child welfare:

- A. The federal and provincial governments must recognize that First Nations have inherent jurisdiction over the welfare of our children, jurisdiction that we have never ceded. We expect and demand control over our own child welfare, and the resources to ensure it.
- B. For as long as provincial statutes are used in the provision of child welfare services to our communities, there should be robust and meaningful accountability measures to ensure that statutory protections meant to keep our children connected to their own families, communities, and cultures are consistently followed by child welfare agencies and applied by the courts. Where such statutory protections are not in place or are identified as inadequate by Indigenous communities, they must be introduced or improved.
- C. Child welfare services must recognize Indigenous conceptions of life stages, including the rights of and supports needed by our babies, children, youth, and young adults in these life stages. The arbitrary and damaging cut-off of care at age 18 must end, and be replaced with staged, ongoing support for youth beyond the age of 18 in a manner that respects their wishes, needs, autonomy, consent, and right to explore, make mistakes, and change their mind as they continue to mature.
- D. All plans of care, child welfare service provision, and funding models must prioritize and ensure the maintenance of Indigenous children's ability to connect with their land, community, family, language, and culture.

- E. An Indigenous child must never be apprehended on the basis of poverty-related grounds, or on the basis of Euro-Canadian norms of parenting and childrearing, where those norms conflict with the traditional parenting and childrearing norms of that child's culture. These guarantees should be given statutory protection.
- F. All interventions and plans of care must have as goal the reunification of children with their families, with robust investment in achieving that goal.
- G. There must be a comprehensive review of the unintended and harmful consequences of the duty to report. This review should include Indigenous leadership and perspectives in setting its terms of reference, and robust community involvement in its investigation, with a particular focus on the involvement of Indigenous mothers. The review should conclude with recommendations for changes that will reduce the unintended and harmful consequences of this duty.
- H. The approval process for Indigenous foster parents and homes must be flexible, non-discriminatory, reasonable, and treat with fairness those realities of life in many First Nations which are beyond individuals' control (such as the availability of housing with separate bedrooms for each child). This process must also give the benefits of keeping a child in their community significant weight when assessing the suitability of a potential foster parent or home.
- I. Child welfare agencies should be given sufficient funding for robust and collaborative prevention and family support services.
- J. Non-Indigenous child welfare workers must be given mandatory cultural, historical, and anti-racism education as part of their standard training. They should also be given culture-specific training when being placed into a community with a significant population of people from a particular Indigenous nation.

- K. Foster homes and foster parents must demonstrate that they will provide a respectful and non-shaming home for Two-Spirit and LGBTQI youth.
- L. We need greater investment in supporting healthy pregnancy, childbirth, and parenting practices, including but not limited to funding for and access to Indigenous midwifery, in-community births, birthing or other relevant ceremonies, breastfeeding support, and parenting classes.

## **VII. Youth leaving our communities to go to school**

- 81. We cannot talk about the IFN communities' challenges without talking about the widespread practice of having to send our youth away to cities for school, which some people in our communities compare to a modern day residential school system.
- 82. Many of our youth must leave their families, homes, and communities and travel to Thunder Bay, Kenora, and Winnipeg to go to school, because some of our communities do not have high schools. This begins as early as Grade 9, when some of the youth are just 13 or 14.
- 83. Most of them end up living in boarding homes with strangers. This happens even though some of them have family members living in these cities, because of a perverse policy decision whereby the government will pay strangers to provide room and board to our youth, but will not pay room and board to family members. This creates needless risk and, given the widespread poverty in our communities and families, is also discriminatory.
- 84. These youth are made vulnerable to violence through separation and isolation in environments that are usually unfamiliar, unsafe, and racist. We know that too many Indigenous children have ended up dead because they have had to come to these cities for school and other services.
- 85. As we offer these submissions, we hold 17-year-old Braiden Jacob's family and community of Webequie First Nation in our hearts as they mourn the recent tragedy of his death after he went to Thunder Bay for counselling.

86. It haunts us when we hear that yet another Indigenous child has died far from home simply because they could not get what they needed in their own community, and the only place they could get what they needed was full of danger. It is a heavy weight on our families to know that accepting this risk is the cost of our youth obtaining an education and job opportunities. We should be able to celebrate our young people's progress on their paths toward their goals and dreams, not fear it.

87. We offer the following recommendations with respect to schooling for Indigenous youth:

- A. All First Nations children should have the option to attend kindergarten to Grade 12 in or away from their community, according to what they and their families believe is right for them. Governments should prioritize investing in high-quality education delivery models that allow youth to complete high school in northern communities and communities that are far from urban centres.
- B. Where First Nations youth choose to stay in-community to complete their schools, governments should invest in innovative methods of ensuring that they have access to a wide range of high-quality courses.
- C. Majority non-Indigenous schools must invest heavily in challenging and preventing anti-Indigenous racism in the school environment, and must ensure that the curriculum, resources, and extra-curricular activities available are inclusive of Indigenous students.
- D. Family members should be allowed to receive payments for room and board for children on at least an equal basis as non-family members.
- E. Indigenous parents should be made aware of their and their children's rights and options regarding all aspects of their children's attendance at a school outside of their community.



## **VIII. Elder abuse**

88. Elder abuse is a serious problem in the IFN communities, and one that we want to acknowledge this in these submissions as we believe it has been under-explored in this Inquiry.
89. Elderly populations in any society are at risk of abuse as they become more dependent on others, and the IFN communities have seen a rise in this risk particularly in relation to the drug epidemic. This is partly because many elders are prescribed pain medications, and because of this, they are becoming targets of robbery and assault, sometimes even by family members.
90. Just a few weeks ago, an 82-year-old woman in one of our IFN communities was beaten to death by her grandson, in an act that was connected to his drug addiction and mental health issues.
91. Many elders are also having to step in and care for their grandchildren without financial and other supports that are equal to those provided to non-family foster parents, while living on incomes that are typically very low. This is creating undue hardship and pressure on them, and impacts on the care they can provide to the children.
92. Elders are also experiencing neglect, tokenization, and isolation that do not reflect our traditions, but rather are symptomatic of the losses, ruptures, and imbalances that colonization has forced upon us.
93. Our elders carry the scars of colonization, particularly from residential schools, and as a result they too are sometimes sources of harm to others in our communities. Their needs cannot be forgotten when we think about our healing; they too need care, support, and services.
94. When our elders are not honoured, it is harmful to them and to the whole community. Our elders embody an important stage of our life cycle and have a valuable role to

play in their families and communities, as people who carry memories, knowledge, experience, and understanding about life that benefit us all.

