



A Path Forward: Priorities and Early Strategies for B.C.

June 2021 Status Update



Ministry of
Public Safety and
Solicitor General

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Minister's Welcome

Two years ago, on June 3, 2019, the Commission of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls released its final report: *Reclaiming Power and Place*. The report was a broad call to action – not only for governments, but for all Canadians – to meaningfully address the systemic causes of violence against Indigenous women and girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA community members.

The Province of BC has a critical role in addressing the systemic causes of violence – in identifying solutions and supporting survivors and family members. We understand that this is complex work that requires a holistic approach to addressing the intergenerational trauma and inequity faced by Indigenous communities since colonization. Addressing this trauma and its systemic causes will require real, meaningful collaboration not only with Indigenous communities, but with all British Columbians. As Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General, I have been mandated to work with colleagues to implement the 231 Calls for Justice.

In 2019, prior to the release of the final report, the Province of BC committed to developing a path forward to ending violence in partnership with survivors, family members, leaders and community members.

This response, on the second anniversary of the release of the final report is intended to recognise not only the work of the National Inquiry, but also the historic work and recommendations of communities, commitments made by the Province of BC, and priorities identified through ongoing dialogue.

We recognise that this is only the beginning of the work required to meaningfully respond to the National Inquiry and the National Action Plan, and we are committed to continuing this work in meaningful collaboration with community, government and sector partners.

On behalf of my provincial government colleagues, I would like to recognise the wisdom, advocacy and ongoing action of family members, survivors, community leaders and partners. Their dedication to identifying and actioning meaningful solutions to prevent, protect and respond to violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA peoples has had an immeasurable impact on all British Columbians.



Honourable Mike Farnworth
Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General

National Inquiry

- The [National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls](#) was established in September 2016 by the federal government. Comprised initially of five (later four) Commissioners, the mandate of the Commission was, in summary:
 - to inquire and report on:
 - systemic causes of all forms of violence against Indigenous women and girls in Canada; and,
 - institutional policies and practices implemented in response to violence experienced by Indigenous women and girls
 - to make recommendations on:
 - concrete and effective action that can be taken to remove causes and increase safety; and,
 - ways to commemorate murdered & missing Indigenous women and girls.

The Province of BC the Province of BC participated in the National Inquiry in several ways, which included:

- Providing research and information related to B.C. communities, programs and services, policy and legislation, and governance;
- Responding to subpoenas for information related to specific files/cases;
- Participating in all institutional and expert hearings, and all B.C.-based community hearings; and,
- Producing a submission to inform the Commission as it considered Calls for Justice (Link to our submission). This included complementary documents highlighting important data and information about the province and its approach to addressing systemic causes of violence.

Generally, the final report identified four key sources of systemic causes of violence:

- historical, multigenerational and intergenerational trauma;
- social and economic marginalization;
- maintaining the status quo and institutional lack of will; and
- ignoring the agency and expertise of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people.

In addressing these systemic causes, the final report outlines 231 Calls for Justice, targeted towards both federal and provincial/territorial governments, as well as the public, industry, media, service providers and others. The Calls for Justice seek to establish a new framework that acknowledges and implements rights to culture, health, security and justice.

The Path Forward

In February 2019, the Province of BC committed to the development of a path forward to ending violence against Indigenous women and girls. The term ‘path forward’ was an intentional one, reflecting an understanding that our work together would change direction over time based on challenges and successes – that our shared history and the complex issues that have come from it could not be meaningfully addressed in a single, point in time response.

While this path forward would be informed by the Calls for Justice of the National Inquiry, government also wanted to respect the historic recommendations and input provided by community and Indigenous

organizations and leadership. Additionally, the Province recognized that, in order to move forward in an impactful way, ministries needed to understand where this path should begin – and to establish these first steps with the direction of survivors, family members, and communities.

Finally, it was understood that a federal response to the Calls for Justice, and the release of a National Action Plan, would provide further opportunity to build on these priorities and inform further actions in partnership with the federal government and other jurisdictions.

To guide the Province’s approach, **FOUR CORE PRINCIPLES** were identified:



PEOPLE CENTRED

Are people who have been impacted by violence at the centre of identified actions and are there opportunities for them to be meaningfully included in the identification of opportunities on a go forward basis?



HEALING CENTRED

Are actions focused on an empowering vision of community and family healing – a vision that supports self-determination and the centering of Indigenous women and girls and 2SLGBTQQIA community members?



RECIPROCAL

Are engagements providing information and resources to communities, family members and survivors, as opposed to being information-seeking only?



COMMUNITY DRIVEN AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

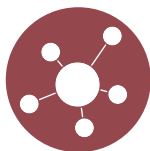
Do actions focus on building capacity among Indigenous communities as opposed to perpetuating dependence on the Crown?

