

PATHWAYS TO SAFETY

Ontario's Strategy in Response to the
Final Report of the National Inquiry
into Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls

MAY 2021





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MINISTERS' MESSAGE

The rate of violence against Indigenous women and girls is a national tragedy that we cannot ignore. Every single Canadian deserves to live in safety, free of violence and abuse.

When the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls was released, we listened carefully to the Calls for Justice and to the survivors, families and loved ones of those who participated. Their courage, strength and resiliency are inspiring. Through overwhelming grief and trauma, they acted as champions for their loved ones.

The way forward for Ontario became clear. Any efforts to address the root causes of this issue cannot succeed unless they are led by Indigenous people, particularly Indigenous women. We are pleased Ontario's strategy in response to the Final Report was created in close partnership with a cross-section of members from Indigenous communities and Indigenous partners, and we are incredibly grateful for their tireless advocacy.

Pathways to Safety: Ontario's Strategy in Response to the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls is the roadmap for the work that lies ahead. It will allow us to confront the root causes of violence and identify and address gaps in Ontario's current system of supports for Indigenous women, children, and Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, questioning, intersex and asexual (2SLGBTQQIA+) people. This includes the need for better access to safe, accessible and stable housing, education and employment.

While we cannot undo the tragedies of the past, through our actions we are committing to providing supports to ensure future generations of Indigenous women, children and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people can live safely and heal from trauma. As the strength, heart and soul of their communities, they deserve nothing less than to live free from violence and fear of harm. That's the vision we must all collectively continue striving toward.

The Honourable Jill Dunlop
Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues

The Honourable Greg Rickford
Minister of Indigenous Affairs



HONOURING THOSE NO LONGER WITH US

Indigenous daughters, mothers, grandmothers, aunties, nieces, cousins, friends, 2SLGBTQQIA+¹ people are missing or are no longer with us. We honour their lives by bringing them to our minds, creating change and committing to ending violence. We wrap their families, communities and survivors whose lives are forever changed in love and pledge our commitment to work in partnership to ensure current and future generations of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people can live in safety and security.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are indebted to all the strong and resilient voices of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people who bravely shared their experiences and offered their advice and expertise to guide and inform our pathways forward. To those who participated in the engagement sessions and the co-chairs and members of the Indigenous Women's Advisory Council: miigwetch, nia:weh, hihi, marsee, thank you. We are listening and responding.

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I want to thank and acknowledge all the brave and courageous women that have broken the silence on this issue, their wisdom was the guiding force of the Indigenous Women's Advisory Council. In honouring the voices of Indigenous women, we have worked collectively to ensure that Ontario's response placed their safety and healing as foundational priorities for generations to come. This is the beginning as we need to now deconstruct the systems that contribute to this crisis and reconstruct Indigenous women's leadership and Indigenous women's safety to make an impact across generations.”

Cora McGuire-Cyrette, Co-Chair,
Indigenous Women's Advisory Council





INTRODUCTION

Across Canada, Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people are going missing and being murdered. The systemic racism, violence and abuse against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people are a crisis that requires action. The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (National Inquiry) delivered 231 Calls for Justice. Ontario recognizes the critical violence prevention needs of Indigenous women, children and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, and will continue to develop and maintain the strong programs and initiatives that are the foundation of our comprehensive, multi-sectoral strategy. Bringing redress and fulfilling the National Inquiry's 231 Calls for Justice will require long-term, government-wide action.

Ontario holds to a vision where all Indigenous women, children and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people live in safety and security, free from violence and exploitation, supported by accountable and ongoing systemic and structural changes.

“

At the National Inquiry, the families of the MMIWG planted the life experience seeds of change with their words. These seeds are watered by each initiative developed and implemented. I look forward to seeing the growth of these sacred plants. May the voices of our MMIWG families be forever heard to promote the safety and well-being of our Indigenous Women, Girls and 2 S+ families for 7 generations to come.

”

Sandra Montour, Co-Chair,
Indigenous Women's Advisory Council





WHY THE NATIONAL INQUIRY INTO MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS WAS NEEDED

It's estimated Indigenous women in Canada are three times more likely to experience violence than other women and six times more likely than non-Indigenous women to be murdered.² Indigenous female youth are 3.1 times more likely than non-Indigenous youth to experience violent victimization. Statistics Canada research has found youth aged 15-29 have the highest rates of victimization, and experiences in foster care can be a risk factor for violence. This has particular significance for Ontario, where 39 per cent of Indigenous women are under the age of 25, and one-third of female foster children aged 0-14 are Indigenous.³

Mounting pressure to inquire into this disproportionate level of violence across Canada led the federal government to announce the creation of a National Inquiry⁴ to report on all forms of violence against Indigenous women and girls, make recommendations on concrete and effective action to address it, and increase the safety of Indigenous women and girls in Canada.⁵

The inquiry's mandate was initially to report on all forms of violence perpetrated against Indigenous women and girls in Canada, however, Indigenous concepts of gender identity broadened the inquiry's mandate to include 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.⁶

The inquiry's Commissioners concluded violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people is the result of colonialism and colonization and that these conditions and practices have not changed. The inequities, marginalization, discrimination and threats to the lives of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people continue and are replicated in nearly every system, institution, environment, sector and community across Canada.





FINDINGS OF THE NATIONAL INQUIRY

The National Inquiry's findings concluded that violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people has been perpetuated across Canada as a result of ongoing colonial violence along four specific pathways:

- Historical, multigenerational and intergenerational trauma
- Social and economic marginalization
- Maintaining the status quo and institutional lack of will
- Ignoring the agency and expertise of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people

To address this violence, the National Inquiry's Final Report articulated 231 Calls to Justice within a human rights framework and grounded in Indigenous worldviews in four areas:

RIGHT TO CULTURE: In the Final Report, the National Inquiry defines the right to culture to include "the ability to practise and pass on cultural traditions, language, and ways of relating to other people and to the land."⁷

RIGHT TO SECURITY: The National Inquiry adopts "a broad definition of 'security' based in human security and development, understanding that Indigenous groups in Canada have been and continue to be threatened by economic, social, and political marginalization, as well as by underdevelopment in many communities."⁸

RIGHT TO HEALTH: According to the National Inquiry Final Report, "The right to health is also a right to wellness and is linked to other fundamental human rights, such as access to clean water or adequate infrastructure in Indigenous communities, as well as the right to shelter and food security, which impact all Indigenous communities but have particular import in the North."⁹

RIGHT TO JUSTICE: In their Final Report, the National Inquiry defines the right to justice to include both access to justice and "effective remedies."¹⁰

The governments of Canada — federal, provincial and territorial — have worked to respond to the National Inquiry's 231 Calls for Justice within their own jurisdictions as well as collaboratively. Ontario is implicated directly or indirectly in at least 198 of the 231 Calls for Justice.





