

Supporting the Yukon's MMIWG2S+ Strategy

Key Actions from Government of Yukon

May 2022


Yukon

Message from the Minister to Families and Survivors

In my role as Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate, it has been my honour to serve as co-chair for the Yukon Advisory Committee on MMIWG2S+. This work is very close to my heart. I am incredibly proud of the progress we have made in partnership with Indigenous women's organizations, Yukon First Nations, and families and survivors. There is real action underway, in every community across the territory.

However, bearing witness to the injustices that survivors and family members of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and Two-spirit+ people have experienced is humbling. Your strength and resilience always keeps me grounded in the urgency of work and the need for comprehensive, long-term change. This work is certainly far from over.

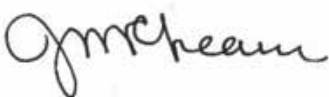
I am committed to taking this journey with you. Reflecting the principles set out in the Yukon's MMIWG2S+ Strategy means being inclusive, staying accountable, striving for equity, and making the work long-term and sustainable. Our government will continue to collaborate with our partners to implement concrete actions that will restore dignity and justice to Indigenous women, girls and Two-spirit+ people in Yukon.

This document shares with you some of the progress that the Government of Yukon has made. Although I am proud of the work that has been done, I acknowledge it is just the beginning, and that we have a lot more to do before we see the kind of change that is needed in the territory.

I would like to thank all members of the Yukon Advisory Committee on MMIWG2S+, as well as the Technical Working Group, for their wisdom, experience, time and dedication to this strategy.

Finally, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to the families and survivors. It is thanks to your tireless advocacy that we are all here today.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J McLean". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "M".

Honourable Jeanie McLean
Minister Responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate



Strategy Action Item 1.4

Community-based Mental Wellness Support:

- Provide and improve community-based, culturally relevant mental wellness support for victims of violence, perpetrators of violence, children witnessing violence, victims of sexual abuse and other family and community members.
- Develop accessible and appropriate community-led options for detox, treatment, aftercare, healing and recovery.

Substance Use Crisis

The Yukon is facing a drastic increase in deaths related to substance use, creating mental health crises in every community. Substance use is often connected to violence, especially violence against Indigenous women and girls. In recognition of these tragedies, the Government of Yukon declared a substance use health emergency on January 20, 2022.

The Government of Yukon is working closely with community partners and Yukon First Nations to advance a range of harm reduction initiatives in response to the emergency. A range of initiatives are underway, including:

- launching a new territory-wide public awareness and education campaign that addresses the toxic drug supply in Yukon communities;
- expanding drug testing and safe supply to rural communities and increasing their availability in Whitehorse;
- enhancing the Government of Yukon's supervised consumption site to support those who use inhalants;
- increasing on-the-land healing and treatment options in the territory;
- working with Blood Ties Four Directions to extend the hours of operation of the outreach van, which provides mobile fentanyl testing and supports to marginalized individuals; and
- developing a new Opioid Action Plan to build on the success of the territory's 2018 Action Plan.

Strategy Action Item 1.6

Indigenous Children and Families:

- Improve and expand culturally appropriate supports to Indigenous families so that Indigenous children are raised in their own safe and loving families and communities.

Child and Family Services Act

The Government of Yukon acknowledges the mistakes of the past, and is working with Yukon First Nations to establish a child welfare system based on non-discriminatory values and fundamental child and human rights.

The foundation of this new Act is to have children safely supported within their families, extended families and communities. The Government of Yukon knows it must continue to improve and expand culturally appropriate supports for Indigenous families so that Indigenous children are raised in their own safe and loving families and communities.

The new amendments aim to achieve six goals:

- support family preservation and family reunification;
- improve access to cultural activities and establish cultural plans for all children in the care of the Director of Family and Children's Services;
- expand transitional support services for children up to the age of 26 (and beyond this in exceptional circumstances);
- provide access to preventative support services for pregnant people at risk of becoming involved in child protection;
- provide the ability to place children with their extended family or a community member; and
- increase the involvement of Yukon First Nations in decision-making processes.

