

Overview of Status of Women Canada Policy and Program Initiatives to reduce violence and increase safety for Indigenous women, girls and LGBTQ2 and gender non-binary individuals

**Prepared by Status of Women Canada to provide
information to the Commissioners of the National Inquiry
into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls**

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Mandate

Status of Women Canada is a federal government organization that promotes equality for women and their full participation in the economic, social and democratic life of Canada.

Status of Women Canada works to advance equality for women by focusing its efforts in three priority areas:

- increasing women's economic security and prosperity;
- encouraging women's leadership and democratic participation; and
- ending violence against women and girls.

Status of Women Canada is responsible for providing strategic policy advice and gender-based analysis support, administering the Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence and the Women's Program (which includes Indigenous women and girls), and promoting Commemorative Dates relating to women in Canada.

The Minister's Mandate Letter indicates that she will help to ensure that Indigenous Peoples and minority groups are better reflected in positions of leadership and that she will work with the Ministers of Justice and Indigenous and Northern Affairs to track progress on the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.¹

Relevant Policy and Program Initiatives

The following highlights a number of Policy and Program Initiatives that are relevant to the mandate of the Commission that seek to:

- address gender-based violence;
- provide funding support for community-based initiatives that benefit women and girls; and
- promote equality for women through GBA+ analysis support.

1. Initiatives to address gender-based violence (GBV)

1.1 Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address GBV

In June 2017, the Government of Canada launched *It's Time: Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence*,² following an engagement process through the summer and fall of 2016, including survivors, frontline workers, researchers, and advocates to bring together the efforts of federal departments and agencies that addresses GBV. Summaries of the engagement meetings are included on the SWC webpage.³ The Strategy's initiatives are organized across three pillars:

¹ <https://pm.gc.ca/eng/minister-status-women-mandate-letter>.

² <https://www.canada.ca/en/status-women/news/2017/06/its-time-canadasstrategytopreventandaddressgender-basedviolence.html>

³ <https://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/violence/strategy-strategie/engagement-en.html>

- Preventing GBV;
- Supporting survivors and their families; and
- Promoting responsive legal and justice systems.

The Strategy will fill gaps in support for vulnerable populations such as Indigenous women and girls, LGBTQ2 and gender non-binary individuals, those living in northern, rural, and remote communities, women and girls with disabilities, immigrant and refugee women, children and youth, and seniors. Budget 2017 and 2018 provided nearly \$200 million over five years and over \$40 million per year ongoing to establish, launch, and expand the Strategy. Although the Strategy encompasses all federal initiatives, six federal departments received funding for specific initiatives.

Details on the Strategy's initiatives can be found on SWC's webpages⁴ and the Strategy's first Annual Report⁵.

In the spirit of reconciliation, the Strategy put forward a range of initiatives to specifically address GBV against Indigenous women and girls, such as funding to respond to the unique needs of Indigenous survivors, providing cultural competency training for federal law enforcement officers, and working with Indigenous organizations to undertake research initiatives. Specifically, in January 2018, the Minister of SWC announced \$20 million in funding for a call for concepts as part of the new GBV Program to support organizations working in the GBV sector to develop and implement promising practices to address gaps in supports for Indigenous women and their communities, as well as other underserved groups of survivors in Canada.

Relevant Documents:

- Fact Sheet: It's Time: Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence - <https://swc-cfc.gc.ca/violence/strategy-strategie/fs-fi-5-en.html>
- A Year in Review 2017-2018 - *Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence* - <https://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/violence/strategy-strategie/report-rapport2018-en.html>

1.2 Advisory Council on Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address GBV

In June 2016, the Minister of the SWC established the Advisory Council on the Strategy to Prevent and Address GBV. The Council has 31 members representing a broad range of sectors and areas of expertise, including members of National Indigenous Organizations who speak to barriers facing Indigenous women and girls. The Advisory Council helps to inform the Strategy's priorities and its implementation. SWC also established an Indigenous Women's Circle, described further below.

Information on the members of the Advisory Council is included on the SWC webpage.⁶

⁴ <https://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/violence/strategy-strategie/index-en.html>

⁵ <https://swc-cfc.gc.ca/violence/strategy-strategie/report-rapport2018-en.html>

⁶ <https://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/violence/strategy-strategie/council-conseil-en.html>

1.3 Action Plan to Address Family Violence and Violent Crimes Against Aboriginal Women and Girls

In September 2014, the Government of Canada announced the *Action Plan to Address Family Violence and Violent Crimes against Aboriginal Women and Girls*,⁷ that outlines concrete actions that will be taken over five years (2015-2020) to address crimes against Aboriginal women and girls. The Action Plan builds on the Government of Canada's earlier investments (2010-2015) to improve community safety, and to enhance the justice system and law enforcement response to cases of missing and murdered Aboriginal women. The Action Plan includes a range of measures at 4 partner departments and agencies, totaling \$25 million over 5 years, including:

- the development of more **community safety plans** across Canada, including in regions identified as high risk through the Royal Canadian Mounted Police's recent operational overview (\$8.6 million over five years)
- projects to **break intergenerational cycles of violence and abuse by raising awareness and building healthy relationships** (\$2.5 million over five years)
- projects to **engage men and boys and empower women and girls** in efforts to **denounce and prevent violence** (\$5 million over five years)
- **victim services and assistance to victims and families** (\$7.5 million over five years)
- actions to **share information and resources** with communities and organizations, and **report regularly** on progress made and results achieved under the Action Plan (\$1.4 million over five years).