### **Overarching principles for going forward**

95. In addition to the issue-specific recommendations made above, the IFN recommends that the following overarching principles be applied in the implementation of all recommendations by all parties. They order in which they are given does not reflect their relative importance.
96. Indigenous people and nations are entitled to more than mere physical survival. We are entitled to excellence, justice, healing, dignity, wellbeing, opportunity, hope, and self-determination across every facet of our lives and societies.
97. All decisions and actions must contribute to reconnection, rebalancing, repair, and restoration of Indigenous people, families, cultures, languages, systems, relationships, lands and water. Nothing that continues the disruption and weakening of these things can be tolerated any longer.
98. All decisions and actions must support the liberation of Indigenous peoples from the imposition of foreign cultural, legal, economic, and social systems.
99. All decisions and actions must respect and protect Mother Earth and our animal relations, and wherever possible should be implemented in a way that is grounded in Indigenous people's sacred relationships with our lands and waters.
100. Solutions must be driven by Indigenous women, girls, and Two Spirit people in a manner reflective of their inherent rights, value, knowledge, and authority.
101. Solutions must include a specific focus on the wellbeing, experiences, healing needs, and cultural roles of Indigenous men and boys.
102. Solutions must challenge and dismantle the colonial ideologies of homophobia, transphobia, and misogyny.

103. All solutions must be community-driven, with overarching coordination, support, and funding that is guaranteed through provincial and federal action plans.
104. All solutions must work from a strengths-based approach that centers Indigenous cultures, families, and communities, and honours the uniqueness and diversity among them.
105. All solutions must be grounded in respect for Indigenous rights, including treaty rights, constitutional rights, inherent rights, the rights set out in the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, and rights as understood within the legal systems of specific Indigenous nations. Where legal interpretation has been biased by colonial worldviews and interests to the detriment of Indigenous peoples, such interpretations must not be considered binding.
106. All actions and decisions must be informed by robust analysis of how they will impact people on the basis of their specific indigeneity, language, gender, sexual identity, geographic location, income and other resources.
107. All policies, laws, programs, institutions, and systems affecting Indigenous people that are assimilationist in nature must be reviewed and reformed.
108. The widespread anti-Indigenous racism and discrimination prevalent across Canadian society must be challenged and ended.
109. Funding to Indigenous people, nations, organizations, and programs must be equitable. This does not mean equal to non-Indigenous funding; given the historical inequities and injustices, it almost certainly means more. Funding must be sufficient to repair the damage done; meet ongoing culture- and location-specific needs; reflect the rights, authority, territories, and jurisdiction of Indigenous peoples; honour the treaties and other bases of rights; and repay the debts owed. We must challenge the pernicious myth that any such funding is charitable or generous on the part of Canada and the provinces.

110. Funding should be directed by default to the community level, in a manner that does not discriminate between those communities that are members of Provincial and Territorial Organizations, and those that are not.
111. Funding should be provided in a manner that supports long-term, holistic, integrated, autonomous, and ambitious strategic planning by Indigenous communities, and in a manner that dramatically increases operational stability and reduces burdensome and paternalistic reporting demands.
112. All decisions, actions, programs, laws, institutions and policies must ensure and enhance Indigenous people's collective and individual safety in the broadest sense, including physical, emotional, spiritual, health, economic, and cultural safety and others.
113. Education is critical to ending violence against Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people.
114. Every Indigenous child belongs to a nation, and the heartbeat of every Indigenous nation is its children. Anything that threatens this belonging and this heartbeat cannot be tolerated any longer.
115. All solutions must be informed by the particular contexts, realities, and needs of Indigenous communities, especially those that are the most remote from major cities.
116. Actions and decisions must be embedded in robust implementation and accountability frameworks that are developed with those Indigenous people affected, and that ensure adequate resources and opportunities for Indigenous leadership in implementation and oversight.
117. Solutions must be embedded in economic, social, and political development that is led by Indigenous communities in accordance with processes that uphold our sovereignty, and are grounded in our right to free, prior, and informed consent.
118. Those giving care must also be given care, to prevent and address stress, burnout, vicarious trauma, and unhealthy coping mechanisms. This includes those doing care

work in formal professional capacities and in informal, family- or community-based capacities.

119. Indigenous people must be supported throughout the whole of life in ways that reflect our communities' understandings of the needs, rights, responsibilities, and roles of each stage of life.
120. Healing includes laughter, kindness, generosity, joy, pleasure, nourishment, and ceremony. We must ensure that these aspects of healing are valued and provided for.
121. Not one single Indigenous person is disposable, or unworthy of care, support, hope, place, expression, and life. Anything that denies or dishonours the inherent value, dignity, and potential of any Indigenous person is unacceptable.
122. The greatest tools Indigenous communities have for ending violence are our cultures and unconditional love for our people.

### **Wise practices**

123. The IFN has done a lot of work to gather, create, and implement wise practices in addressing violence in our communities.
124. This has included a scoping exercise of wise practices used by others in Canada and internationally. An excerpt from this scoping exercise is attached as Appendix B.
125. We share this in the hope that this information is useful for Indigenous people across the country in addressing the violence against your women and girls.

### **Conclusion**

126. The IFN offers its care, compassion, and solidarity to all Indigenous families who have lost women and girls to violence, whether or not they have participated in the Inquiry process. We honour the families as the driving force behind the public awareness of this issue, and this Inquiry. We thank you for your efforts, your sacrifices, your energy, and your refusal to let your precious loved ones be forgotten.