Additionally, a number information sources were considered to guide community dialogue and uncover key priorities:



RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS OF PREVIOUS AND ALIGNED RECOMMENDATIONS

Review of historic recommendations provided by community and Indigenous partners, and articulation of priority themes. Consideration of potential opportunities to validate and address these priorities.



PARTNER DIALOGUE

Conversations with Indigenous and community partners to understand current context and discuss potential approaches to the development of a path forward.



COMMUNITY AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Initiation of Indigenous-led, community-based engagement opportunities to inform priorities and identify early strategies.



PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT ALIGNMENT

Consider new and ongoing government commitments aligned with addressing systemic causes and how path forward priorities and early strategies can align with and amplify current initiatives.



FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ACTION

Consider federal government commitments and action and how path forward priorities and early strategies can complement and draw on these commitments.

Early review and research identified that, in addition to current and emerging government policy and program investments, foundational support was required for:

- Increased community capacity to identify safety priorities and develop safety plans is of continued interest. This includes interest in opportunities to establish culturally appropriate protocols and approaches, improve information sharing, and increase access to available resources and community investment;
- Ceremonies to support healing and wellness, re-establish traditional practices, and improve relationships and community safety;
- Culturally appropriate tools and resources to increase awareness and understanding of consent, personal safety and available resources;

- Improved awareness and understanding across the public service as it relates to the experience of Indigenous youth and the 2SLGBTQQIA community is a significant area of opportunity. Increased engagement with the Indigenous 2SLGBTQQIA community and focused resources for public servants to increase their knowledge and capacity are important steps;
- Improved data collection and evaluative frameworks to better understand the impacts of systemic causes, and identify evidence based and data-informed metrics for success. This includes the development of meaningful reporting.

In order to better understand community perspective related to these and other priorities, the Province supported a series of Indigenous-led community dialogues between summer 2019 and spring 2021.

Path Forward Dialogues – 2019

During the summer of 2019, 12 community dialogue sessions were held across British Columbia to bring together individuals from communities across the province: Merritt, Williams Lake, Prince George, Haida Gwaii, Fort St John, Cranbrook, Smithers, Terrace, Nanaimo, Port Hardy, Harrison Hot Springs and Vancouver. The twelve sessions were led by facilitator and planner, Elaine Alec (Alderhill Planning Inc.), and were guided by the knowledge and expertise of community members and elders.

Conversations around MMIWG and dismantling systemic racism and colonial patriarchal practices can be overwhelming. In using a traditional Indigenous decision-making process, these sessions were designed in a way that ensured information sharing was done in a manner that considered culture and protocol and supported healing. The intention was to create a safe space in which every individual who

came to the circle would have their voice heard. Participants identified themselves as women, men, elders, youth, 2spirited individuals, Indigenous, non-Indigenous Canadians, community members, leaders and life-long advocates.

By working with protocols and through each participant's contributions, by the end of each session participants were able to come up with tangible action items that they could implement within their own families, communities, and organizations.

The final report of these dialogue sessions, "*Path Forward Women & Girls Safety Community Sessions Action Plan and Toolkit*" was released in Autumn, 2019. The report outlines the main themes from each of the twelve sessions along with short-term, medium-term and long-term goals, action items and a toolkit of resources for communities to use in their own work moving forward.



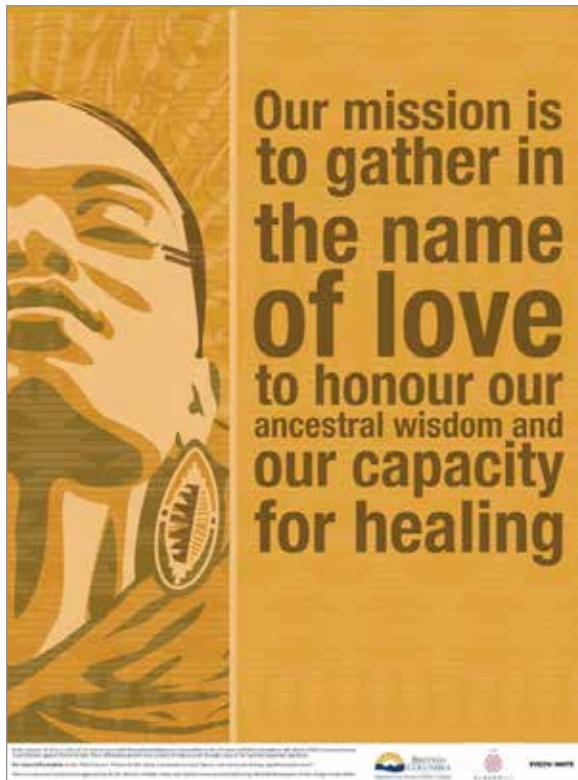
KEY PRIORITIES

At the end of each of the twelve dialogue sessions, we asked participants the following two questions:

- What are two priorities that we can move forward in our own community or organization?
- What supports and resources are needed?