ONTARIO'S APPROACH

Ontario's government-wide strategy in response to the Final Report into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) was developed in close partnership with Indigenous communities, organizations, and the Indigenous Women's Advisory Council. It builds upon existing relationships and current collaborations on actions to end violence against Indigenous women. Of paramount importance was the need for Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people to be centred in Ontario's response.

In collaboration with Indigenous organizations, the Ontario government has played a leadership role across the country in addressing violence against Indigenous women and girls. Ontario's priorities focus an explicit violence prevention lens on transformation, resourcing and structural change within the health and wellness, child welfare, education and training, mental health and addictions, housing, transportation and justice systems. Examples of collaborative initiatives include:

- Ongoing investment in the Indigenous Healing and Wellness Strategy to ensure holistic and culturally appropriate supports are in place to help communities address the impacts of intergenerational trauma.
- Launching the Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy with Indigenous-specific resources embedded throughout to provide significantly more supports to address the unique needs of Indigenous individuals and communities.

- Redesigning the child welfare system to focus on community-based prevention services that are high-quality, culturally appropriate and truly responsive to the needs of Indigenous children, youth and families.
- Ending birth alerts — notifications sent by children's aid societies to hospitals when they believed a newborn may be in need of protection. Birth alerts affected racialized and marginalized mothers and families, deterring expectant mothers from seeking prenatal care or parenting supports while pregnant due to fears of having an alert issued.

A relational framework for accountable action: remedying the root causes of violence and finding justice

Ontario's strategy is founded upon the following principles:

- Addressing anti-Indigenous racism and promoting equity
- Partnership and collaboration
- Local, specific and tailored interventions
- Sustainability, responsibility and accountability

The long-term, ongoing structural and government-wide action required to address the crisis of violence and missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people must start with establishing and renewing Ontario's relationship with Indigenous peoples, including families, loved ones and survivors. This strengthened relationship must be accompanied by an accountability framework inclusive of each responsible ministry.





This framework is a renewal of Ontario's commitment to ending violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people on mutual terms, grounded in truth-telling and respectful practices. It forms a central piece of Ontario's strategy and includes the following components:

- Annual progress reporting and evaluation from each responsible ministry outlined further below
- Continued centering of Indigenous women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples' voices
- Improved data and measurement of outcomes and progress

Implementation of Ontario's strategy will require measures for key performance indicators under each area of action and will be overseen by Indigenous communities and each responsible ministry. Measures and outcomes encompassing the government-wide response must include a review of key initiatives to determine what is working, where more can be done and the identification of gaps.

Voices and expertise of Indigenous women at the centre: creation of the Indigenous Women's Advisory Council.

Indigenous women, communities and organizations have made it clear that solutions for Indigenous women must be led by Indigenous women. To chart this new course, Ontario built upon its relationships and engagements with Indigenous women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people to establish an Indigenous Women's Advisory Council (the Council) in 2020.



MEMBERS OF THE INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S ADVISORY COUNCIL

CORA MCGUIRE-CYRETTE (Co-Chair)
Ontario Native Women's Association

SANDRA MONTOUR (Co-Chair)
Six Nations of the Grand River

ANNA BETTY ACHNEEPINESKUM
Chiefs of Ontario

CHIEF LAURIE CARR
Hiawatha First Nation, Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians

CHIEF JANICE HENDERSON
Grand Council Treaty #3

LYNDIA JONES
Independent First Nations

AMANDA KILABUK
Tungasuvvingat Inuit

SYLVIA MARACLE
Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres

MARINA PLAIN
Anishinabek Nation

JENNIFER ST. GERMAIN
Métis Nation of Ontario

TERESA SUTHERLAND
Nishnawbe Aski Nation



The mandate of the Council is to provide input on violence prevention actions and the development of Ontario's strategy in response to the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Members of the council include Indigenous women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ violence prevention experts from across the province, representing a diversity of First Nation, Métis, Inuit and urban Indigenous communities.

In advising Ontario in the development of its strategy, the Council defined priorities and helped to develop the framework. Ontario also conducted initial engagements in collaboration with the Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA) through which Indigenous women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people identified high-level priorities, incorporated into each of the six areas for action:

- Pathway to Safety and Security
- Pathway to Culture
- Pathway to Health and Well-Being
- Pathway to Justice
- Pathway to Collaborative Responsibility and Accountability
- Pathway to Identifying and Addressing Systemic Anti-Indigenous Racism and Indigenous Gender-Based Analysis

These priorities include:

- ensuring that solutions for Indigenous women are led by Indigenous women;
- investments in Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people and their leadership;
- targeted and systemic change in key institutions through education; and,
- the establishment of government accountability mechanisms to ensure implementation of Ontario's response.

Key engagements

Building upon Ontario's history of work with Indigenous communities and organizations on violence prevention, Ontario supported engagements in collaboration with ONWA, Nishnawbe Aski Nation, and Tungasuvvingat Inuit to ensure the voices and expertise of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people guided Ontario's strategy.

The sessions, attended by a broad cross-section of Indigenous community members, have enabled Ontario to focus its strategy on priorities identified by Indigenous women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people and members of specific Indigenous communities (i.e., urban Indigenous, fly-in communities, youth, Métis, Inuit).

In addition to ongoing work with the Council, Ontario will continue engagement work in 2021-22. This will include discussions with provincial and territorial organizations, service organizations and advocacy agencies and will help ensure progress milestones and data measures reflect the needs and expectations of Indigenous communities.





