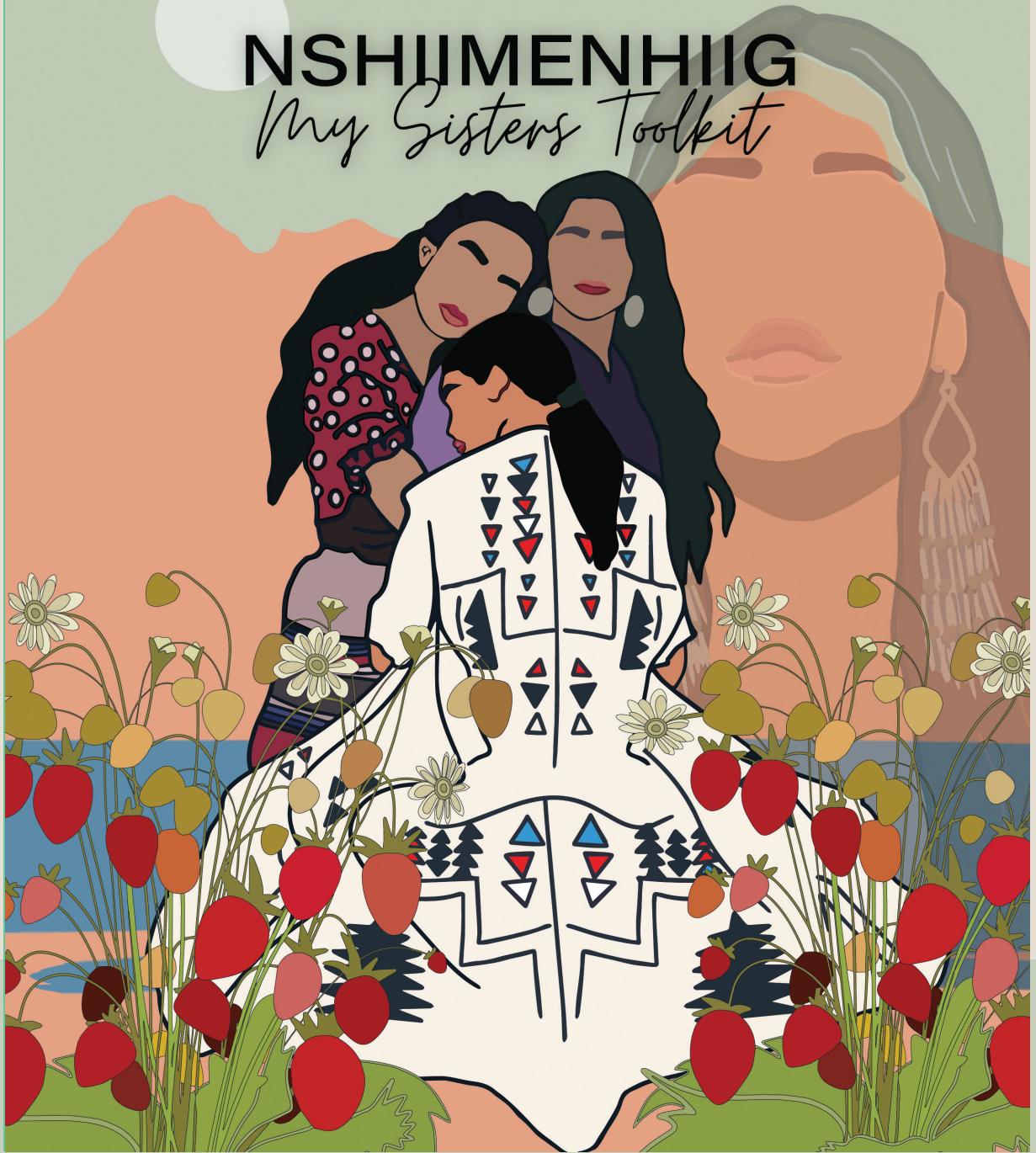




NSHIMENHIIG

My Sisters Toolkit



“Safety looks like a whole community caring for Indigenous women, loving Indigenous women, uplifting their voices, protecting their children, educating their children, [and] feeding their children. Safety looks like love multiplied. Safety is found at the end of colonial violence. Let’s stop the violence, the trauma. Let the women lead.”