Through this conversation, participants were supported to articulate their two most pressing priorities that they can move forward *now* in their own sphere of influence, be that within their families, friends, community, volunteer positions, or work. In many of the twelve communities, at least one priority focused on the creation of safety plans, protocols, committees, policies, and practices. Many also focused on priorities related to increasing community capacity, through mentorship, skills development, and proper resourcing through funding and better relationships with partners. It is important to note that these priorities are specific to each community and circumstance, and should not be broadened or removed from that context. Below is the complete list of both priority actions identified in each of the twelve dialogue sessions:

MERRITT	Priority #1: Creation of safety committee(s)
	Priority #2: Safety committee(s) address top priorities identified by community
PRINCE GEORGE	Priority #1: Creation of strategy to mobilize the community when a person goes missing
	Priority #2: Programs and support for survivors and their families
WILLIAMS LAKE	Priority #1: Creation of community safety plan
	Priority #2: Building on cultural foundations to promote healing
FORT ST. JOHN	Priority #1: Community service providers are practicing lateral kindness and willingly participate in educational opportunities that promote safety for women and children
	Priority #2: Safe spaces and specialized supports
HAIDA GWAI	Priority #1: Educational sessions and empowerment groups
	Priority #2: Safe houses and spaces program & reporting protocols
CRANBROOK	Priority #1: Emergency contacts and safe houses
	Priority #2: Community awareness and involvement to find solutions
TERRACE	Priority #1: Community-based solutions
	Priority #2: Solutions supported by our partners
SMITHERS	Priority #1: Strengthen relationships and safety protocols
	Priority #2: No one is left behind
NANAIMO	Priority #1: Healing and mentorship
	Priority #2: Crisis line advocacy and 24-hour support
PORT HARDY	Priority #1: Building connections to increase capacity
	Priority #2: Learning new skills to respond to community needs
HARRISON HOT SPRINGS	Priority #1: Safe spaces and better resources to support us
	Priority #2: Transform relationships and practices with our partners
VANCOUVER	Priority #1: Safety planning and responses for the whole community
	Priority #2: Strengthen resiliency with culture and shake up the status quo



FOUR CORE STREAMS

The conversations that took place during the twelve dialogue sessions in 2019 were transformative and helped to identify four core streams that articulate priorities moving forward. These core streams provide the high-level framework within which all actions can take place along the path forward for women and girls' safety. The four core streams are:

Safe Spaces and Safety Plans

A safe space can be a physical location such as a welcoming home in the neighbourhood, a transition house in the community, or a crisis centre in an urban area. A safe space can also be a moment to connect with someone at a gathering, spending time in a healing circle, making a phone call to a helpline, or reaching out to support services through an app. In the event that a person does go missing or there

is a crisis, communities voiced their desire for clear safety plans and protocols to be in place so that communities and families know how to respond.

Healing Support

Cultural teachings are the foundation of healing. Ongoing healing support through both traditional and contemporary mediums is necessary to ensure that people can continue to access services as they need them throughout their lifetime. Healing from intergenerational trauma is a top priority for communities as we still see and live the effects of unhealthy relations in our families and across our nations.

Strengthening Relationships with Our Partners

When community members are in crisis, grieving, and looking for support, they look to those who deliver services to treat them respectfully and show an understanding of Indigenous history and cultural sensitivity. The many barriers that prevent Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA community members from seeking support are deeply rooted in systemic racism. In using the principles of UNDRIP, and the thousands of recommendations from the National Inquiry's Final Report, Red Women Rising, and the multitude of other reports, partners must actively work to make change, and to support us as we work towards our own Indigenous self-determination.

Access to Resources and Recommendations

In many cases, communities know what they need to do to move forward, but don't have the resources to achieve their goals. Community participants articulated the need for consistent and long-term funding, in addition to adequate information, and sometimes even support from mentors and other community connections.