127. The IFN gives thanks to all of the Indigenous Nations that welcomed the Inquiry onto your lands.
128. The IFN gives thanks to the Commissioners for accepting this very challenging responsibility under nearly impossible conditions, and for your efforts to show humility, graciousness, courage, and determination in leading it. We know that you know it has not been good enough. We know that you fought to make it better.
129. The IFN gives thanks to all of the Commission staff and others who have made this Inquiry possible, including the Elders, healers, drummers, singers, artists, and others who have done your best to keep us all connected to sources of safety, care, life, and wellness amidst a very painful and challenging process.
130. The IFN gives thanks for the opportunity to participate in the Inquiry as a party with standing, and to the other parties with standing who have made outstanding and important contributions.
131. The IFN calls on all members and all parts of Canadian society to treat the final report, and the lives and memories of our women and girls, with the respect, seriousness, and commitment to change that they deserve.
132. Miigwetch. Niá:wen.

## Appendix A - Map of the IFN Communities

### *Independent First Nations in Ontario*



## Appendix B - Excerpt from the document *Towards Ending Violence Against Aboriginal Women: Literature Review, Independent First Nations, 2017.*

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

Participants in the IFN focus groups commented:

We could discuss the problems impacting our communities all day long but it doesn't get us anywhere so instead of focusing on the things that keep us down, we need to start envisioning the things that are uplifting to our nations. Our people need to be empowered and inspired going into the future; we need to restore or revitalize pride in our communities and create solutions for a brighter tomorrow. (Maracle, August 2011, p. 15).

This section of the literature review highlights wise and promising<sup>4</sup> practices and interventions that have been cited in literature to address violence against Indigenous women. The goal is to provide inspiration and ideas that will help IFN First Nations to implement or augment initiatives to end violence against Indigenous women. By considering what makes initiatives successful and meaningful, it points the way forward and provides recommendations for action. The tables also include initiatives that may not have been formally evaluated, analyzed, or cited in literature but have been referenced by Indigenous people or presented as practices that have seen success. It is imperative that the voices of Indigenous people, through first-hand experience, be included here.

#### Characteristics of Wise Practices and Recommendations for Action

The following are the characteristics or elements of wise and promising practices to address violence against Indigenous women, organized to reflect the medicine wheel. By looking at what is working well, it becomes apparent that these wise and promising practices may be considered by IFN in future and ongoing work to end violence against Indigenous women.

<sup>4</sup> As pointed out by a number of researchers, the terms "promising practice" and "wise practice" are more accurate than the more conventional "best practice", because they suggest "movement along the healing path, and acknowledge progress and the likelihood of success without implying that only a particular practice or approach will succeed" (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2006, p. 7).

What are the commonalities or the key factors that help ensure the success of initiatives? What does the literature recommend for successfully addressing and ending violence against Indigenous women?

Nearly all studies agreed that **wholistic and community-driven healing initiatives** hold the most promise in ending violence against Indigenous women, and must involve families and communities (Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers Responsible for Justice, 2013; Ellerby & Bedard, 1998; Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2006; Chiefs of Ontario, 2015; Legal Strategy Coalition on Violence against Indigenous Women, February 26, 2015). Successful initiatives focus on healing and wellness, rather than just the violence itself. They are also multi-disciplinary approaches (Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers Responsible for Justice, 2013) and supports physical, mental, spiritual and emotional well-being.

Bopp et al. proposed a framework for intervention aimed at reducing and ending family violence and abuse. The framework has the following categories: building an adequate community response system; healing the root causes; transforming the family and community systems that enable and perpetuate abuse; and building adequate support and service systems for long-term healing and development (Bopp, Bopp, & Lane, 2003, p. 83).

"The degree to which individual, family and community healing has taken hold and been able to change community norms and behaviours is also a major determinant" of a community that is able to end violence against Indigenous women (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2006, p. 54).

Another overarching wise practice is to promote networking and knowledge exchange. For example, the IFN Shelter Directors indicated there is tremendous value in meeting together to share information, exchange ideas, receive additional training and work on collective approaches to end violence against Indigenous women (Maracle, August 2011).



Families of 15 First Nations families that have lost loved ones who are missing or were murdered, made a number of recommendations on what an inquiry into MMIW would look like. These recommendations were grouped under key areas: solid foundation; emphasis on healing; ensure and increase supports; strong leadership and direction; improve police investigations; improve the justice system (Chiefs of Ontario, 2015)

### EAST—Leadership and Accountability

**Engaged leadership:** When First Nations leaders are engaged on this issue and take responsibility for supporting Indigenous women experiencing violence, there can be healing in the community (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2006; Chiefs of Ontario, 2015). Community leaders must be seen as role models who listen to people and help community members on their healing journey. Men who champion this issue and show positive leadership by delivering anti-violence messages targeting other men can truly initiate and promote healing (Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers Responsible for Justice, 2013). On the other hand, some small, rural and remote First Nations indicate that men in leadership sometimes perpetuate the violence, or protect family members from taking responsibility for their violence (Ipsos Reid, 2006). Healing and accountability starts with community leadership.

**Women create solutions:** Positive changes can often be seen when Indigenous women are in leadership positions (Ipsos Reid, 2006), and when Indigenous women are actively involved in creating solutions (Bopp, Bopp, & Lane, 2003; Ellerby & Bedard, 1998; Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2006; Feinstein & Pearce, 2015; Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers Responsible for Justice, 2013; ONWA, December 1989).

**Consequence for perpetrators:** In terms of personal accountability, effective initiatives are those that have actual, enforced consequences for perpetrators (Ipsos Reid, 2006; Shea, Nahwegahbow, & Andersson, 2010). There must be individual accountability. “For the healing process to begin, the individual must have desire and motivation to heal and must take responsibility for him/herself, his/her behaviour and his/her involvement in the healing process” (Ellerby & Bedard, 1998, p. 15).

Healing teams are strong and skilled. Skilled and dedicated employees, volunteers, managers and project teams of support agencies and programs are essential to success (Bopp, Bopp, & Lane, 2003; Maracle, August 2011). Projects funded by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation were asked what made their healing practice or program successful; more than half replied that it was their healing team that was the most important success factor (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2006, p. 115).