Building upon legacy initiatives

The National Inquiry identified one of the pathways maintaining violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people as an “institutional lack of will.”

Ontario recognizes the multifaceted nature of this issue and the need for government accountability. Programs have been developed across the education, health, social services and justice sectors that provide a holistic, government-wide approach to prevent violence against Indigenous women and their families and promote safer communities.

Our strategy profiles existing government initiatives and commits to building on this work by identifying gaps and developing programs and services to fill these over the next five years.





ONTARIO'S SIX PATHWAYS TO SAFETY

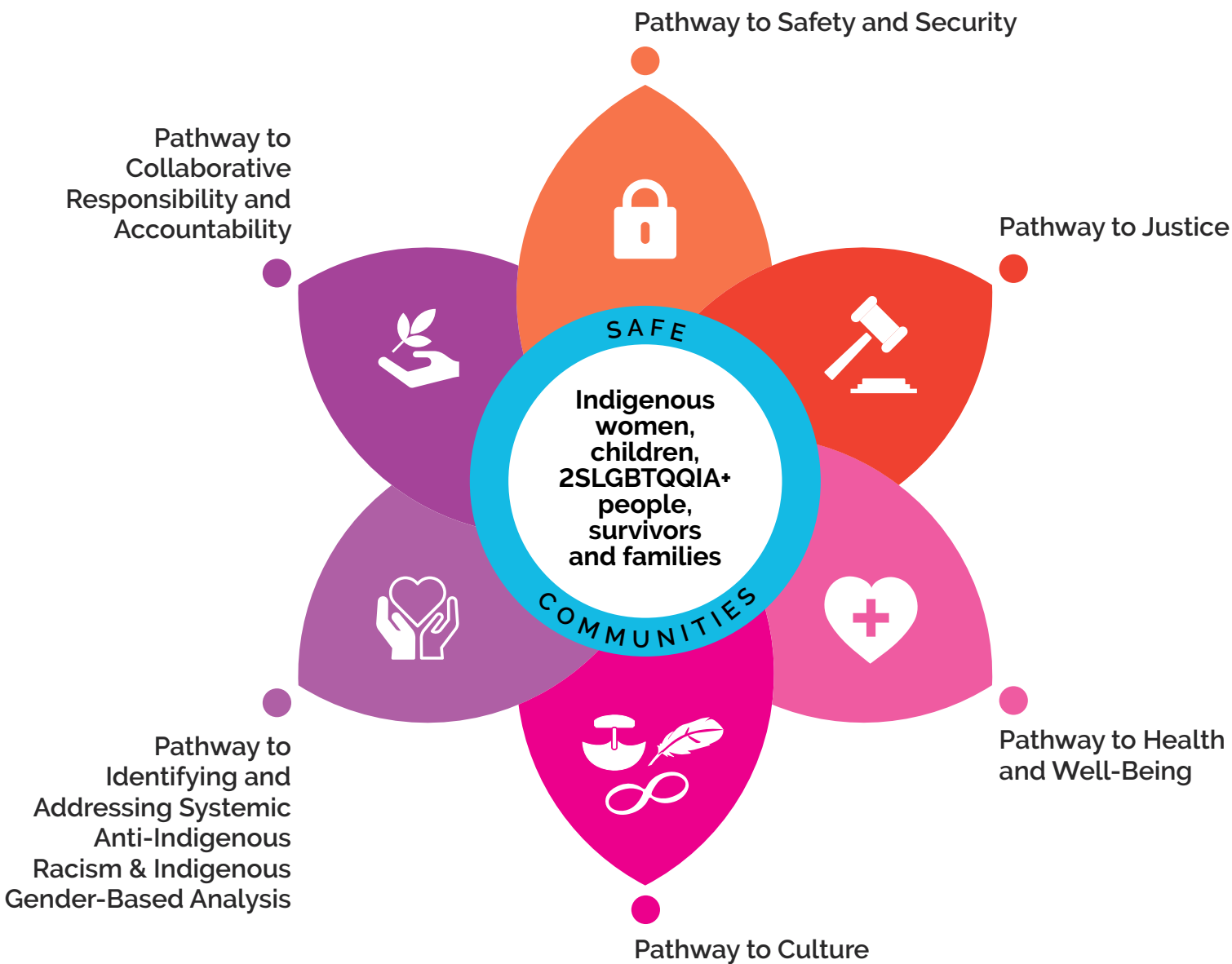
Ontario's approach centres on the safety and security of all Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, with the goal of building pathways enabling them to live freely, fully and safely in all spaces in the province.

Informed by the priorities identified by the Council and other Indigenous organizations and communities, Ontario's strategy focuses on transformation, resourcing and structural change with an explicit violence prevention lens. These priorities, across six areas of action, will address the negative impacts of deeply held anti-Indigenous attitudes and their wide-ranging effects on the health and well-being of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people and their communities. The complexity and interconnectedness of the issues involved require a multi-pronged strategy, cutting across over 10 government ministries*.

Sustained over the long term, these actions will create the systemic changes required to restore Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples' power and place within society and advance Ontario towards meaningful reconciliation.



VISION: An Ontario where all Indigenous women, children and 2SLGBTQQA+ people live in safety and security, free from violence and exploitation.



MINISTRY KEY

EDU: Ministry of Education
IAO: Ministry of Indigenous Affairs
ARD: Anti-Racism Directorate
MOH: Ministry of Health
MAG: Ministry of the Attorney General
MTO: Ministry of Transportation
MCU: Ministry of Colleges and Universities

MCCSS: Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services
MLTSD: Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development
MMAH: Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
SOLGEN: Ministry of the Solicitor General

PATHWAY TO SAFETY AND SECURITY: PREVENTION AND HEALING

Promoting safety, healing and wellness for Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people through prevention-focused resources, investments, and programs.

The National Inquiry concluded that across the country the right to security is routinely compromised in the lives of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people and is a key area where violence can and should be addressed.¹¹

Ontario is addressing the threats to physical, emotional, economic, social and cultural security by promoting safety, healing and wellness through prevention-focused resourcing and programs.

Through key engagements, Ontario must support Indigenous women to lead what is needed to increase safety and healing. This could include resourcing emergency and long-term shelter, increasing access to safe and affordable transportation services, access to mental health and addictions treatment, and peer support programs for families of those missing and murdered.