Path Forward Dialogues – 2021

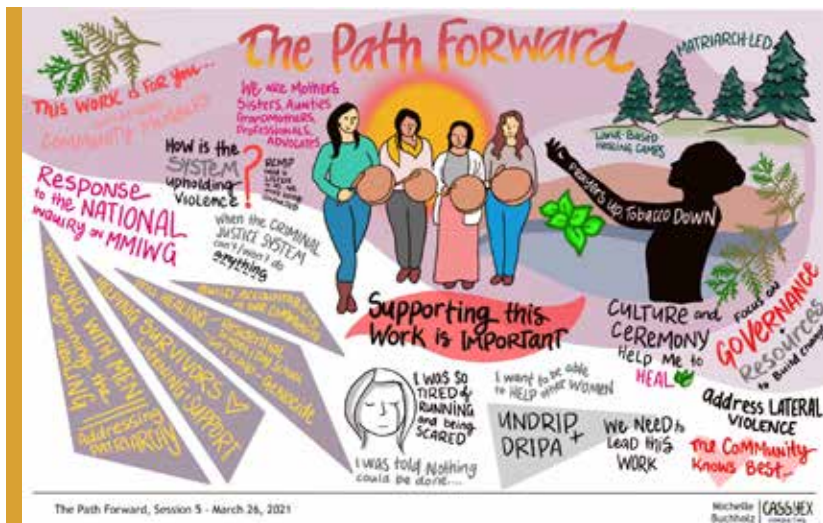
The Path Forward community dialogues were continued in Spring 2021. Participants from the 2019 dialogue sessions, and others interested, were invited to attend one of five sessions. As with the first round of community dialogues in 2019, these sessions were hosted by Elaine Alec (Alderhill Planning Inc.) and used the same process of traditional Indigenous decision-making to create a safe space for participants. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, all five engagement sessions took place virtually, over Zoom. A certified counselor and support worker attended each session to open and close with a prayer, and to provide additional support to anyone who needed it during, or after the discussion.

The goals of this round of community dialogues were to:

- Validate what we heard in 2019, regarding priorities and foundational actions;
- Identify further detail that would help shape these actions; and,
- Provide an opportunity for communities to connect to discuss this work.

To explore this, we presented the four core streams (Safe Spaces and Safety Plans, Healing Support, Strengthening Relationships with Our Partners, and Access to Resources and Recommendations) and offered the following seven questions for discussion:

1. Do these themes related to the systemic causes of violence reflect the challenges and opportunities in your communities? Can you provide examples?
2. What are some of the examples of where support to communities can assist them reduce risk to women and girls? What might that look like?
3. In thinking about the work of eliminating violence



in our communities, what roles are there to play? Who needs to be involved in this work?

4. Where are these barriers to success? Even with additional resources or community capacity, where might challenges remain and how could they be addressed?
5. Where are community capacity and resources needed to start addressing systemic causes?
6. What steps need to be taken to address the systemic racism and violence faced by our women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people?
7. If you were asked to design a model for your community, with funds for community development and capacity to address systemic racism and the root causes of violence, what would this model look like? What is required?

These questions were offered as a departure point for dialogue, and facilitators did not intend to address each one fully during the sessions. In each of the five sessions, providing these questions led to an open discussion on main priorities, barriers, and what support is needed to continue moving along the path forward. The feedback received through those sessions strongly affirmed what was heard in 2019 and built upon priorities identified. This feedback is summarized below and discussed at greater length in the engagement summary report. ([TBD Hyperlink](#))

Safe Spaces and Safety Plans

Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA community members have reiterated the need for safe spaces where they can find protection, comfort, and support. A safe space can be a physical location such as a welcoming home in the neighbourhood, a transition house in the community, or a crisis centre in an urban area. For women wanting to leave situations of intimate partner violence, community members stress the importance of safe spaces for them to heal, recover and access resources. It was stressed that, too often, there are limited options of safe places in times of need, particularly those that provide Indigenous-specific spaces to find safety.

A safe space can also be a moment to connect with someone at a gathering, spending time in a healing circle, making a phone call to a helpline, or reaching out to support services through an app. Recognizing that people who need support may be withdrawn, afraid, and ashamed to share their story, it is important to stay connected through these means to ensure that community members have access to a safe environment where they feel empowered to come forward. Having someone to reach out to, where an individual will be treated with care, dignity, and respect, helps to create a safe space. Knowing that there is someone to talk to, someone who understands what an individual is going



through, is important. Participants noted that when women are in positions of leadership, they create more safe spaces. As such, ensuring that women's councils, matriarch's councils, and women leaders in communities are supported to do this work will lead to the creation of more safe spaces for women to come forward to share their stories and to seek support.

In the event that a person does go missing or there is a crisis, there is a great need for clear safety plans and protocols to be in place so communities and families know how to respond. This could include training on the use of different communications channels and how to do a grid search. One participant explained that in that moment of panic, it is important to have the training. Other ideas for responding in a crisis included issuing an alert, similar to an amber alert, and using social media such as TikTok to amplify the message.