### SOUTH—Programs and Community Development

**Spaces are safe:** Unresolved trauma causes people to feel unsafe; it is therefore critical that support workers, healers, and front line workers provide spaces that are physically safe, as well as culturally safe and sensitive (Ipsos Reid, 2006; Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2006; Chansonneuve, 2005; Chiefs of Ontario, 2015). This applies to shelters, transitional houses, crisis centres, and delivery and access locations for programs and services (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2006; Maracle, August 2011). Programs and services must reflect women’s beliefs and traditions (Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers Responsible for Justice, 2013). Sites and personnel can create trust through non-judgmental attitudes.

**Healing is wholistic:** First Nations that are addressing this issue successfully use holistic approaches that incorporate tradition, culture and often language, and provide support for victims, abusers, families and community members (Ipsos Reid, 2006; Bopp, Bopp, & Lane, 2003; Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2006; Lane, Bopp, Bopp, & Norris, 2002). A number of studies indicate that sentencing circles, healing circles, justice circles and other forms of restorative justice represent a wholistic and effective approach (Ipsos Reid, 2006; Shea, Nahwegahbow, & Andersson, 2010). Incorporating other traditional social responses to violence (e.g., banishment, understanding sex roles) and integrating Indigenous languages, traditional healing and ceremonies into the process have shown promise in addressing violence against Indigenous women (Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers Responsible for Justice, 2013; Ellerby & Bedard, 1998; Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2006). A combination of formal therapeutic sessions and informal social and cultural activities and Western and traditional approaches contributed to overall success as this addresses the many facets of the issue including unresolved trauma, grief, addictions, mental health. Treatment and support must look at the 'whole' person (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2006; Andersson, Shea, Amaratunga, McGuire, & Sioui, 2010; AMR Planning & Consulting, July 2011).

**Healing opportunities for men:** It is important to ensure there are healing opportunities for men as well (AMR Planning & Consulting, July 2011; Chiefs of Ontario, 2015). The most successful programs for men are those that offer hands-on activities such as making drums, sports, hunting and fishing, rather than those focused directly on healing (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2006). Also effective were approaches that empower men to understand and revitalize their traditional male roles, including their roles as fathers (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2006; Lamontagne, January 2011).

**Funding is adequate:** There is near universal agreement in the literature that, with adequate financial resources, more community development can be done and better, wholistic programs can be developed to end violence against Indigenous women (Ipsos Reid, 2006; Bopp, Bopp, & Lane, 2003; Feinstein & Pearce, 2015; Maracle, August 2011). Successful programs are cited as those with adequate funding, though some say this funding should not funnel through the First Nation administration or Chief and Council (Ipsos Reid, 2006; Bopp, Bopp, & Lane, 2003; (Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers Responsible for Justice, 2013).

**Incorporate the arts in healing:** The incorporation of music, dance, creative writing, theatre (role playing), visual arts and other forms of creative expression lead to some highly effective healing initiatives (Maracle, August 2011; ONWA, December 1989).

**Work together with a variety of partners:** IFN has made strategic decisions to create linkages and partnerships between service providers, advocacy organizations, urban Indigenous support networks, provincial governments and organizations, and other partners (Maracle, August 2011; Lamontagne, January 2011; AMR Planning & Consulting, July 2011). These partnerships allow IFN members to address the broad spectrum of health and wellness needs of Indigenous women (Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, November 2014; Maracle, August 2011; Public Safety Canada, 2012). This inter-connectivity and sharing also applies in individual First Nations. Service providers and various departments need to work together and connect with each other to best support women facing violence and abuse (ONWA; Shea, Nahwegahbow, & Andersson, 2010; Lamontagne, January 2011).



## WEST—Research and Education

**Teach traditional values:** It is essential to teach children and youth, formally and informally, that violence against women is not acceptable (Ipsos Reid, 2006; Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers Responsible for Justice, 2013; ONWA, December 1989; Lamontagne, January 2011). As the root causes of violence against Aboriginal women are far-reaching and prevalent, community members must understand it is not acceptable, and has never been part of traditional culture or life (Ipsos Reid, 2006; Lane, Bopp, Bopp, & Norris, 2002; Shea, Nahwegahbow, & Andersson, 2010; Special Committee on Violence against Indigenous Women, March 2014). Such teaching could include learning about respect, culture, traditional spirituality, healthy relationships, and self-esteem.

**Learn about Residential Schools:** Reclaiming history and learning about residential schools and its impacts on individuals, families and communities can be a catalyst for healing, awareness and empathy and should be widespread (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2006; Feinstein & Pearce, 2015; TRC, 2015).

**Promote cultural sensitivity and cultural safety training:** Educating government officials and departments on the complex factors around violence against Indigenous women is vital, as is providing training to all government workers and service providers, including police officers, in cultural sensitivity and cultural safety (Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers Responsible for Justice, 2013; Feinstein & Pearce, 2015; ONWA, December 1989).

**Ensure accurate and culturally appropriate statistics:** Gathering and maintaining accurate and relevant statistics is essential but challenging (Maracle, August 2011; Bopp, Bopp, & Lane, 2003; Legal Strategy Coalition on Violence against Indigenous Women, February 26, 2015). The data must be gender-specific, and allow oral history as a valid form of data collection (Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers Responsible for Justice, 2013). All research must adhere to community-based research protocols and ethics (Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers Responsible for Justice, 2013), which address the need for clear outcomes and benefits to First Nation communities (TRC, 2015).

**Understand triggers for violence:** Education is not only for women and families; men must also understand the blocks, attitudes and behaviours that cause them to become angry and violent (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2006). Given that much male violent behaviour is rooted in abuse and trauma experienced by these men when they were boys, programs and initiatives that help men understand these 'triggers' have been shown to be most successful (Shea, Nahwegahbow, & Andersson, 2010).

**Provide school-based mental health and wellness opportunities:** Helping children and youth deal with violence and the intergenerational effects of trauma in a school setting can also be a promising practice to address violence. This can include counselling sessions, traditional forms of discipline, developing strong and healthy relationships between students and teachers, and school walk-in mental health clinics (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2006; ONWA, December 1989; Lamontagne, January 2011; OFIFC, 2012).