Ontario recognizes the need to address the unique circumstances faced by women in remote or northern communities, including near resource extraction industries. Ontario will explore how the potential negative impacts of infrastructure and resource development projects on Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people can be considered and mitigated to ensure the economic potential of these important projects can benefit all.

Ontario will also explore resources and approaches that focus on healing for Indigenous individuals, families and communities, which could include resourcing holistic, culture-based healing programs.

Supporting Indigenous-led wealth creation, financial sustainability and access to education, training and employment opportunities involves a government-wide approach. Key initiatives addressing social and economic marginalization act as a protective factor against violence.

Steps to Success:

Funding student safety/transition programs in Northern Ontario (EDU)

Funding provided to Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) and NAN organizations is to ensure the safety of First Nation students and safe transitions between First Nation/federally operated schools and provincial schools. EDU provides funding to First Nation Youth Inquest partners to provide training and supports to address education-related recommendations from the Seven First Nation Youth Inquest.





Supporting children and youth in care through the Transportation and Stability Supports Program (EDU)

Provides funding to school boards to support Children and Youth in Care (CYIC) who may be experiencing transitions in home or residential care. This includes funding for transportation, tutoring services, technology provisions and connections to cultural resources. The program seeks to improve the education experience and outcomes of children and youth in care by ensuring positive and stable connections to school and learning.

Promoting internet safety for Indigenous students and families (EDU)

Ontario is working to expand broadband internet to remote and rural communities. While reliable broadband will bring access to learning and economic opportunities, there may also be negative impacts. [Cyber-bullying](#) and other violence and harassment can increase negative mental health concerns and vulnerability to trafficking. A toolkit will be developed to help Indigenous students and families stay safe as they navigate increased access to the internet. An Indigenous organization would develop the toolkit, which will provide culturally appropriate information and resources to foster safe and positive internet use.

Providing social and employment-related supports for urban Indigenous women (MCCSS, MCU, MLTSD)

Ontario is working with urban Indigenous organizations who provide comprehensive social and employment-related supports, including wrap-around supportive housing, childcare, mental health supports and skills development, to sole-parent Indigenous women to create pathways to postsecondary education and employment.

Increasing Indigenous-led anti-human trafficking initiatives, including dedicated supports and services for Indigenous victims, survivors and communities (MCCSS)

As part of Ontario's five-year [Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy](#), the province is investing in more programs and services to better support Indigenous victims and survivors of human trafficking, including those at risk, to help them rebuild their lives. These investments will increase supports designed by and for Indigenous people and make more specialized, culturally responsive supports available to better address the needs of Indigenous victims and survivors, families and communities.

Prioritizing Indigenous peoples in Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy (MCCSS)

Ontario's five-year [poverty reduction strategy](#), launched in 2020, prioritizes women and Indigenous peoples and includes [specific Indigenous-focused and led initiatives](#) and approaches to advance economic development, prosperity, health and well-being that respect the diversity of Indigenous communities and cultures.





Increasing access to safe transportation options for Indigenous communities (MTO)

Ontario provides programs and services to increase access to safe transportation options for Indigenous communities. These include operating 27 remote airports providing service to fly-in First Nation communities in Northern Ontario, providing driver examination services to obtain a G1 or G2 driver's licence in remote fly-in First Nation communities, intercommunity bus service provided by the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission throughout Northern Ontario, and supporting local and intercommunity bus services in unserved or underserved communities. This includes some municipalities who are partnering with Indigenous communities and organizations through the Community Transportation Grant Program.

Improving safety and combating human trafficking on provincial transportation infrastructure (MTO)

Ontario is improving safety and combating human trafficking through public awareness campaigns at provincial transportation facilities and by training front-line employees to increase recognition and reporting of suspicious activities to authorities. These efforts involve posting educational material with the [Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline](#) at transportation hubs as well as providing funding for the development of anti-human trafficking educational materials accessible to the trucking sector. Additional initiatives include upgrading infrastructure at facilities operated by the Ministry of Transportation, safety improvements to transportation hubs and rest areas (e.g., improved lighting,

visibility, security cameras, etc., where feasible) and working closely with agencies and industry organizations in the transportation sector, encouraging initiatives to combat human trafficking (e.g., the inclusion of human trafficking in the curriculum for Entry-Level Training for truck drivers).

Supporting access to affordable and safe housing (MMAH)

The province is working with Indigenous Program Administrators to deliver housing programs for Indigenous people living off-reserve. This includes the Rural and Urban Indigenous Housing program, which helps create and maintain affordable and rent-geared-to-income housing, to Indigenous and non-Indigenous households across the province, as well as the Indigenous Supportive Housing Program, which provides housing assistance and support services to Indigenous people who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness.



PATHWAY TO CULTURE: EDUCATION AND LANGUAGE

Focusing on Indigenous-informed approaches to education, training, employment and language revitalization in First Nation, Métis, Inuit and urban Indigenous communities.

Reclaiming power and place through access to cultural safety was a key finding of the National Inquiry. At the most basic level, respecting cultural safety means renewing honour for Indigenous women — it means celebrating and embracing women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people as sacred and valuable and teaching and communicating these values to individuals, to communities, and to the non-Indigenous world.¹²

Indigenous worldviews and ways of knowing are grounded in Indigenous languages and Indigenous women have a critical role in transferring language and culture from one generation to another. Ontario recognizes that initiatives that seek to promote healing by supporting the restoration, reclamation and revitalization of Indigenous languages, cultures and identities is key. Actions to promote education and connection to culture must be undertaken at the grassroots level and emphasize opportunities for youth to learn their culture, spend time with Elders and knowledge holders, and be centered within community.¹³

Indigenous partners have indicated that historical impacts should be a primary focus for any action to address the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. It is essential that the history of Indigenous peoples, colonialization and its effects, and the residential school system and its legacy effects be included in student curriculum, professional training, community-based workshops and public education campaigns within the non-Indigenous community.