Community-Based Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Submission (2018)



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Nshiimenhiig (My Sisters Toolkit) has been developed as part of an MMIWG Commemoration Project, honouring Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

This Toolkit has been designed with, by, and for families and survivors with the intent to raise awareness and promote lifelong learning and support to Indigenous women, girls, and LGBTQQIA2S+ individuals that is relevant to violence prevention, protection, and perseverance for their healing, wellness, and personal growth.

We begin by acknowledging the voices of the Indigenous women and girls that contributed to the development this resource, sharing their lived experience(s).

While “women and girls” is referenced throughout this resource, the Anishinabek Nation recognizes the many gender diverse identities of Indigenous women and girls, including those who identify as trans or Two-Spirit who are impacted by violence and/or facing vulnerabilities.

We would like to honour, and acknowledge the leadership and wisdom of the Anishinabek Nation Kwe-Wuk Advisory Council:

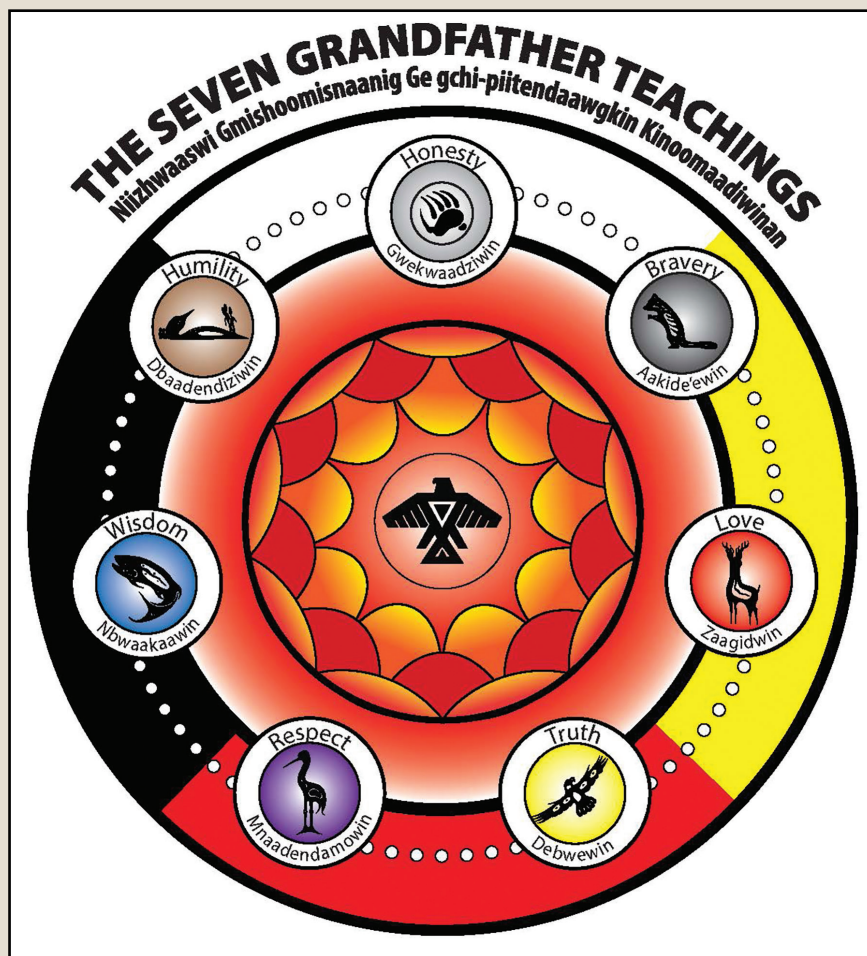
Donna Debassige
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Betsy Kechego

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Anishinabek Nation Communications Department
Mary Pheasant, Shelter Manager for Nookomisnaang Shelter
Julie Dalglish, Shelter Manager for Ojibwe Women’s Lodge

The Seven Grandfather Teachings

The development of this Toolkit was guided by Indigenous knowledge and the described ways of knowing and being of Indigenous women and girls. The Seven Grandfather Teachings is the framework that guides our approach and our relationships:



Zaagidwin (Love)
Debwewin (Truth)
Mnaadendamowin (Respect)
Nbwaakaawin (Wisdom)
Dbaadendiziwin (Humility)
Gwekwaadziwin (Honesty)
Aakedhewin (Bravery)

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INTRODUCTION

The Nshiimenhiig (My Sisters Toolkit) has been designed for women and girls leaving the shelter system and returning to their communities.