**Conduct evidence-based research at the community level:** While there are various regional and national studies on data and statistics regarding violence against Indigenous women, there is very little research done at the local First Nation level. More detailed data of this sort could inform program development and help to justify funding requests (Maracle, August 2011). Public Education. Awareness campaigns and public education opportunities can increase knowledge of the important role of Indigenous women and root causes of violence (OFIFC, 2012; Pacific Association of First Nations Women, BC Women's Hospital, BC Association of Specialized Victim Assistance and Counselling Programs, October 2003; Special Committee on Violence against Indigenous Women, March 2014). This could be posters, media campaigns, and curriculum development and teacher resources.

**Call a national inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Men and Children:** Many organizations including the AFN, TRC, federal political parties (Liberals, Green party, NDP), NWAC and numerous others advocate for a national inquiry to look at the root issues of violence against Indigenous women and develop national recommendations and strategies (TRC, 2015; Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, December 2014; Palmater, 2015). There is caution, however, that any inquiry must be based on Indigenous traditional law and culture, families must be involved in developing the process and the focus must be on healing (Chiefs of Ontario, 2015). This inquiry also needs to look at the high incidence of homicides against Aboriginal. The TRC is also recommending the support of its Missing Children Project to record the names of the students who died at residential schools.

**Conduct research on violence against Indigenous men and boys:** The homicide rate of Indigenous men is higher than that of women yet this is an under-researched area (Jones, 2015; Warren, 2015). A major coroner's inquest was held in Ontario into the mysterious deaths of seven First Nations youth who died while attending high school in Thunder Bay. Six of the youth were boys, one was a girl. The jury delivered 145 recommendations in the areas of education, health, youth participation in decisions, missing person investigations, police issues and calls to action (Ontario Ministry of Safety and Correctional Services, 2016).

## NORTH—Policy and Legislation

**Ensure the presence of community police officers:** Studies indicate that the presence of community police officers, particularly Indigenous police officers working directly in First Nation communities (Ontario Native Women's Association, December 1989) and a positive relationship with community members can encourage Indigenous women to come forward to seek help and protection from violence (Ipsos Reid, 2006).

**Provide cultural training for front line workers:** Ensuring that first responders, support workers and health care personnel are trained in culturally safe and sensitive practices can be effective in addressing violence against Indigenous women (Maracle, August 2011; Ipsos Reid, 2006; Bopp, Bopp, & Lane, 2003; Lamontagne, January 2011; Special Committee on Violence against Indigenous Women, March 2014).

**Ensure First Nations/multi-departmental coordination:** Policies addressing violence against Indigenous women should be explicitly prioritized and supported by community leadership, adequately resourced, and implemented across all departments through policies and processes within the First Nation (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2006).

**Integrate policy development:** Policies, programs and legislation must take into account "the whole web of factors that put Aboriginal people at higher risk of victimization" and not see family violence largely as a criminal issue or only focus on punishment and healing for individuals (Bopp, Bopp, & Lane, 2003).

**Observe culturally-appropriate protocols:** Communities with active justice committees and collaboration protocols for working with policy and the courts "have been able to make significant strides in reshaping justice services according to Aboriginal values and beliefs and in building effective community-based or regional services operated by Aboriginal people" (Bopp, Bopp, & Lane, 2003, p. 79).

**Link healing with political, community and economic development:** There is a growing body of knowledge that links healing with effecting change at the political and economic level (Special Committee on Violence against Indigenous Women, March 2014; Lane, Bopp, Bopp, & Norris, 2002). "It is certainly possible to emerge from trauma and tragedy to become physically and spiritually whole... but governmentally imposed limits to people's development potential constitutes a very serious obstacle to keeping the next generations remotely healthy" (Lane, Bopp, Bopp, & Norris, 2002). This can include a number of measures, including the provision of adequate, affordable housing so women fleeing violence have somewhere to live (Maracle, August 2011), providing employment and training programs that empower Indigenous women (OFIFC, 2009), and other measures to promote personal and financial independence.

**Make a clear community commitment:** First Nations can create by-laws, policies or community laws that address violence, and enshrined the protection of women in the governance of the community. These could be framed as a 'Children and Youth Bill of Rights' (Expositor staff, 2013), a by-law, a Band Council Resolution, or a policy. These can give women and children the assurance that their First Nation is committed to ending violence against Indigenous women, and gives leadership the authority and tools to address it.

**Provide more services to inmates:** Culturally relevant services are required for Indigenous inmates, including increased services for Indigenous men and women dealing with family and domestic violence. (TRC, 2015)

**Law Reform:** Discrimination against Indigenous women and girls exists in the Canadian legal system and more law reform is necessary (Legal Strategy Coalition on Violence against Indigenous Women, February 26, 2015).

**Improve Police Investigations:** There are overlapping areas of police jurisdiction that impede resolution of some investigations into violence against Indigenous women (NWAC, 2010; Special Committee on Violence against Indigenous Women, March 2014). There needs to be better standards and procedures as to how various levels of police forces deal with these cases.

### Examples of Wise Practices

The tables below reflect the four medicine wheel directions and the eight strategic directions established by OFIFC in its *Strategic Framework* as an organizing principle, summarizing the programs and initiatives developed to address the issue of violence against Indigenous women. This represents only an initial list but it is representative of the initiatives found during the course of preparing this Literature Review. This should be considered a 'living document' and can be updated and increased periodically.

Note that the emphasis is on First Nations-specific examples. There are many other promising practices for Indigenous people in urban settings and within Inuit and Métis communities, but most are not profiled here.

 EAST—Leadership and Accountability

Name/Title	Description	Origin	Success factors
Buffalo River Dene Nation	Provides mentoring and financial support to leaders who are addressing this issue. Also supports Elders and cultural leaders seeking to integrate healing procedures into existing cultural and spiritual practices.	Buffalo River Dene Nation, Alberta	Supports leaders, ensures financial stability, community-driven.
<i>It starts with you. It stays with him.</i>	Website with resources to help and encourage men to become role models, and stop violence against Aboriginal women.	White Ribbon Canada	A mainstream program, but could be adapted for First Nations.