Key initiatives must re-establish the relationship between societal and government initiatives and Indigenous peoples and communities. By focusing on Indigenous-informed approaches to education, training, employment and language revitalization in First Nation, Inuit, Métis and urban Indigenous communities, Ontario's actions and initiatives can reinforce violence prevention-focused solutions and strengthen the pathway to culture.

An educated, engaged public is key to addressing violence against Indigenous women and girls. We must invest in targeted and appropriate education for community members, public servants, parents, teachers, service and health providers and students.





Educational programs must address Indigenous women's histories, including traditional roles, gender impacts of colonialism, Indigenous rights and treaty rights. Strengthening Indigenous-informed education approaches to the relationship to land are key initiatives for Ontario, including harvesting and the importance of women's roles and responsibilities to the land and water. Other initiatives that are key to this pathway are: relationship training, healthy masculinity, sexual exploitation and human trafficking, systemic bias, safe spaces, trauma-informed responses and awareness, skills to support complex challenges and the relationship between substance abuse and mental health issues.

Equally valuable are initiatives that promote a culturally holistic and safe learning environment for Indigenous learners and the availability of services in languages of the Indigenous communities they serve.

Steps to Success:

Supporting Indigenous students in obtaining an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (EDU)

The Indigenous Graduation Coach Program supports Indigenous students in completing their Ontario Secondary School Diploma. It also supports successful transitions from First Nation/federally operated schools to provincial schools, and to postsecondary education, training, and labour market opportunities. Expanding the program will provide more students with a graduation coach who acts as an advocate and mentor and facilitates access and referrals to community and school resources.

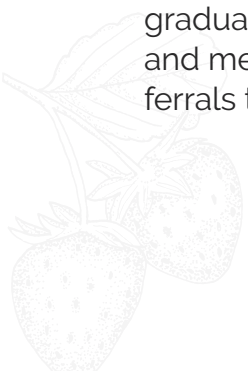
The coach has life experiences deeply rooted in Indigenous communities and experiential connections to Indigenous cultures.

Revising and strengthening Indigenous content and learning in elementary and secondary schools (EDU)

Ontario is continuing to build on the 2018 implementation of the revised Social Studies, Grades 1-6; History and Geography, Grades 7 and 8 and the Canadian and World Studies, Grades 9-10 curricula, which added mandatory learning about First Nation, Métis and Inuit perspectives, cultures, contributions, histories and topics of significance for all students in Grades 4 to 8 and Grade 10. The province will continue to work with First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities and organizations to strengthen Indigenous content and learning across all subjects, grades and courses, including revising the Indigenous Languages curriculum.

Promoting safety and success for Indigenous 2SLGBTQQIA+ youth (EDU)

A new initiative will be developed with Indigenous communities and organizations to support Indigenous 2SLGBTQQIA+ youth in Ontario. Projects will focus on mentorship, leadership, and education supports to build self-esteem, acceptance and academic success. Competency training and resources for parents, caregivers, and foster parents about Indigenous 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples' identities would also be developed.





Offering community and school-based language revitalization programs (EDU)

The “Anishinaabemodaa” – “Let’s speak Ojibwe” Initiative funded by Ontario will support Ojibwe speakers to become Early Childhood Education workers and certified classroom teachers and increase language learning opportunities and access to language learning resources for First Nation students.

Funding for Indigenous students successfully accessing and transitioning to postsecondary education (MCU)

Ontario is supporting [nine Indigenous Institutes](#) with operating funding to provide provincially recognized postsecondary education and training for Indigenous learners. The funding supports the delivery of postsecondary education programs, student support services for Indigenous learners and long-term planning and programming based on community needs and Indigenous knowledge. Student support services and improved access, success and safety for Indigenous learners in postsecondary education and training are funded through additional programs.

Providing the G1 driver’s licence test in Indigenous languages and in remote communities (MTO)

The G1 knowledge test required to obtain a G1 driver’s licence is available in three Indigenous languages — Ojibway, Oji-Cree and Cree — at all DriveTest locations across the province. Ontario also offers direct delivery of the G1 knowledge test and road test to get a G2 driver’s licence in remote/fly-in First Nation communities.



PATHWAY TO HEALTH AND WELL-BEING: COMMUNITY-LED RENEWAL AND RESTORATION

Ensuring Indigenous women/ 2SLGBTQQIA+-centered approaches to health system delivery, including programs and services to improve access, promote safety, and increase culturally relevant services across Ontario.

The National Inquiry defined health as a holistic state of well-being including physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and social safety. Indigenous women made clear the important connection between health and violence.

Ontario recognizes that women in remote northern communities and Inuit women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people face unique challenges, particularly when they are fleeing domestic violence or seeking to obtain basic services others take for granted.¹⁴

Ontario's actions and initiatives seek to promote community-led renewal and restoration of health by including Indigenous women and 2SLGBTQQIA+-centered approaches to the health system delivery. This includes programs and services to improve access, promote safety, and increase culturally relevant and appropriate treatment and mental health services across the province.

Ontario's strategy seeks to identify and address systemic anti-Indigenous racism in the healthcare system experienced by Indigenous women, girls, families and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.

Ontario continues to implement its Indigenous Children and Youth Strategy using First Nations, Métis and Inuit models for child and family services. The province remains committed to enhancing health promotion and resiliency for Indigenous women and girls and reducing health disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations.

Steps to Success:

Developing mental health supports for young Indigenous women, girls and justice-involved youth (EDU, MCCSS)

The Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC) is developing a strength-based initiative to support young Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, who have experienced or witnessed violence. This approach includes culture-based programming and will be adapted to meet local needs and circumstances. Ontario also supports Indigenous community-based organizations to provide mental health and wellness services to justice-involved Indigenous youth in Thunder Bay, Kenora and Ottawa.





Continuing to advance the Ontario Indigenous Children and Youth Strategy (MCCSS)

The Ontario Indigenous Children and Youth Strategy (OICYS), co-developed with First Nations, Inuit and Métis partners, is a government-wide approach intended to improve outcomes for Indigenous children and youth. Ontario continues to implement the OICYS through a distinct Indigenous approach to the government's Child Welfare Redesign, announced July 2020. Ontario is shifting the child and family services system to one that is community-led and prevention-based. This includes the continued delivery and expansion of the Family Well-being Program and implementing Indigenous-designed and led models for child and family services, including those governed under Indigenous laws.