This resource will provide some guidance and support to those looking for ways to become advocates for violence free communities.

Note: reference(s) to “women and girls” in this Toolkit is inclusive of gender diverse people.

Why a Toolkit?

The Anishinabek Nation is committed to advancing the equality of all Indigenous women and girls. This includes strengthening their abilities to heal while bringing leadership and knowledge to their communities.

This Toolkit brings together promising practices and strategies that will:

- foster empowerment;
- give voice to women and girls;
- create a space for Elders and Knowledge Keepers to share their gifts and knowledge on traditional child rearing practices, customs and culture;
- promote leadership; and
- develop solutions that are community and culturally-based.

Serving as a resource for women and girls who have or are currently using Anishinabek shelter services because of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), this Toolkit has been designed to:

- **reflect perspectives of Indigenous women and girls** that offers awareness, enrichment, encouragement, and lifelong learning;
- **honour lived experiences;**

- **promote awareness and education** that will empower and strengthen women to become more involved in creating safe, engaged and empowered communities;
- **contribute to reducing the incidence of IPV** in communities; and
- **promote a future** where women and girls can live in a violence free community.

“The ‘She is Wise Framework’ recognizes Indigenous women as experts in their lives. It’s grounded within a need to create space for Indigenous women to reclaim and restore their roles and leadership. Indigenous women are the centre of our community, and when they are healthy and well, so too are their families and our extended community.”

Ontario Native Women’s Association

The end goal is for women and girls to be:

- ☑ **heard** and empowered;
- ☑ **connected** to each other and to community resources;
- ☑ **able to advocate** for ongoing community change; and
- ☑ **have a role** in the development of a vision for a violence free community.

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE IN ANISHINABEK NATION COMMUNITIES

HISTORICAL ROOTS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS AND INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA

“The fulfilment of the Calls for Justice requires a decolonizing approach. This approach is a way of doing things differently; it challenges the colonial influence under which we live by making space for Indigenous perspectives that are often cast aside. It involves recognizing inherent rights through the principle that Indigenous Peoples have the right to govern themselves in relation to matters that are internal to their communities; integral to their communities; integral to their unique cultures, identities, traditions, languages, and institutions; and with respect to their special relationship to the land. Our approach honours and respect Indigenous values, philosophies, and knowledge systems. It is a strength-base approach, focusing on their resilience and expertise of individuals and communities themselves.”

Reclaiming Power and Place:
The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls - Calls for Justice

The historical impact of colonization and resulting intergenerational trauma is key to understanding the experiences of Indigenous women and girls with IPV. The trauma resulting from colonization, and the forceful erasure of culture and tradition, is present in the lives of many Indigenous peoples.ⁱ It has left many women and gender diverse people living with and struggling with violence, racism, discrimination, poverty, social exclusion, poor mental and physical health, and addictions.ⁱⁱ

A History of Colonization

Colonialism and ongoing systemic racism destroyed traditional ways of life for Indigenous men, women, and children. It included the seizure of land, and the forced erosion of language, culture, spirituality and traditional values. As a result; the traditional roles of men and women, and traditional social systems were diminished and devalued – causing immeasurable harm. Women who were once “respected and honoured for their spiritual and mental strength”ⁱⁱⁱ lost their traditional roles of leadership and reverence as givers of life.

“To begin to understand the severity of the tragedy facing Indigenous women today you must first understand the history.”

Nick Printup

The *Indian Act*, Residential School System, and the Sixties Scoop contributed to further loss of family structures and caregiving roles, resulting in generational poverty, inadequate housing, food insecurity, and mental, spiritual and physical concerns. These issues are further compounded today by ongoing discrimination and racism, inequities in health, educational opportunities, social services, and deep-rooted intergenerational issues with addictions and family violence in First Nation communities.

“Intergenerational trauma is key to understanding Indigenous women’s experiences of domestic violence. The trauma resulting from colonization, and the forceful erasure of culture and tradition, is present in the lives of many Indigenous peoples.”