## SOUTH—Programs and Community Development

Name/Title	Description	Origin	Success factors
Action for Indigenous Women	<p>Culturally relevant Friendship Centre movement Initiatives, to provide support to victims of violence and to change the conditions and behaviours that lead to violence. Includes seven programs and services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A4W Live: mobile site for Aboriginal youth</li> <li>• National relaunch of New Journeys web site</li> <li>• I am a Kind Man and Moose Hide program</li> <li>• Annual Indigenous Women's policy leadership award</li> <li>• Human Trafficking Initiatives (to come)</li> <li>• Community Safety Planning pilot project</li> </ul>	National Association of Friendship Centres	<p>Provide information, tools and support Indigenous girls and women need; engage men, families, communities and the general public to change conditions and behaviours; collect real-time data about violence and victimization. (National Association of Friendship Centres, 2015)</p>
Art Therapy	Allows families to participate in art therapy and art-making as part of healing.	Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health (among others)	Increase knowledge of traditional parenting, understand intergenerational impacts on parenting and family relationships. A non-verbal way to express feelings.
Rape Crisis Centre	An Aboriginal Women's Program which provides one-on-one counselling, healing circles, traditional teachings, community referrals and educational workshops. WAWAW also coordinates the Sacred Footprints Aboriginal Youth Group and the Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women's Family Counselling Program.	Women Against Violence Against Women (WAWAW) in BC	Programs are holistic and incorporate traditional teachings. (Eberts, 2005)
Asini Kanapawit Counselling Services	Traditional therapists who integrate Western philosophies.	Cut Knife, Saskatchewan	All counsellors are residential school survivors who can relate to clients. All counsellors speak Cree to encourage language use. Counsellors provide a safe environment, and are knowledgeable and professional.
Biidaaban Community Healing Model	A restorative justice approach to deal with offences. Includes treatment plans for offenders, community gatherings (circles) to give everyone a voice on the impact of the offense.		



Name/Title	Description	Origin	Success factors
Brothers In Spirit project	Involves men in violence prevention programming, increasing community dialogue concerning men's roles in preventing and ending violence, promoting male role models.	Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council	Supports men on their healing journey, holistic, provides safe environment for men.
Culture as Treatment Model	Incorporates aspects of culture as a way to heal. Part of treatment for addictions.	Round Lake Treatment Centre (among a number of others)	Restores pride in and awareness of culture. Grounds participants in tradition.
Culture Camp	An opportunity for community members to spend time in nature, living off the land and connecting.	Many First Nations	Reconnect with nature, regain traditional skills, and link Elders and youth, opportunity for entire community to be together away from the community, restores pride and self-esteem.
Esemkwu (wrapped in blanket) Squamish Nation Crisis Centre	Conceived by Elders as a place for healing and a catalyst for change, offers crisis intervention. Group also organized a Residential School Healing Conference for Squamish people.		Community-driven and developed. Elders are part of the solution.
Esketemc Healing Committee	A community made famous in the 1980s to overcome rampant alcoholism in the community. Out of this, the community developed a successful training program called "New Directions Training".	Alkali Lake, BC	Community-led, meets direct community needs, professional and knowledgeable leaders.
Healing Lodge, Healing Centre, Treatment Centre	A safe, culturally centred program, either residential or day programs, to help people with healing from addictions, trauma, violence or abuse.	Many First Nations	Provides a safe environment, away from the community, opportunities for self-reflection, counselling, healing. <sup>1</sup>
Healing Society, Mental Health and Social Work Service, First Nation	Traditional activities for all community members looking for healing and restoration. Can include drumming, singing, storytelling, hunting, fishing, trapping, snowshoeing, traditional food preparation, smudging, beading, sewing, reconnecting with nature, medicine wheel teachings, traditional medicines, sacred fire.	Many First Nations	Connects members to their culture and traditions, restores pride.



Name/Title	Description	Origin	Success factors
Holistic Circle Healing Process	The First Nation formed a Resource Team (political leaders, service providers, community volunteers) to guide the community through the healing journey. They developed a training program (modelled on the New Directions Training) and also the Community Holistic Circle Healing, which are procedures for dealing with disclosures of abuse and how it is dealt with in the court system.	Hollow Water First Nation	Addressed structural and inter-departmental issues, holistic, community-led and driven.
I da wa da di (We Should all Speak)	Traditional healing practices for women as part of a series of retreats and workshops. Includes fasting, circles, songs, art therapy.	Six Nations, Ontario	Provides a safe environment, builds trust, learning they are not alone, incorporation of traditional therapies and healing methods.
Just Therapy	Developed in New Zealand, this is a reflective approach to therapy that takes into account the impacts of colonization, marginalization and poverty.	New Zealand	Community-developed, Indigenous-specific, takes into account the multi-faceted and intergenerational impacts of trauma.
Kanawayhitow-In: Taking Care of Each Other's Spirit	Adapted from an Ontario campaign. A variety of resources. Facilitator training for front line workers to educate the community on prevention of violence and delivery of violence prevention and education workshops.		Adapted to be culturally relevant. Male-specific resources, capacity building so community members can be facilitators.
Promotional Campaigns	A number of First Nations have developed posters and promotional campaigns to address this issue. Some are also developed by Government departments, ministries or organizations such as the government of Manitoba's Aboriginal Men's Anti-Violence Campaign <a href="http://www.gov.mb.ca/stoptheviolence/amavc.html">http://www.gov.mb.ca/stoptheviolence/amavc.html</a> or the Tlicho community promotion of videos and resources to address violence against Aboriginal women <a href="https://tlichocart.files.wordpress.com/2014/09/breaking-the-silence-premiere-poster-2.jpg">https://tlichocart.files.wordpress.com/2014/09/breaking-the-silence-premiere-poster-2.jpg</a>	Many First Nations	Empowers community members, community-developed and driven, raises awareness.
Talk4Healing Helpline	A partnership between ONWA and Beendigan, this is a culturally appropriate crisis support and referral service for Indigenous women affected by violence in remote and isolated communities.		