Healing Support

Healing from intergenerational trauma continues to be a top priority for communities because of the continuing downstream effects of unhealthy relations in families and across nations. Community members noted that when children, parents, and grandparents are caught in these cycles of trauma, they may make decisions that negatively affect their personal safety and well-being, and may put themselves at risk without knowing how serious the consequences could be because they are blinded by their pain and anger. Communities, families and individuals need heal from this pain, to feel empowered and to lift each other up. When people love and respect themselves, they make good decisions about how to care for their bodies and minds, and pass these teachings on to those around them so that they too can live their lives in a good way and contribute to the safety of our families and communities.

The need for empowerment is especially important with respect to young women and our girls. It is important for them to feel proud of who they are, and to have access to mentors and role models who can help them to recognize their full potential.

Community members placed emphasis on cultural teachings as the foundation of healing. Participants at every dialogue session spoke about the need for land-based healing and cultural opportunities. Traditionally, within Indigenous communities, from the moment someone is born they are told creation stories and stories of the land. These stories are embedded in Indigenous laws and practice. Due to trauma leading to displacement or community fragmentation, not everyone receives these teachings at a young age. It is important to create opportunities for people



to re-learn and re-integrate these teachings in our communities, especially for youth.

Participants shared that they wanted to promote learning about the land through hands-on experiences and by connecting children and youth with elders for teaching and re-teaching traditions. This could include rights of passage and name giving ceremonies that can be passed along in the community. Participants shared that these opportunities could take place through the schools, by bringing all children (including non-Indigenous children) out to the land to do ceremony. In many communities this work is already taking place through healing camps for women, men, elders, families, and children. Community members also shared their experiences with weekend or week-long retreats on the land, with elders and cultural support to bring people together in ceremony to heal. One participant shared about a MMIWG healing camp on her territory where they did trauma therapy through strength-based practice, and brought in chiefs and the father clan to work through a collective grief the family was experiencing.

In whichever forms healing support takes, whether it is traditional or contemporary mediums, it is crucial that it is ongoing and always available.

Strengthening Relationships with Our Partners

Indigenous communities cannot do this work alone. Participants stressed that they require strong relationships with partners, built in trust and respect. For these relationships to be strengthened, there must be significant work done to address the systemic racism faced by Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA community members.

Participants discussed the many reports, recommendations and frameworks that support this work. Many discussed the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and how it holds up the right to Indigenous self-determination and clearly outlines how to be in relationship with Indigenous Nations. As the B.C. government works to implement UNDRIP by bringing the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (DRIPA) into law, working with Indigenous partners to ensure full adherence to the principles will lead to strong relationships with our partners.

In addition to adhering to the principles of UNDRIP, participants spoke about the need for the government to be held accountable to the many hundreds and thousands of recommendations that have been made in numerous reports, most recently with the *National Inquiry's Final Report 'Reclaiming Power and Place', Red Women Rising*, and *'In Plain Sight' Report: Systemic Racism in B.C. Healthcare in 2020*. For families who have participated in these processes and have shared their stories, it can feel frustrating to see the slow pace of change. It is not enough to read and acknowledge these recommendations – it is necessary for our partners to actively push them forward, making changes to both high-level policy and on-the-ground actions.

Participants stressed the importance of service providers, such as those in health and public safety, to demonstrate respect, build trust, and ensure safety. This includes a meaningful understanding of



Indigenous history and cultural sensitivity. Without this respect and trust, community members may be triggered or re-traumatized.

Through the 2019 dialogues, it was stressed that, even when health and police services are available, people would not reach out and access them because they:

- Felt stigmatized
- Were concerned that their confidentiality would not be protected by the person delivering services\
- Had previously encountered racism, insensitivity, and a lack of prioritization for Indigenous and community concerns.

Being treated with a lack of care and respect, and being seen as less credible when sharing their stories than non-Indigenous women, is discrimination and it is deeply rooted in systemic racism. This must be named and addressed.

Making changes to these deeply rooted structures will require many different approaches. Internal standards and policies will need to be changed within existing organizations and governments, and leaders will need to be firm in changing workplace culture and responding to the needs of Indigenous communities within service provision. Most importantly, Indigenous communities themselves need to be supported to lead in this work of re-centering and re-prioritizing the safety and wellbeing of women and girls, in collaboration with trusted partners.

Access to Resources and Recommendations

While community members have identified key opportunities to address systemic causes of violence, they reiterated the lack of resources to achieve their goals. They stress there is often limited capacity as we face many priorities that require attention. Participants noted in particular, the current opioid crisis and how it is compounding already existing challenges related to women's safety, poverty, and child wellness. There is a strong desire to do the work in community, but more support is required for this to be sustainable. Oftentimes, community members who are active in responding to community crises are living in poverty themselves, are working full time jobs, and have many other roles in the community.

Participants stressed the need to be financially resourced to do this work; coming up with solutions and implementing them on their own terms. Some participants shared the positive changes they have seen in their communities by re-establishing women's councils and matriarch councils to advise elected leadership, empower youth, be positive role models. With consistent support and funding for initiatives such as women's councils, big changes can be realized in community.