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (2019)

As far back as 1996, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People^{iv} acknowledged that the roots of family violence could be traced to colonization as well as the ongoing racism and discrimination faced by Indigenous people. The Commission noted that:

- family violence is distinct in that it has invaded whole communities and cannot be considered a problem of a particular couple or an individual household;
- failure in family functioning can be traced in many cases to interventions of the state deliberately introduced to disrupt or displace the Indigenous family; and
- violence within Indigenous communities is fostered and sustained by a racist and social environment that promulgates demeaning stereotypes of Indigenous men and women and seeks to diminish their value as human beings and their right to be treated with dignity.

Systemic Racism

Indigenous women and girls face structural and systemic issues that increase their risk of experiencing partner violence.^v Violence against Indigenous women continues due to:

- ☑ the prevalence of racism and misogyny;
- ☑ inequalities in Indigenous women and girl's economic, social, political and cultural rights;
- ☑ the disruption of Indigenous communities caused by the historic and present-day removal of children;
- ☑ the overrepresentation of Indigenous women in the criminal justice system;
- ☑ inadequate police response to violence against Indigenous women^{vi}; and
- ☑ the overrepresentation of children and youth in the child welfare system.

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AGAINST INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS

Partner abuse and Indigenous women^{vii}

- Indigenous women have rates of family violence two to three times higher than non-Indigenous women.^{viii}
- Indigenous women are almost twice as likely as non-Indigenous women to experience physical abuse by an intimate partner in their lifetime.
- Indigenous women are reported to be more likely to fear for their lives as a result of partner violence.^{ix}
- Indigenous women with a disability experienced partner abuse 74% more often than women without a disability.
- 2SLGBTQQIA+ women are 59% more likely to experience partner abuse than their counterparts.
- Indigenous women [are] almost three times more likely to experience financial abuse by an intimate partner in their lifetime compared with non-Indigenous women.
- When Indigenous identity is coupled with other socioeconomic factors such as isolation, poverty, addiction, mental health, [and/or] lack of housing, a woman's vulnerability to violence increases. Addressing violence against Indigenous women in communities can be complicated by a series of factors including:
 - lack of culturally appropriate resources;
 - services designed and delivered from a western world view with little or no understanding of Indigenous world views or cultural frameworks for interventions;

- fear of child welfare intervention;
- rural and remote geography;
- challenges related to confidentiality and safety;
- transportation and/or access to the internet;
- fear of discrimination and racism when women have to access services from outside the community*;
- political cultural and historical barriers;
- poverty; and/or
- lack of Indigenous victim services in many communities.

“Violence is any behaviour by one person against another, within the context of relationships based on kinship, intimacy, dependence and trust, which can endanger that person’s survival, security or well-being.”

National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health

It is important to acknowledge that men can also be a victim in IPV. However, this Toolkit is designed by and for those that identify as women and girls. It is also important to understand that IPV exists in same-sex relationships.

COVID-19 and Intimate Partner Violence

Indigenous women have reported increased violence during pandemic lockdowns. Accessing support networks and services continues to be difficult. According to the Native Women’s Association of Canada (NWAC) “resources that were previously available for victims have been diverted to respond to COVID-19, such as funding for emergency shelters. Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people were already disproportionately affected by Domestic Violence due to existing structural inequalities, which intensified during the pandemic”.

“In May 2020, 17 percent experienced violence (physically or psychologically) in the previous three months, compared to 10 percent reporting violence from their spouse over the previous five years, as reported in 2014.”

Native Women’s Association of Canada

Culturally Relevant and Trauma-Informed Strengths-Based Service Delivery

The history of intergenerational trauma requires that service providers have an understanding of colonialism and its impacts on Indigenous women and girls, and their communities. In addition to the need to responsibly develop culturally-based approaches to care.

Trauma-informed care and practice embraces a holistic strength-based approach with an understanding of the impacts of trauma and the importance of the emotional, physical, mental and spiritual well-being of women, their families, and communities.

It is imperative that Indigenous women [and girls] receive services within an environment that is spiritually, socially, emotionally and physically safe.^{xi}

This includes ensuring that:

- ☑ services are delivered in a culturally safe community environment, and consistent with an Indigenous world view respecting language, culture and values;
- ☑ cultural identity is valued through shared respect, meaning, knowledge and the experience of learning and growing;

- ☑ Anishinabek First Nation communities determine the strategies and actions necessary to build the community capacity to deal with partner abuse and to strengthen the community's capacity to support women; and
- ☑ interventions are holistic and address the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual aspects of the women, the family and the community.^{xii}

"Violence prevention in Indigenous communities requires multi-faceted and multi-dimensional approaches, tailored to fit the needs of multiple types of participants, including men, women, children, families and communities, the young and the elderly victims as well as perpetrators."