Reducing violence and improving Indigenous healing, health and wellness through the Indigenous Healing and Wellness Strategy (MCCSS, MOH, IAO)

[The Indigenous Healing and Wellness Strategy](#) supports Indigenous designed and delivered, holistic, culturally appropriate and community-based programs to help reduce violence against Indigenous women, children and families and improve healing, health and wellness. Co-developed between Ontario and Indigenous communities and organizations, these programs include Healing Lodges, Indigenous shelters and safe houses for women and children experiencing or at risk of experiencing violence. It also includes community wellness promotion and prevention programs as well as crisis prevention and intervention services.

Expanding access to culturally appropriate mental health and addictions services for Indigenous children and youth (MOH)

The Ontario government is expanding access to specialized children and youth mental health and addictions services in Northwestern Ontario. This will help to develop a system-wide response to mental health and addictions challenges through local community-based services, including culturally appropriate services for Indigenous children and youth.

Investing in Indigenous-led mental health and addictions programs (MOH, MCCSS)

Ontario is investing in Indigenous-led [mental health and wellness programs](#) in First Nations and urban and rural Indigenous communities, including: Indigenous-led mental health and wellness support programs that provide a range of treatment models and new and expanded [Indigenous Mental Health and Addictions Treatment and Healing Centres](#) to provide access to culturally safe treatment closer to home. These Treatment & Healing Centres provide holistic residential mental health and addictions services for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples through a combination of Indigenous healing and clinical approaches to improve the overall health and wellness of individuals, families and communities.





Delivering the Fire Keeper Patrol Program (IAO)

The Fire Keeper Patrol is a mobile Indigenous street outreach program serving members of Mushkegowuk Council and Wabun Tribal Council and other Indigenous people residing in the Timmins area, using a model of care reflective of Indigenous cultural knowledge and values. In collaboration with the City of Timmins and other urban service provider organizations, the program delivers outreach and street patrol services, harm reduction, mental health counselling and assistance navigating access to other social services.

Supporting First Nations communities and organizations in exploring options to transform First Nations health care (MOH)

The Ontario and federal governments are supporting First Nations communities and organizations in exploring options to transform First Nations health care. Ontario is working with a number of First Nations communities and organizations through dedicated processes and relationship agreements to support First Nations-led planning, design, delivery and evaluation of programs and services for First Nations peoples, families and communities.

Supporting emergency preparedness in remote First Nations communities (IAO)

Ontario is investing in new Social Emergency Manager positions to build capacity around emergency prevention, response and recovery efforts in remote and northern Nishnawbe Aski Nation and Grand Council Treaty #3 First Nation communities. This investment is part of the government's comprehensive mental health and addictions plan — [Roadmap to Wellness](#).



PATHWAY TO JUSTICE: SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION AND STRUCTURAL CHANGE

Focusing on systems-wide transformation informed by Indigenous perspectives in priority areas including justice, policing, and child welfare.

Seen through the lens of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, the National Inquiry's examination of access to justice as a basic human right makes clear why universal principles of accountable, open government and accessible justice systems must be assured to every citizen.

Ontario recognizes the need to re-establish the relationship and build trust between Indigenous people and communities, and justice institutions.¹⁵ This strategy will focus on systems-wide transformation informed by Indigenous perspectives and structural change in priority areas, including justice, policing and child welfare.

These responses will contribute to the fundamental structural changes needed across all areas of the justice sector to:

- Support the mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional needs of Indigenous survivors and witnesses to violence through Indigenous-specific programming.
- Fund culturally relevant and trauma-informed services for Indigenous survivors and witnesses to violence, including land-based healing and teachings on cultural practices to support individual healing.

- Increase access to meaningful Indigenous-specific supports within the justice system, including enhancements to existing programming in corrections.
- Build on existing supports for concerted and coordinated enforcement action by police services to address crimes against Indigenous women and girls, including human trafficking.

Steps to Success:

Supporting Families of MMIWG through the Family Information Liaison Unit (MAG)

Ontario established the Family Information Liaison Unit (FILU), in partnership with Justice Canada, to support families of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls to access information related to the loss of their loved ones. Ontario's FILU is part of the Indigenous Justice Division. To date, FILU has assisted over 300 family members in gathering information about their loved one. FILU innovated the trauma-informed, culturally relevant Family Circle process, which gathers affected family members of MMIWG, the investigating police service, the Office of the Chief Coroner and, if relevant, Crown prosecutor, to share information about a loved one's case. FILU staff have facilitated over 75 Family Circles to date. Family Circles have led to the reopening of several police investigations of MMIWG cases.



Providing Indigenous-specific intimate partner violence prevention programs (MAG)

Ontario is delivering Indigenous-specific, culturally relevant Intimate Partner Violence Prevention (IPVP) education and counselling programs to prevent and address domestic/intimate partner violence. These programs are designed, developed and delivered by Indigenous communities to meet the unique needs of their communities and offer support to victims, families and community members impacted by domestic/intimate partner violence. Recently, as a result of more IPVP programs being approved, Indigenous participants will have more opportunities to access Indigenous-specific IPVP programs, rather than alternatives that do not speak to the root causes of intimate partner violence in Indigenous communities.

Providing Gladue and restorative justice programs for Indigenous women (MAG)

Ontario funds Indigenous communities and organizations to deliver the Gladue Program, which consists of Gladue writers and aftercare workers.¹⁶ The province also funds 58 Indigenous communities and organizations to design and deliver Indigenous restorative justice programs to Indigenous people, increase opportunities for diversion and Indigenous legal systems to support community healing. These programs move matters from the criminal justice system into the control of Indigenous communities, where they can be resolved according to the community's legal norms and systems.

Enhancing community and individual safety in the Kenora area (SOLGEN)

Ontario is providing funding to support the Makwa Patrol, which enhances community and individual safety by helping Indigenous and vulnerable people to safely access support services and resources, including in times of crisis, and to improve community reintegration. Specifically, the patrol works in Kenora and responds to local incidents, builds relationships with vulnerable populations in the community, assists with searches for missing persons and responds to requests for assistance from individuals, businesses, emergency service providers and other agencies.