As a way to share in the work, participants noted that in some cases neighbouring communities could work together, facilitating conversations and programs on MMIWG and healing. This is especially important when recognizing that people do not always feel safe disclosing or seeking help within their own communities, and that having another option might increase the number of people who come forward.



Provincial Response

In setting a strong foundation for a path forward to ending violence, and in response to the perspective and input shared by family members, survivors and community members, the Province acknowledges key components that are critical for success:

- Increased community capacity, and recognition of the agency of Indigenous communities.
 - The province recognises that solutions lie within communities and strategies are more meaningful and impactful when they are Indigenous-led.
- Re-centering' Indigenous women.
 - The province acknowledges the experiences and expertise of Indigenous women, and the importance of Indigenous women's leadership and direction in guiding the path forward.
- Re-imagining of 'safe spaces.'
 - The province acknowledges that safe spaces are not limited to bricks and mortar, but also to community networks and cultural resources that surround women. The province recognises that more must be done to create the spaces that currently exist safer and more respectful for all Indigenous peoples.
- Meaningful collaboration across all levels of government.
 - The province recognises the key role and accountability of all levels of government - municipal, provincial, federal, and Indigenous - to addressing the systemic causes of violence. This collaboration is essential to identifying opportunities to engage all British Columbians in building a path forward.
- Respecting diversity and distinction.
 - The province recognises the incredible diversity of Indigenous communities across the province, and the need to implement the path forward in a way that reflects this diversity.

Building on existing actions to address systemic violence, which are highlighted throughout this document, the Province has identified key commitments that align early strategies to community priorities:

1. SAFE SPACES AND SAFETY PLANS

- 1.1** Invest in community-based mental health and social services so there are more trained front-line workers to help people in crisis, and free up police to focus on more serious crimes
- 1.2** Support communities in addressing street disorder and public safety concerns by expanding mental health intervention team
- 1.3** Identify minimum standards for sexual assault response
- 1.4** Increase training related to sexual assault for police agencies, crown council and justices
- 1.5** Based on recommendations of the Special Committee on Reforming the Police Act, identify recommendations to address systemic racism, create dedicated hate crime units within local police forces, and review training and procedures related to 'wellness checks.'
- 1.6** Implement a homelessness strategy.

Transition of Gladue Services

Beginning April 1, 2021, management of B.C.'s Gladue report program will transition from Legal Aid BC (LABC) to the BC First Nations Justice Council (BCFNJC). The transition of Gladue services to the BCFNJC allows the removal of barriers related to requesting a Gladue report. As of April 1, 2021, any First Nations, Métis or Inuit person can request a Gladue report, regardless of whether they have a private lawyer or are a client of Legal Aid BC.

Trauma Informed Practice

The Trauma-Informed Practice (TIP) Foundations Curriculum for Justice, Public Safety, and Anti-Violence Community Sectors in British Columbia

launched on June 27, 2019. The a cross-sector, trauma-informed practice training, education and awareness curriculum for justice and public safety sector personnel (policing, corrections, lawyers, Crown, and victim service/anti-violence programs) consists of a self-directed online course, a facilitated one-day in-person course scheduled regionally across the province (and now also available in a virtual format), a companion webinar series, and a series of sector-specific expert videos. The TIP curriculum supports personnel to better understand how trauma may impact victims/survivors and shape their responses, to reduce potential re-traumatization experienced by victims/survivors participating in the justice system, and to assess participants' own practices and processes accordingly.

Police and Public Safety Modernization

In response to events involving police use of force against Indigenous and Black peoples and growing calls to address systemic racism in policing, the Legislative Assembly appointed the [*Special Committee on Reforming the Police Act*](#). The final report of the Special Committee is to be tabled by April 28, 2022.

2. HEALING SUPPORT

- 2.1** Advance the First Nations Justice Strategy and improve access to culturally appropriate justice
- 2.2** Continue to establish Indigenous Justice Centres across the province
- 2.3** Provide an increased level of support – including more access to nurses and psychiatrists – for B.C.'s most vulnerable who need more intensive care than supportive housing provides by developing Complex Care housing.
- 2.4** Further implement A Pathway to Hope, B.C.'s roadmap for making mental health and

addictions care better for people, by expanding access to counselling, using new e-health and other technologies to bring care to more people in all regions of B.C.