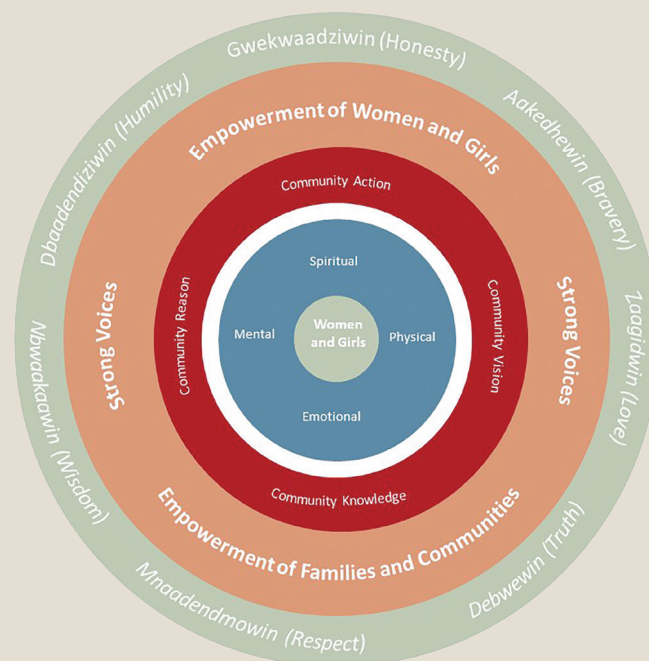
The National Collaborating Centre

Cultural approaches for healing involve spiritual practices and ceremonies such as talking circles, healing circles, spiritual circles, sharing circles, smudging and the sweat lodge. These healing approaches can stand on their own or be integrated into a counselling approach.

Moving Forward: from Individual Healing to Community Health

Once a woman or girl leaves the shelter, a their healing journey may continue if they are feeling empowered. They may even reach out to their community to develop a vision for ending violence against women and girls. Through sharing knowledge and engaging communities, this Toolkit can provide a path towards community action.

The following section of the Toolkit uses the Four Directions of the medicine wheel to layout a path toward individual and community healing:



1. The Eastern Direction offers the gift of vision.

This Toolkit starts in the East. The Eastern Direction offers the gift of vision. Developing a strong vision of what a safe community, free from violence for women and girls, looks like is an essential first step in the community healing process for everyone - women, girls, boys, men, families and communities.

Women are at the heart of traditional community.

2. The Southern Direction offers the gift of knowledge and insight.

Once there is a vision, women can lead their community towards the Southern Direction - offering the gift of knowledge and insight. This section is intended to help better understand the types of abuse and how women can plan for keeping themselves and their families safe.

"Breaking the cycle of violence means supporting the cultural, mental, emotional, spiritual and physical health of everyone involved."

Walking Together

3. The Western Direction offers the gift of reason.

With the knowledge that they need, women and their communities can move towards the Western Direction which offers the gift of reason. By establishing connections with those affected by violence against women and girls, we create opportunities to engage the community towards creating better safety for them.

Indigenous reciprocity allows women, girls, men, and boys to learn from experiences and knowledge that are shared in a respectful way – leading the path to forgiveness and healing.

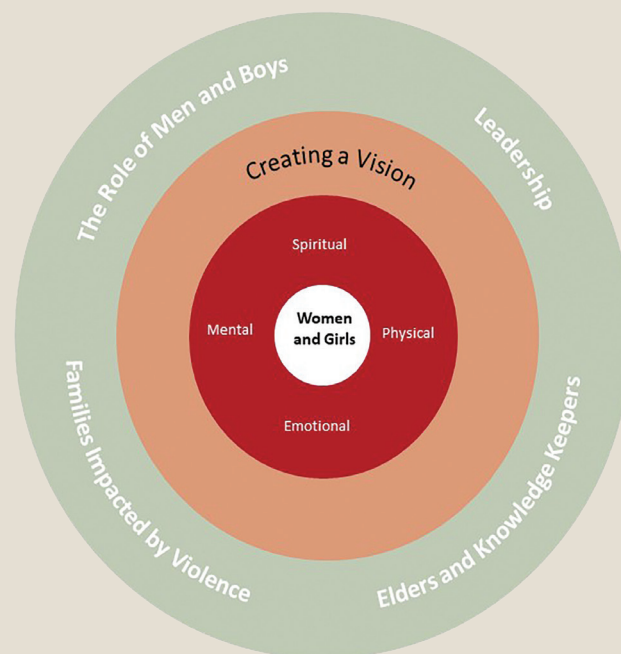
4. The Northern Direction offers the gift of calls to action.