The amendments to the Act were created through the efforts of the Child and Family Services Act Steering Committee. The committee included representatives from Yukon First Nations and was co-chaired by the Council of Yukon First Nations and the Government of Yukon. The committee members worked to determine how best to implement the required actions from *Embracing the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, the 2019 final report of the Child and Family Services Advisory Committee. The steering committee was also responsible for making the Yukon's legislation consistent with new federal child welfare legislation.

The Government of Yukon thanks the members of the Child and Family Services Advisory Committee, the Child and Family Services Act Steering Committee, the Council of Yukon First Nations and all those who worked diligently on this Act over the past three years.



Path 2

Community Safety & Justice

Strategy Action Item 2.1

Community Safety Assessments, Plans and Implementation:

- Conduct community-based safety assessments designed by communities to identify factors that contribute to ongoing violence and unsafe conditions.
- Develop and implement community safety plans that address these factors and conditions.

New Community Safety Planning Program

Community safety planning represents an innovative approach that is integral to the safety and well-being of northern and remote communities.

The Government of Yukon has created a new Community Safety Planning program to ensure there is consistent funding for First Nations governments across the Yukon to engage in community safety planning activities. Phase one of the program has been approved and will provide up to \$200,000 to each First Nations government to support local community safety assessments, planning and initiatives.

This program will help First Nations create tailored community safety plans that respond to the challenges, concerns and priorities of their communities.

Strategy Action Item 2.2

Evaluate *Sharing Common Ground*:

- *Sharing Common Ground – Yukon's Police Force Review* (2010) is the final report of the review in Yukon, focusing primarily on the RCMP — the evaluation should review the status of the implementation of the recommendations and identify emerging needs.

Reviewing the Implementation of *Sharing Common Ground*

The Government of Yukon, in partnership with the Council of Yukon First Nations and RCMP M Division, has engaged a Yukon-based company to review the implementation of *Sharing Common Ground: Review of Yukon's Police Force*, which was completed in 2010.

The Yukon's MMIWG2S+ Strategy recommended this review to assess each of the report's recommendations. The review will help determine what has been successful and what challenges remain and will identify any emerging needs.

The review is an important step in making the Yukon a safer place, where Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit+ Yukoners are treated equitably and with dignity and justice.



Strategy Action Item 3.6

Safe Housing and Freedom from Poverty:

- Appropriately and safely meet the needs of Indigenous women, girls and Two-spirit+ people — this includes providing gender-specific options for safe and affordable housing, food, clothing and other essentials.

Supporting Safer Housing

Lack of access to safe, affordable housing is a barrier for many Indigenous women who experience violence. Safe housing and freedom from poverty are critical steps to ending violence against Indigenous women and girls.

Projects of note that directly support vulnerable women and children include:

The Government of Yukon is investing \$1 million from its Housing Initiatives Fund, building on \$15 million from the Government of Canada, to refresh and renovate the High Country Inn. This will create 55 new supportive housing units for Yukoners who are in uncertain housing situations. There will be a number of units specifically for women and youth.

An emergency shelter in Whitehorse for Yukon First Nations women and children escaping family violence will be constructed in the coming years. This is in collaboration with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), CYFN and the Government of Yukon. CYFN will lead the construction and operation of this emergency shelter, comprised of 15 units (32 beds).

A total of three triplexes were built in the last year in Mayo, Watson Lake and Whitehorse. An additional \$1.1 million from CMHC's Northern Housing Fund will contribute nine units towards supporting affordable, energy-efficient community housing options for vulnerable Yukoners. Two of these nine units are specifically designated for women and children.