- 2.5** Accelerate B.C.'s response to the opioid crisis across the full continuum of care: prevention, harm reduction, safe prescription medications, treatment and recovery
- 2.6** Expand the availability of treatment beds for people by building new treatment, recovery, detox and after-care facilities across the province with some beds specifically for British Columbians under age 24
- 2.7** Expand support for Aboriginal Friendship Centres that serve the needs of local Indigenous communities
- 2.8** Reflect Indigenous peoples' history and cultures in provincial parks and wilderness areas.
- 2.9** Extend support for cultural preservation and revitalization by funding key projects designed to preserve and respect Indigenous cultures, including the retention and revitalization of First Nations languages.
- 2.10** Continue to support families involved with the child welfare system by focusing on family preservation and keeping children and youth connected to their communities and culture.

Addressing Anti-Indigenous Racism

In June 2020, Minister of Health launched an investigation into anti-Indigenous racism in B.C.'s health system, leading to the Nov 2020 *In Plain Sight* report, which found evidence of widespread systemic racism against Indigenous peoples. In response, the Minister publicly apologized, affirmed the Province's responsibility to address the problem and announced the appointment of a new Associate Deputy Minister of Indigenous Health for a fixed term to oversee a task force to implement the report's recommendations.

Supporting Indigenous-Led Solutions

- The Province and the FNHA have allocated \$20.5M for 44 new First Nations-led mental health and wellness initiatives throughout BC since 2019.
- The Province has provided the FNHA with \$23.5M over 3 years to support First Nations to deliver new land-based and cultural healing programs.
- The Province and FNHA are working together to increase access to culturally safe substance use supports by replacing six First Nation-run treatment facilities in BC through a shared capital commitment of \$40M.

Intervention Circles

The Province is working to pilot a community safety and wellbeing initiative, known as Intervention Circles, in Indigenous communities across British Columbia (BC). It is anticipated that one Intervention Circle will be established in Northern BC and one on Vancouver Island by the Fall of 2021. Intervention Circles bring together human service professionals from various agencies and sectors (e.g. police, mental health, housing, education, children and family services, etc.) to identify early detections of risk and/or acutely elevated risk in an individual and mobilize an intervention before harm occurs.

3. STRENGTHENING RELATIONSHIPS WITH OUR PARTNERS

- 3.1** Deliver the action plan required under the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples' Act to build strong relationships based on recognition and implementation of the inherent rights of Indigenous peoples protected in UNDRIP and Canada's constitution
- 3.2** Draw from recommendations from 'In Plain Sight' to address Indigenous-specific racism in health care in B.C.
- 3.3** Expand the 'situation table' model that connects front-line workers from different health, safety, and social service sectors to identify and help vulnerable people.

- 3.4** Continue to work with Indigenous partners and the federal government to reform the child welfare system, including implementing the new federal Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families, and continuing to reduce the overrepresentation of Indigenous children in care.

Community to Community Forum

The Province provides funding to the Union of BC Municipalities to manage the Community to Community Forum Program in partnership with the BC First Nations Summit. The program enables local governments and First Nations to access funding (up to \$5,000) to hold events for relationship building. This could include meeting to discuss reconciliation or health and safety. In 2021, program partners decided to cover 100% of event costs (previously was a 50/50 cost shared model).

Indigenous Child Welfare

The Province has implemented amendments to the Child, Family and Community Service Act (CFCSA), supporting collaborative practices with First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities and recognizing their shared rights and responsibility for the upbringing and well-being of their children. This included signing over 40 information sharing agreements (section 92.1 of the CFCSA), improving collaboration and engagement with Indigenous communities.

4. ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1** Establish core funding for sexual assault centres
- 4.2** Improve transit options for people in rural communities by expanding service for the BC Bus North program.
- 4.3** Conduct a full review of anti-racism laws in other jurisdictions and launch a stakeholder consultation to inform the introduction of a new Anti-Racism Act that better serves everyone in B.C.

- 4.4** Work with B.C.'s new Human Rights Commissioner and other stakeholders to introduce legislation that will help reduce systemic discrimination and pave the way for race-based data collection essential to modernizing sectors like policing, health care and education.
- 4.5** Expand the use of cross-government data to increase evidence-based decision making and better inform public policy.
- 4.6** Assist more people from underrepresented groups get their first job in the tech sector, while simultaneously helping B.C.-based tech companies hire and grow, by increasing the number of Innovator Skills Initiative Grants and prioritizing placements for women, Indigenous people, people of colour and others currently underrepresented in B.C.'s tech sector.
- 4.7** Create a plan for a dedicated Secretariat by the end of 2021 to coordinate government's reconciliation efforts and to ensure new legislation and policies are consistent with the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act.
- 4.8** Build on our expanded supports for youth in care, with particular attention to supporting the transition to independence and ensuring supports reach all youth.