At this point, a decision is made by the community to move towards action. The "community call to action" outlines the path towards a formal commitment to create a safe community for women and girls to be free of violence. It also outlines specific actions that the community needs to take to ensure that the opportunities for change are in place for them.

1. CREATING A VISION: Starting in the East

This section of the Toolkit is designed to support the creation of a community vision and identify some steps to make that vision a reality.

Note: the information below is intended as a starting point. Each community will find its own way to achieve health and well-being for their members.



Why a community vision?

The purpose of a community vision is to:

1. bring people together to share what a violence free community means to them;
2. invite the community to be creative and be inspired by the possibilities of a violence free community;
3. ensure that there are culturally safe services in place for survivors;
4. build trust amongst people and allow for the community to build a plan for implementation; and
5. create ways of having help available to men and to boys who exhibit violent tendencies, to examine their roles and beliefs about their relationships with women and girls.

A shared community vision answers the question: what do we want to create?

Things to consider when creating and sharing a community vision:

- ☑ Put women and girls at the centre.
- ☑ Have leadership and Elders present.
- ☑ Involve men and boys.
- ☑ Listen carefully to the words of the Elders.
- ☑ Engage the entire community; be inclusive and welcoming while making the physical and emotional safety of all involved a priority.
- ☑ Find “champions” to advocate for a violence free community.
- ☑ Foster collaboration and innovation among service providers and leadership.
- ☑ Follow the Four Directions of the medicine wheel to lay out a path toward individual and community healing.

Questions to answer when creating a vision that may be asked in a “community visioning day” include:

- What makes our community strong and how can we use those strengths to move towards our vision?
- What are the challenges and issues around violence that we need to address and solve to reach our vision?
- What does a strong community that embraces women’s safety and sense of belonging look and feel like?
- What would our community look like in the future if it were free of violence against women and girls?
- How do we strive to uphold Mino-Bimaadizwin and prepare our communities for future generations to live The Good Life?
- How can we raise the strong voices of women and girls, helping to ensure they’re heard?

- How do we support women leaving the shelter system to fulfill a dream of a safe and violent free community?

“Woman is the centre of the wheel of life. She is the heartbeat of the people. She is not just in the home, but she is the community, she is the nation.”

Art Solomon (The Women’s Part)

Every community will have a slightly different way of sharing their vision. It might be a piece of art, it might be a song, it could be a statement, or a story.

Steps that lead to the creation of a community vision:

1. Meet with health and social service providers to share your idea(s) of bringing the community together to create a vision for a violence free community.
2. Engage Chief and Council.
3. Ask the service providers to form a Circle and invite Elders, members from Chief and Council, women, men, youth, and family members who have lived experience(s).
4. Ask Chief and Council to host the event. Funding may be available to cover the costs.
5. Encourage the service providers, who have experience organizing community events, to handle the event coordination. If able, include a feast.
6. Invite community members.
7. Find a facilitator to lead a “community visioning process”.

The Important Role of Men and Boys

The Moose Hide Campaign (2016) was developed to raise awareness of violence against women and children. The campaign invited men to:

“Join and stand against violence with a commitment to honour, respect, and protect the women and children in their lives and to work together to end violence against women and children.”