Name/Title	Description	Origin	Success factors
Traditional Language Programs	Classroom, workplace, homes and other settings for language learning.	Many First Nations	Restores pride in culture, understand how culture and language are linked, closer connections with Elders and language speakers, opportunities for youth to participate.
Partner Assault Response Program	While not an Indigenous-specific program, this is a program to enhance victim safety and increase client accountability. A wide variety of topics are discussed including: causes of domestic violence, power and control issues in relationships; gender roles; anger interventions; effective communications; stress management and other topics. A certificate of completion is available, which can be presented to the courts or correctional services.	Anger Management Centre of Toronto	Addresses some of the underlying issues for perpetrators and provides a certificate at the end of successful completion of the program which assist with court sentencing or probation.
Man Alive "Living without Violence" courses	From New Zealand, this is a Maori-specific, culturally appropriate program for men to take responsibility for their violence and understand there is no excuse for abuse. Participants work in groups of 16 men and two facilitators, once a week for a couple of hours. It is run by men, for men.	Man Alive Tane Ora	Culturally-appropriate. Addresses the roots of violence, by men, for men, in a safe environment. Allows men to take responsibility for their actions and understand where the anger and violence comes from.
White Bison	A non-profit organization in the United States offering sober living, recovery, addictions prevention and wellness learning resources to Native American communities. There are a number of courses offered through the Wellbriety Training Institute, including healing from intergenerational trauma, programs for men, women and families and culturally-based 12 step programs.		Culturally-appropriate. Addresses the root causes of violence. Programs can be delivered at the community level.
Gookomisag Odanoklitaanaawaa Mino Bimaadizwin (Grandmothers Working for Good Life)	A grassroots program established in Winnipeg after a father sexually abused his daughter and re-entered the community and re-offended with other girls. The program aims to increase public awareness to end violence against girls and women through events, education and spiritual ceremonies. It is run by a volunteer group of grandmothers.		

Name/Title	Description	Origin	Success factors
"Who is She?" Campaign	Chiefs of Ontario began a community-driven process to examine the collective safety of Indigenous peoples. One of the main goals is to raise funds for a judicial inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. Currently, there is no financial goal or timeline.	Ontario	Community-driven, Involves affected families
Crisis Centre	Established in Elispogtog First Nation. Successful centre to prevent suicide and self-harm that focuses on: prevention (through a help line and other programs); crisis intervention and community rehabilitation.	Elispogtog First Nation, New Brunswick	Community-driven, safe and confidential.
Sexual Abuse Survivors Program	For sexual abuse survivors to increase awareness of how abuse has impacted their relationships using a wholistic model and develops an historical 'map' of abuse in the participants' family of origin.	Bikdaaban Healing Lodge, Heron Bay, Ontario	Wholistic, incorporates traditional methods and ceremonies
Sex Trade Out Reach Mobile (S.T.O.R.M)	Assists Indigenous sex workers in finding shelter, other information and referrals, crisis intervention, basic supplies, snacks and clothing	Minwaashin Lodge, Ottawa, ON	Encourages women to connect with their culture, non-judgemental
Drug and Treatment Programs	Lodges, centres and programs that offer Indigenous-specific drug and alcohol support and treatment. Some examples include Rising Sun Treatment Centre, National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program (NNADAP), lodges and centres	Many First Nations	Culturally-based, access to ceremonies, many have in-patient and/or out-patient choices, help clients deal with underlying issues, including lateral violence, trauma, effects of colonialism
Circling Buffalo Program	A partnership between Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC), Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), Shelter Networking Group, Manitoba Family Violence Prevention Program, Manitoba Tribal Councils. Interested First Nations apply for INAC Family Violence Prevention funding. Program connects them with partners, supports, programs. Communities		Provides much needed funding, awareness campaign resulted in expanding list of resources offered to clients.
Shelters and Transition Houses	Located on and off reserve across Canada, these houses provide safe spaces for women and children fleeing violence and abuse.		Many incorporate access to culture and Indigenous traditions and holistic healing.
Children who Witness Abuse	Provides a safe place for young people to discuss the trauma of witnessing violence; develop parental awareness of how violence affects children and raise community awareness through violence education.	Haida Gwaii Society for Community Peace, Masset, BC	Use of Elders and cultural teachers as well as artists



Name/Title	Description	Origin	Success factors
Purple Ribbon Campaign	Developed by the Cambridge Bay Wellness Centre In Nunavut, the campaign educates the public that violence against women and children is not culturally acceptable. Community members can put a purple ribbon in their window to indicate they are a safe home where women and children fleeing violence can find immediate shelter and assistance. The program also works with schools and offers education workshops and counselling.	Cambridge Bay, Nunavut	Incorporates Inuit teachings and cultural safety.
Residential Schools Healing Programs	A variety of First Nations and organizations offer healing and education programs for Residential school survivors and awareness campaigns. These include: Aboriginal Survivors for Healing Inc., Embracing our Humanness, Gwich'in Wellness Camp, Warrior Programs and others.	Across Canada	
Programs for Aboriginal Men	A number of First Nations and Indigenous organizations offer healing and education programs for Indigenous men. These are often about breaking the cycle of violence, addressing anger, discussing traditional roles for men and women, trauma counselling, healing, reclaiming cultural practices and support.  In 2013, Public Health Agency of Canada commissioned a national scan of all "Aboriginal Father Involvement Programs". The inventory contains information on the name of the program, description, location, cost, barriers and successes. The report details 35 programs. View the report at: <a href="http://cahr.uvic.ca/nearbc/media/docs/cahr51f0ad892de6c-phac-aboriginal-father-involvement-scan.pdf">http://cahr.uvic.ca/nearbc/media/docs/cahr51f0ad892de6c-phac-aboriginal-father-involvement-scan.pdf</a>		