Relevant Documents:

- *Action Plan to Address Family Violence and Violent Crimes Against Aboriginal Women and Girls* - <https://swc-cfc.gc.ca/fun-fin/ap-pa/index-en.html>

2. Funding support for community-based initiatives that benefit women and girls

2.1 The Gender-Based Violence Program

The GBV Program⁸ takes action under the second pillar of Canada's Strategy "supporting survivors and their families". Its objective is to support organizations working in the GBV sector in developing and implementing promising practices to address gaps in supports for Indigenous and underserved groups of survivors in Canada. As the first call for proposals closed in March 2018, there are not yet any results that can be reported on.

⁷ <https://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/fun-fin/ap-pa/index-en.html>

⁸ <https://swc-cfc.gc.ca/fun-fin/gbv-vfs/index-en.html>

2.2 The Women's Program

The Women's Program provides funding to eligible organizations in support of projects at the local, regional and national levels that address the following three priority areas:

- Ending violence against women and girls
- Improving women's and girls' economic security and prosperity
- Encouraging women and girls in leadership and decision-making roles.

Funding is available for time-specific projects of 36 months or less that address barriers to women's participation and equality in Canadian society.

The community-based initiatives that have been funded under each priority are listed on the SWC webpage.⁹ A number of promising practices are highlighted¹⁰ including:

- Victim Services Program of Toronto – Engaging Youth in Preventing Violence against Girls and Women - <https://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/fun-fin/success-reussites/vspt-en.html>
- Old Town Storytellers Foundation – K'yuuksxw - Waking Up to Change - <https://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/fun-fin/success-reussites/otsf-en.html>
- Muskoka Community YWCA – Enterprising Women: Enhancing Small to Medium-Sized Women-Owned Businesses in Muskoka - <https://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/fun-fin/success-reussites/success7-en.html>

3. Promoting equality for women

3.1 Action Plan on Gender-Based Analysis + (GBA+)

The Government of Canada has been committed to using GBA+ in the development of policies, programs and legislation since 1995, and the SWC supports this work through GBA+ analysis assistance. It provides federal officials with the means to continually improve their work and attain better results for Canadians by being more responsive to specific needs and circumstances.

The Government recently renewed its commitment to GBA+ and is working to strengthen its implementation across all federal departments.¹¹ The *Action Plan on Gender-Based Analysis*¹² explains more about the Government's renewed commitment, including its response to the 2015 Report of the Auditor General of Canada "Implementing Gender-Based Analysis" and SWC's role its implementation.

In Budget 2018, no budget decision was taken without being informed by GBA+. To ensure that gender remains a key consideration for future governments, the Government will introduce new GBA+ legislation to make gender budgeting a permanent part of the federal budget-making process.

⁹ <https://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/fun-fin/projects-projets/index-en.html>

¹⁰ <https://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/fun-fin/success-reussites/index-en.html>

¹¹ <https://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/gba-acg/approach-approche-en.html>

¹² <https://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/gba-acg/plan-action-2016-en.html>

To strengthen Canada's ongoing capacity to apply the gender and diversity lens, the Government will make SWC an official Department of the Government of Canada by introducing departmental legislation that solidifies and formalizes the important roles of SWC and its Minister.

Relevant Documents:

- *Action Plan on Gender-Based Analysis (2016-2020)* - <https://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/gba-acs/plan-action-2016-en.PDF>
- *Budget 2018: Equality and Growth, A Strong Middle Class* - <https://www.budget.gc.ca/2018/docs/plan/toc-tdm-en.html>

3.2 Indigenous Women's Circle

SWC also established an Indigenous Women's Circle on May 23, 2018, to discuss ways of addressing systemic inequalities that disproportionately impact Indigenous women and girls – they will also advise federal action on GBV.

The Circle was also created to engage with Indigenous women leaders and experts in the public and private sector on the challenges they face and their priorities for the Government of Canada related to advancing gender equality. The members of the Circle come from a broad range of sectors and include First Nations, Métis, Inuit, youth, and Elders, with representation coming from all parts of the country. Information on the 18 members is included on the SWC webpage.¹³

¹³ <https://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/initiatives/indigenous-autochtones/circle-cercle-en.html>