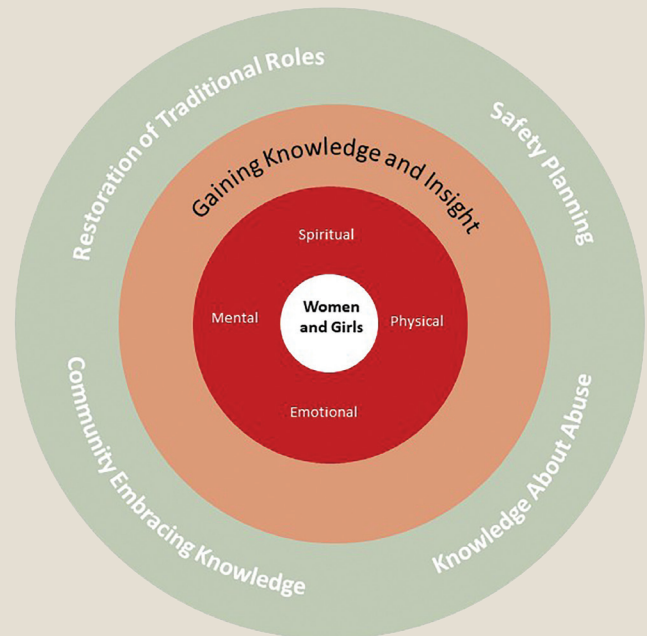
In order to work towards a violence free community, there needs to be change at the individual as well as the community level. It is important to understand that violence against women and girls has become a learned and normalized behaviour, as a result of generations of harm from colonialism. As a learned behaviour, violence can be unlearned through the examination of beliefs that support the violence, the acknowledgement that the use of violence is a choice, and the will to change.^{xiii}

The revitalization and reclamation of Indigenous gender roles requires a renewed focus on women and girls to reclaim leadership roles, however, it also involves a healing journey for men and boys to unlearn western gender norms and embrace a violence free life.

Restoring Indigenous principles of responsibility for men and boys are critical factors, in addition to integrating cultural and spiritual practices in this process.

There are models of intervention premised on the belief that: changes in men’s violent behaviour toward women is possible through collective holistic healing approaches.

2. GAINING KNOWLEDGE AND INSIGHT: Moving Towards the South



Understanding and recognizing IPV against women is central to healing. Information on how to recognize IPV and where to turn for help can empower every community member with the insight and knowledge needed to make powerful changes in their families and communities.

Earlier in the Toolkit, we talked about the historical roots of IPV in Indigenous communities. In this section, we will focus on the dynamics of the IPV itself.

For more information on programming for abusive men and their families – resources that might be helpful include:

- I am a Kind Man, Warriors Against Violence Program
- Change of Seasons Program
- Islands of Safety

Sometimes families are not aware of the extent or seriousness of the violence because it can become normalized, or family members can believe the abuse is their own fault. It can be scary and difficult

to break free and find an escape, or know someone to trust and tell. Family members can worry that if they tell someone the abuse will get worse, or the abuser will be upset and feel betrayed.

Remember: it is normal to have feelings of love for someone who abuses you, but loving someone does not mean it is [acceptable] for them to hurt you. You deserve to feel safe, respected, and cared for in your family, no matter what.^{xiv}

Types of Abuse

It is abuse when your partner or ex-partner uses violence, threats of violence, or harassment to exert power and control over you. It is never your fault if someone abuses you, and **you are not alone**.

Partner abuse includes^{xv}:

- physical abuse or threats of violence;
- sexual abuse;
- emotional abuse (psychological abuse, verbal abuse, and/or spiritual abuse);
- threats of harm;
- financial abuse; and/or
- criminal harassment and stalking.

For more information on safety and self-care, a good resource is the: You Are Not Alone Handbook developed by the Native Women's Association of Canada (link below).

<https://www.nwac.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/NWAC-You-Are-Not-Alone-Handbook-with-weblinks.pdf>

Signs You May Be in an Abusive Relationship^{xvi}

- ☑ You feel nervous when you are around your partner.
- ☑ You watch what you are doing to avoid making your partner angry or upset.
- ☑ You have stopped seeing your friends or family because your partner doesn't want you to.
- ☑ You try to please your partner rather than yourself in order to avoid being hurt.
- ☑ You feel that nothing you do is ever good enough for your partner.
- ☑ You lie to your family and friends about what is really happening in the relationship.
- ☑ You are afraid of voicing a different opinion than your partner.

Your partner:

- ☑ Forces you to have sex.
- ☑ Makes fun of you and/or embarrasses you in front of others.
- ☑ Checks up on what you have been doing.
- ☑ Is overly jealous and may constantly accuse you of cheating.
- ☑ Tells you that he will stop hurting you when you start behaving yourself.
- ☑ Threatens to harm you, your children, other family members, or pets.
- ☑ Keeps you from going out or doing things that you want to do.
- ☑ Says that if you try and leave them, you will never see your children again.
- ☑ Says that if you try to leave, they will kill themselves, your children and/or you.