Complete Cellular Access on Highway 16

As announced on April 7, 2021, the Connecting British Columbia program and the Government of Canada's Universal Broadband Fund will provide Rogers with \$4.5 million towards the \$11.6-million cost of providing continuous cellular coverage along the whole of Highway 16. As part of this project, Rogers will install 12 cellular towers along the highway. This will provide 252 kilometres of new highway cellular coverage, closing several gaps. The project will also provide coverage to three rest areas along Highway 16, located at Boulder Creek, Basalt Creek and Sanderson Point. It is scheduled to be complete in fall 2022. This project directly

reflects the recommendations of the Highway of Tears Symposium and the final report of the National Inquiry and will significantly contribute to increased safety along the corridor.

Emergency Sexual Assault Funding

In May 2020, B.C. announced funding to EVA BC to develop and administer a multi-year, \$10 million grant program to support the delivery of co-ordinated emergency sexual assault response services that are trauma-informed and culturally appropriate. In regions throughout B.C., 23 organizations across the province received grants through this funding. In recognition of the substantial need for locally relevant and culturally safe supports for sexual assault survivors in Indigenous communities in B.C., approximately half of the grant funding was awarded to organizations under an Indigenous Services Stream. In May 2021, B.C. provided an additional \$10 million towards the grant program to help support the delivery of more services.

First Nations Well Being Fund

The Province is providing the First Nations Public Service Secretariat, an initiative of the First Nations Summit, a \$2.7-million grant to administer the First Nations Well Being Fund as part of TogetherBC, B.C.'s poverty reduction strategy. The First Nations Well Being Fund offers funding to First Nations and Tribal Councils to support projects related to community well being and poverty reduction. Areas of particular focus for funding will include, but are not limited to, food security, social and cultural supports, employment, education and training, families, children and youth, mental health, and transportation. The community projects stream will support First Nations to undertake local projects in order to promote wellness and to reduce poverty at the community level, while the planning projects stream will support First Nations to undertake planning and community engagement activities to develop a plan (or begin discussions on a plan) that will assist in promoting well being and reducing poverty at the community level.

Supporting Kinship Care Options

The Province has increased the monthly maintenance rate provided to foster caregivers and out-of-care care providers that have an agreement with the Ministry of Children and Family Development under the Child, Family and Community Service Act, or who have adopted under the Adoption Act. This rate covers the basic living costs for those children and youth in their care. Increasing this rate (for the first time in a decade) addresses the financial disincentive against out-of-care placements and values the role that relatives and family friends play in taking care of vulnerable children and youth, ensuring accessing to culture and community.

Foundational Investments

In addition to these actions, and to set a solid foundation for a path forward to ending violence, the Province of BC is making an initial \$5.5M investment in 2021/22, with a commitment to additional, multi-year funding. Specifically, the Province will invest directly in a community fund – accessible to First Nations communities, urban/off reserve communities, Metis citizens and 2SLGBTQQIA communities – to support capacity to develop safety plans that:

- Support engagement and information sharing within and between communities, and between levels of government;
- Identify community priorities related to safety and systemic causes of violence;
- Improve awareness of, and access to, existing provincial and national programs, services and resources; and,
- Identify gaps and potential additional opportunities for future action.

Additionally, the Province will make a number of aligned investments that to increase the impact of the community fund. These include:

- An Indigenous-led technology initiative, which will seek to address violence against Indigenous women and girls by:
 - reducing isolation;
 - creating online and offline links to support in real time;
 - providing better data and insight; and;
 - developing accessible online tools.
- An Indigenous data and evaluation initiative to identify culturally appropriate mechanisms for collecting information and measuring progress. This initiative will also inform the development of an evaluative framework related to the Path Forward.
- The development of training and education resources to improve public service awareness and understanding of 2SLGBTQQIA perspectives and experiences, in collaboration with community members.

The Province will also invest in the commemoration and honouring of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA peoples who have gone missing or been murdered, and their family members.

As we continue to build the path forward, the Province remains committed to ongoing engagement with community, and to honouring and respecting the expertise, agency and leadership of Indigenous women. The Province will also continue to be a strong collaborator with the federal government and provincial and territorial partners in order to develop meaningful responses to the National Action Plan.

Closing Statement

The priorities identified through reflection of historic recommendations and current community engagement provide a strong foundation for ongoing collaboration and action. Moving forward, the Province will work closely with community members and Indigenous partners, informed by the key principles and priorities that serve as the foundation for the Path Forward.

The release of the federal response to the National Inquiry, and the National Action Plan provide additional opportunities to identify meaningful solutions to systemic causes of violence against Indigenous women and girls and 2SLGBTQIA people. We look forward to engaging with partners to consider additional opportunities to address the systemic causes of violence.

Ultimately, the contribution of family members, survivors, community members and government partners has laid a solid foundation for meaningful action. We are committed to ongoing collaboration as we build and implement these opportunities together.



Ministry of
Public Safety and
Solicitor General