Investing in specialized abuse issues investigative supports for First Nations police services (SOLGEN)

Ontario is providing funding for dedicated staff in First Nations police services to investigate, oversee, review and monitor abuse issues investigations. This would significantly enhance trauma-informed responses by First Nations police services to better meet the needs of at-risk Indigenous women and girls. This can be critical in addressing the causes that lead to increased risk of human trafficking and further victimization that continue to put women and girls at risk of abuse and exploitation.





Investing in social navigators for First Nations police services (SOLGEN)

Ontario is investing in social navigators within each First Nations police service to help with coordination and capacity issues in navigating the social services and justice sectors. Social navigators are civilian coordinators who work in partnership with service agencies and communities to identify areas of concern (e.g., mental health, addictions, homelessness, etc.). They provide early preventative access to community safety and well-being services that can divert at-risk individuals from cycles of incarceration and victimization.

Addressing the overrepresentation of Indigenous youth in the justice system (MCCSS)

Ontario is working with Indigenous communities and other organizations to address overrepresentation of Indigenous youth in Ontario's justice system by funding culturally relevant programs, such as prevention initiatives and 49 community-based programs for Indigenous youth in, or at risk of, conflict with the law. These include restorative justice, extrajudicial measures/sanctions, probation services, non-residential attendance centres, reintegration services, community workers and mental health and wellness services.

Providing the Nishnawbe Aski Police Services Survivor Assistance Support Program (IAO)

The Survivor Assistance Support Program provides culturally sensitive, immediate victim and witness support and integration of bail court services in northern and remote Indigenous communities.

Supporting Indigenous women with wellness and enhanced services for incarcerated Indigenous women (SOLGEN)

Building on the principles of a successful model offered to Indigenous men in Toronto, Indigenous women wellness and enhanced services will be expanded to include Indigenous women at select institutions to increase access to culturally responsive programming and to support reintegration. This model strives to create a holistic, supportive healing environment that combines programming and physical environment.

Collaborating on community safety and well-being planning (SOLGEN)

Ontario is supporting Indigenous partners in engaging in and undertaking the community safety and well-being (CSWB) planning process. CSWB planning involves working with multi-sectoral partners to proactively identify and address local priority risks to safety and well-being before they escalate. This requires refocusing efforts on the long-term benefits of social development and prevention to improve the social determinants of health and alleviate long-term reliance on the criminal justice system. CSWB planning can also create better coordination between police and community partners through crisis response as well as collaborative service delivery models. This ensures vulnerable individuals with complex needs are receiving services from the providers best suited to support them.





Establishing Justice Centres to transform Kenora's criminal justice system (MAG)

Introduced in over 70 communities around the world, Ontario is establishing [Justice Centres](#) that bring together court and community partners to address the root causes of crime and improve community safety. Each Justice Centre is designed by and for the community it serves. Through a participatory design process, MAG is collaborating with First Nations leadership and Indigenous organizations, local service providers, law enforcement, justice system participants and municipalities to implement a Justice Centre model in Kenora. This model will include parallel criminal and Indigenous restorative justice processes with the aim of increasing referrals to existing Indigenous restorative justice programs, reducing bail and remand populations, and providing multi-sectoral trauma-informed supports delivered by Indigenous organizations to youth and adults, including Indigenous women and girls who have experienced or witnessed trauma or violence.





PATHWAY TO COLLABORATIVE RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

In response to the clear expectation of the Indigenous Women's Advisory Council as well as Indigenous communities and organizations to see strong, ongoing provincial government accountability measures, Ontario and Indigenous partners will design a performance measurement accountability strategy based upon mutual respect and two-way responsibility.

The accountability measures contemplated will uphold five key principles:

- **Transparency and collaboration:** documented processes where Indigenous communities and organizations have time and spaces to meaningfully contribute through feedback and input.
- **Ongoing, continuous MMIWG response and Ontario commitment:** this strategy holds Ontario accountable to a decline in violence against Indigenous women, children and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people through its responsibilities to listen, learn and contribute meaningfully to partnerships and collaborations.
- **Collaborative governance approach for oversight and progress reporting:** outcomes that measure progress will be culturally appropriate to the unique needs of Indigenous communities.

- **Long-term trust and relationship building:** strategy supports Indigenous-led efforts toward community safety and healing with a focus on Indigenous women and Indigenous understandings of gender.
- **Clear MMIWG response outcomes developed in dialogue with Indigenous partners:** strategy facilitates partnerships that are respectful of Indigenous knowledge and expertise by supporting Indigenous-led planning, design, development and delivery of activities.

This collaborative accountability is further strengthened by the province's commitment to deliver an annual public progress report. The report, co-developed by Indigenous communities and organizations and Ontario, will be released annually for the next five years, on or before the June 3rd anniversary of the Final Report, in conjunction with a yearly progress meeting with Indigenous communities and organizations.

As Ontario's strategy evolves over time, it may be updated, adapted, amended or expanded upon in discussion with Indigenous communities and organizations and the Council to reflect changing relationships and the identification of resources required.



PATHWAY TO IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING SYSTEMIC ANTI-INDIGENOUS RACISM AND INDIGENOUS GENDER-BASED ANALYSIS

Focusing on a government-wide approach to addressing anti-Indigenous racism and developing an Indigenous gender-based analysis approach to inform Ontario's strategy.

The need to confront and eliminate racism, sexism, homophobia and transphobia requires action by individual ministries to collectively uphold the safety, security and cultural safety of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. By building competency and capacity, and increasing awareness of systemic racism, we equip individuals across sectors at all levels with knowledge and tools to advance racial equity.

Ontario will take steps to actively increase the ability of the Ontario Public Service to recognize and address systemic barriers and inequities. As an example, Gender-Based Analysis will be applied to the impacts of policies and programs in the resource industry on the safety and quality of life for Indigenous women, girls, 2SLGBTQQIA+ people and Indigenous people residing in northern and remote communities.

The province will also provide individuals working in the education sector with the tools to build and strengthen meaningful relationships with Indigenous communities.

The rehabilitation and re-integration of Indigenous youth in contact with the justice system will be supported by the provision of culturally competent services.