Strategy Action Item 3.3

Employment, Livelihoods and Entrepreneurial Development:

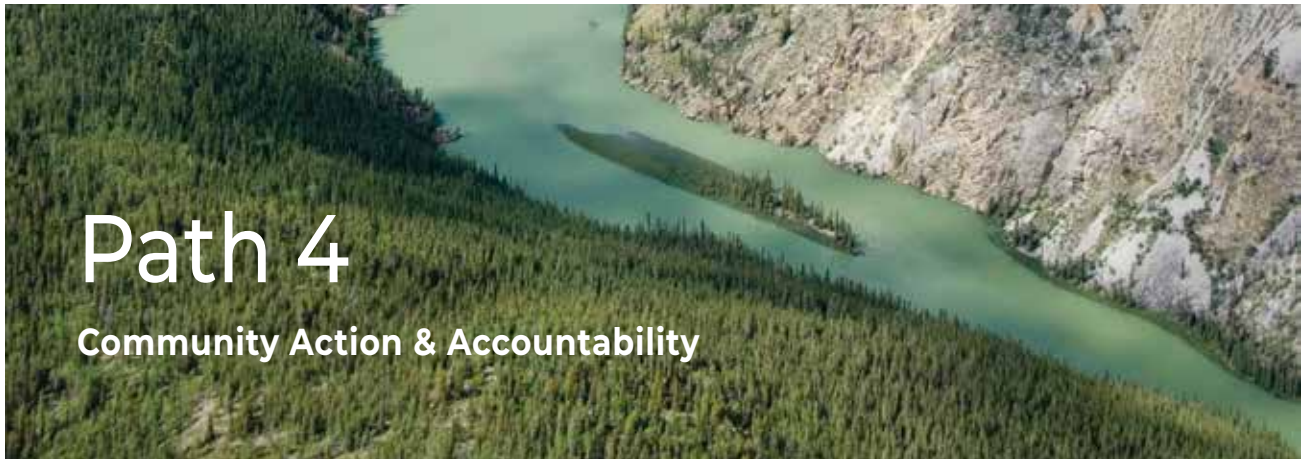
- Increase and improve opportunities for Indigenous women, girls and Two-spirit+ people to create sustainable and self-determined livelihoods and economic independence.

Indigenous Hiring Preference

It is important that the Government of Yukon reflect the diversity of the people and communities it serves. The Indigenous hiring preference initiative is contributing to the goal of increasing the number of Indigenous employees in the public service. This is also one step to enhance economic independence for Indigenous women, girls, and Two-spirit+ people.

Since October 2020, all Government of Yukon hiring competitions have included a preference for qualified candidates who self-identify as having Yukon First Nation or Canadian Indigenous ancestry. In April 2021, the hiring preference pilot was extended until 2029.

The Government of Yukon developed the Breaking Trail Together plan in collaboration with Yukon First Nations governments. The ten-year plan addresses the Government of Yukon's legal obligation under the Yukon First Nation Final Agreements to develop and implement a Representative Public Service Plan.



Path 4

Community Action & Accountability

Strategy Action Item 4.6

MMIWG2S+ Strategy

Accountability Framework:

- Embed an accountability framework into the strategy to ensure that MMIWG2S+ families, survivors, partners, contributors and all Yukon communities continue to be included and involved.

Supporting the First Annual MMIWG2S+ Accountability Forum

The Government of Yukon has heard clearly from families that it is time to take action. There is a lot of work ahead and the Government of Yukon is committed to doing this work with its partners.

Embedding accountability into the territory's MMIWG2S+ Strategy will ensure that this work continues. The Government of Yukon is proud to support the first annual MMIWG2S+ Accountability Forum. The forum offers an opportunity for families and survivors to come together with partners and contributors in order to build relationships, share promising practices, and find ways to continue working together.

Strategy Action Item 4.7

2SLGBTQIA Advocacy and Public Education:

- Assess the needs and resources of organizations that engage in advocacy and education on anatomical sex, sexual orientation, sexualities, gender expression and identities — the goal is to address colonial violence against all genders and sexualities, promote understanding, and create safety, equality and justice for 2SLGBTQIA Yukoners.

LGBTQ2S+ Action Plan

The Government of Yukon recognizes the need for action and education to address colonial violence against all gender and sexualities. Two-spirit+ people face greater discrimination and higher rates of violence than the general population does.

In July 2021 the Government of Yukon released a five-year action plan. It includes more than 100 items across nine departments to advance LGBTQ2S+ inclusion, such as improving access to Two-Spirit, trans, non-binary-affirming health care, providing education and training to service providers, and supporting LGBTQ2S+ culture and programming.