 WEST—Research and Education

Name/Title	Description	Origin	Success factors
Breaking the Cycle: Ending Violence Against Women In Aboriginal Communities	Video, workshop and facilitation guide, lesson plans and teaching kit for students and teachers.	Justice Education Society of BC	Practical tools and supports; addresses root causes.
Community Constable Program	A successful pilot program to recruit individuals from First Nation communities and provide training to become Special Constables who go back to their communities.	Thompson, Manitoba, Gypsumville and Nisichawayasihk, Manitoba	More culturally responsive than general police officers, more trust in police, more likelihood of bringing forward allegations of abuse and violence.
Family Violence Awareness Workshops	Workshops for family members, as well as training for teachers and parents, and a radio talk show on preventing violence.	Naskapi Nation of Kawawachikamach	Wholistic, involves all family members, uses media to have farther reach.
Interviews with Elders and Survivors	Every survivor of residential school is interviewed on video by community members on their life before and after residential school.	Driftpile First Nation, Alberta	When done in a safe environment, allows survivors to acknowledge childhood trauma and begin healing journey
Kizhaay Anishnaabe Niin: I am a Kind Man	Supports men and families to end violence. As part of this program, there is an accompanying toolkit that explains violence, tips for facilitating discussions with men about abuse and violence, exercises and handouts.	Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres	Indigenous-led and created resource. Raises awareness of this issue, provides a safe environment, focus is on men. Exercises are based on the seven grandfather teachings.
Moosehide Campaign	Grassroots initiative whereby supporters wear squares of moosehide to inspire men to become involved in the movement to end violence against Indigenous women and children. From their web site, they provide resources for children, men and women. Many of the resources have been developed by other organizations but linked from the moosehidecampaign.ca web site.	c/o BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres	Grassroots, awareness raising
Residential School Remembrance Weekend	An opportunity for the First Nation to acknowledge the legacy of residential school, honour survivors. Includes traditional teachings and traditional family systems. Other First Nations have held Letting Go Ceremonies and Welcoming Home Ceremonies to also acknowledge the damage done by residential schools and help with healing.	Buffalo River Dene Nation, Alberta	Counters the shame and stigma of residential school, assists with healing and awareness
Youth Gatherings About Preventing Violence	The Board manages funds received from INAC to host educational gatherings for youth.	Alberta First Nations Regional Board for Family Violence	Involves youth, increases awareness and education about violence.





Name/Title	Description	Origin	Success factors
High School Education Program		Lac La Ronge Indian Child and Family Services Agency, Saskatchewan	Comprehensive program, culturally-relevant, reaches out to high school students, works to reduce violence and risk behaviours.
Sistermess	Elders and workers mobilize communities to de-normalize violence through modules delivered by a Mi'kmaq Elder.		Embrace Mi'kmaq healing practices and cultural ways. Made a difference in breaking the silence on family violence.
Working Together in Unity and Solidarity to Address Family Violence	Quarterly workshops held in all First Nation communities in Nova Scotia on domestic violence prevention, child safety, sexual assault prevention, media promotion, parenting programs and many others. Promotes well-being of Mi'kmaq families. Focus on prevention, prevention education, awareness campaigns, emphasis on holistic family approaches.	Mi'kmaq Family and Children Services of Nova Scotia, Eskasoni	Rooted in Mi'kmaq language and cultural traditions. Elders work with community members, workshops offered in community.
Circle of Safety Violence Program	Educating clients about domestic violence and parenting through a 20-week program. One teaching per circle. What is family violence? What is good parenting? Safety planning, social skills development, etc.	Edmonton, Alberta	Separate teaching circles for men, women and youth. Program learns from clients, integrates into future programs.
Train the Trainer Program	Community-based facilitators are trained and then implement culturally-based education and training to address and reduce violence and increase safety.	Newfoundland Aboriginal Women's Network (NAWN), Stephenville	
Butterfly Club	Program for Indigenous pre-teen girls to support positive self-identity, provide skills to build positive relationships and reduce vulnerability to violence. Components include cultural activities, academic lessons, workshops, regalia making, etc.	Kanikanichchik, Winnipeg	Run by Indigenous managers and Elders and support workers.
Violence is Preventable Program	Partnerships with school boards, relationships with local and regional First Nations and schools. Variety of programs including awareness presentations to educate the educators in schools about domestic violence, group interventions and support for children	BC Society of Transition Houses, Vancouver	Program encourages schools to partner with First Nations to ensure cultural component available for First Nations students participating in the program.
Youth Violence Prevention and Healthy Relationships Project	Working with schools and Indigenous youth, program seeks interested youth to participate in focus groups, educational workshops and create youth media projects to raise awareness of Indigenous family violence		Elders and cultural teachers can be incorporated into the program; partnerships with First Nations.

Name/Title	Description	Origin	Success factors
Aboriginal Community-Based Victim Services	Offers criminal justice support, safety planning, emotional and practical support, information and referrals for Indigenous women who have been victims of violence or abuse.	Northern Shuswap Tribal Council, BC	
Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy (AHWS)	Created to address violence and health issues in First Nation communities in Ontario.		The AHWS has seen some successes but strategies need to be in place to specifically address violence against women.
Family Homes on Reserves and Matrimonial Interests or Rights Act	Gives First Nations communities the ability to introduce laws governing matrimonial property in the event of relationship breakdown.		The Act has been criticized because it does not address on-reserve marital rights and few mechanisms for women to enforce their rights. However, greater control over their homes on reserve can make it easier for women to leave violent or abusive relationships.
First Nation Statistical Institute (FNSI)	The federal government cut funding to FNSI, but it was created to address data and knowledge gaps concerning Indigenous populations in Canada. While FNSI no longer exists, there continues to be a need for such an organization to gather and analyze data on violence against Indigenous women.	National	This was to be an Indigenous-run organization, addressing community-driven priorities and data issues.
First Nations Child and Family Caring Society	Advocates on behalf of Indigenous children and families. Works to address issue of over-representation of Indigenous children in care.	National	Indigenous-led and supported. Addresses root causes of violence, raises awareness of issue of violence against Indigenous women.
Stop the Violence Counseling Program	Counseling for women who experience violence and abuse.	Bella Coola	This is a mainstream program but could be adapted for First Nations.
Tricia's Trust	Government of Manitoba's sexual exploitation strategy includes a number of Indigenous-specific initiatives offered in culturally-sensitive ways. This includes support for those exiting trafficking situations, help with housing, support programs, employment and training.	Manitoba	Use of culture-based methods and programming. Use of multiple, grassroots partners to raise awareness and offer support services.