By advancing this strategy, Ontario seeks to re-establish the relationship between societal and government institutions and Indigenous people and communities.

Steps to Success:

Providing systemic anti-racism, anti-discrimination, and anti-colonial education and learning for educators/education workers (EDU)

Ontario is delivering a series of four modules to provide educators and education workers with anti-racism, anti-discrimination and anti-colonial education learning. Modules include: Building Context for Human Rights Equity and Anti-Discrimination Education; Impacts of Colonialism on Indigenous People; Understanding and Addressing Anti-Black Racism and Affirming Black Student Identities and Experiences; Classroom and whole-school responses to racism and discrimination in schools.





Providing Indigenous cultural awareness training for Youth Justice staff (MCCSS)

Ontario is providing mandatory training for Youth Services Officers to support culturally competent services to Indigenous youth in the justice system. The training examines current and historical issues impacting Indigenous communities and introduces some Indigenous beliefs and best practices for working with Indigenous youth.

Offering trauma-informed training to build Indigenous cultural competency across the education sector (EDU)

Trauma-informed education training supports help to create safe learning environments in ways that are relevant and meaningful to the school community.

Developing a new Anti-Racism and Anti-Hate Grant Program (ARD)

The province is collaborating with Indigenous communities and organizations to create a new Anti-Racism and Anti-Hate Grant program. Ontario will work with Indigenous communities and organizations to prioritize key issues that will have the greatest impact on eliminating anti-Indigenous racism and hate and to inform design and implementation of the program, including Indigenous-focused initiatives.

Investing in the Safer and Vital Communities Grant program (SOLGEN)

The province is supporting non-profit, community organizations and First Nations Chiefs and Band Councils by investing in the Safer and Vital Communities (SVC) Grant program to support local projects that enhance community safety and well-being.

Projects funded under the current grant cycle theme, "Preventing Hate Motivated Crime through Community Collaboration", will help community-based organizations and their policing partners tackle discrimination and foster greater inclusiveness.

Offering Bimickaway Training for justice sector workers (MAG)

Ontario created an Indigenous cultural competency training program for justice sector workers, including prosecutors, victim service workers, police and correctional officers. Bimickaway — an Anishinaabemowin word meaning "to leave footprints" — training covers historical and current realities impacting Indigenous people, treaties, northern realities and anti-Indigenous racism. The curriculum was developed with input from Indigenous leadership, Elders and community members. To date, more than 6,000 individuals have participated in the training.





Delivering Indigenous cultural safety training for healthcare professionals and administrators (MOH)

Ontario is supporting the Indigenous Primary Health Care Council to deliver an Indigenous cultural safety training program for healthcare professionals and administrators across the health sector to improve Indigenous healthcare experiences and outcomes by increasing respect and understanding of the unique history and current realities of Indigenous populations.

Providing Indigenous relations training for Ministry of Transportation staff (MTO)

The Ministry of Transportation will provide staff with training, tools and resources to help ensure Indigenous peoples' rights and interests are considered and reflected in decision-making related to transportation initiatives.





CONCLUSION

Ontario is committed to realizing its vision where all Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people live in safety, free from violence and exploitation and keeping Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people at the centre of this work.

Building on our strong foundation of programs and services — strengthened by our renewed commitment to collaboration and progress — we will release an annual public report to chart our progress. The report will be developed in collaboration with Indigenous communities and organizations and with responsible Ontario ministries, and will be released on or before June 3rd of each year, in conjunction with an annual progress meeting with Indigenous communities and organizations.

We are building upon our progress to date by extending the Indigenous Women's Advisory Council mandate beyond March 2022. We are working to establish locally led Women's Circles and Family and Survivor's Circles to support the roll-out of actions within communities and identify community needs on an ongoing basis.

Ontario is committed to working closely with Indigenous partners to deliver on the actions outlined in this strategy. Together, we will continue on the path to safety by confronting and eliminating the root causes of violence so future generations of Indigenous women and their families are safe to live their lives free from violence.





FOOTNOTES

- 1** Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, questioning, intersex and asexual as defined by the 2SLGBTQQIA+ Sub-Working Group, National Action Plan (February 2021), p. 7.
- 2** J Boyce (2016). Victimization of Aboriginal People in Canada, 2014. Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Catalogue no. 85-002-X and Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics Table 7 (2001-2013); Table 35-10-0156-01 (2014-2018). Violent victimization includes sexual assault, robbery and physical assault.
- 3** Ontario Ministry of Indigenous Affairs, Ending Violence against Indigenous Women Placemat, Performance Measures and Data Unit, last updated February 2020.
- 4** See note 3, Final Report, Vol. 1a, p. 57.
- 5** Canada, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, "Terms of Reference for the National Inquiry." See also, National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Legal Path, Rules of Respectful Practice, available at <http://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/legal-path-rules-of-respectful-practice.pdf>
- 6** See note 1, Sub-working group report, p. 5.
- 7** Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, National Inquiry, 2019, vol. 1A, p. 327. For more on the four rights of the National Inquiry, see Final Report, vol. 1a, p. 117-122.
- 8** Final Report, vol. 1b, p. 141.
- 9** Final Report, vol. 1a, p. 416.
- 10** Final Report, vol. 1a, p. 711.
- 11** See note 3, Final Report, Vol. 1a, p. 508.
- 12** See note 3, Final Report, Vol. 1a, p. 408.
- 13** Métis Nation of Ontario to MCCSS-OWI, March 2021.
- 14** Tungasuvvingat Inuit: We Are Resilient, Consultation on the MMIWG2S National Action Plan From an Urban Inuit Perspective, Ontario Chapter, Our Voices Will Be Heard (22pp).
- 15** This message was reinforced by Indigenous organization the Métis Nation of Ontario to MCCSS-OWI, March 2021.
- 16** Gladue writers prepare reports to give judges information they must consider when sentencing an Indigenous person, including the unique systemic or background factors that may have played a part in bringing the individual before the courts and the types of sentencing that may be appropriate because of a particular person's Indigenous heritage or connection. Gladue aftercare workers support Indigenous persons with development and follow through of recommendations in a Gladue report, as well as advocate with service providers and create healing plans.