- ☑ Always has an excuse for their behaviour.
- ☑ Promises to change and says that “this will be the last time” they will harm you.

Important Resources for Safety Planning Women’s Shelters:

- Mississauga Women’s Shelter
 - Ojibway Women’s Lodge
- Nookomisnaang Shelter for Victims of Family Violence
- Beendigen Anishinabe Women’s Crisis Home & Family Healing Agency

Crisis Lines:

MMIWG Crisis and Support Line:

Toll-Free: 1-844-413-6649

Community Assistance Program (CAP):

Free for Anishinabek Nation member First Nations citizens:

Toll-Free: 1-800-663-1142

Talk4Healing

(14 Indigenous Languages – 24/7 Phone/Text)

Toll-Free: 1-855-554-4325

Assaulted Women’s Helpline

24/7 Support Line: 1-866-863-0511

More information on Safety Planning from [Indigenous] Shelters of Ontario:
<https://aboriginalshelters.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/safety-planning-w-indigenous-women.pdf>

The Native Women’s Association of Canada:
 You Are Not Alone-Safety Plan
 (<https://bit.ly/2XyVtuZ>)

- have a concrete plan in place if you want to leave and you need to be in a safe place temporarily or you have chosen to end the relationship; and
- help you to stay safe after leaving the abusive relationship.

It is imperative that your safety plan be kept somewhere that your abuser won’t find it.

A good safety plan is updated as needed and considers mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual wellness. It considers questions such as:

- ☑ What documents might I need if I decided to leave quickly?
- ☑ Who can I call if I need help?
- ☑ Where can I go to be safe?
- ☑ How can I keep my children safe?
- ☑ Where can my pets stay?
- ☑ Is my internet use traceable by my abuser?

These are just a few of the things to consider when making a safety plan. Please reach out to a family violence shelter close to you for help safety planning for you and your family.

“The best way to end violence against women is by ‘the restoration of traditional [Indigenous] values of respect for women and children and reintegration of women into family community and nation decision making.”

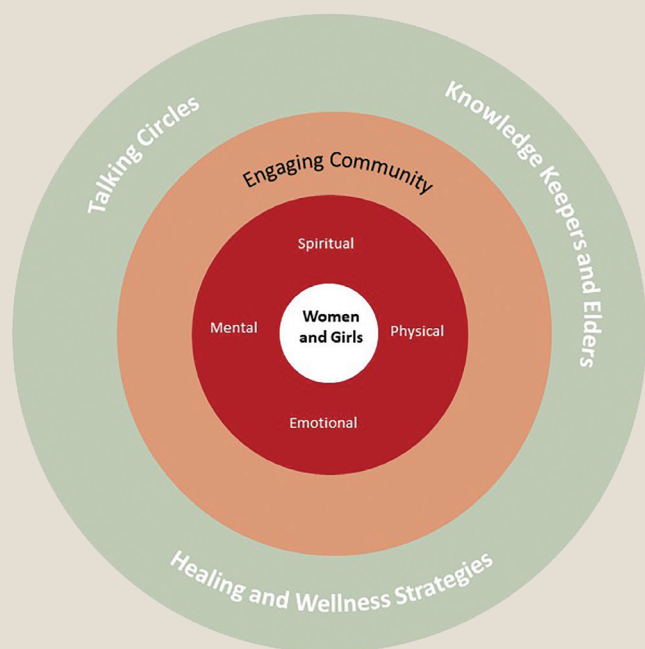
[Indigenous] women during the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP)

Safety Planning and Services

Having a safety plan helps to:

- identify ways to stay safer while in an abusive relationship;

3. ENGAGING COMMUNITY: Moving West and Using the Gift of Reason



The gift of reason allows us to move away from blame and being victims to being advocates for a violence free community with all of the necessary supports in place.

Community-Led Action to End Intimate Partner Violence

The revitalization and restoration of culture in communities is perceived to be a central component to making lasting change to violence against women [and girls]^{xvii}. Connections to the land and water within a First Nation community's cultural land-based practices are viewed to be integral in healing and changing relationships. This is bound by a focus on healing and wellness strategies for women and girls individually, and as part of a family and community.

Community Circles create connectedness. They bring together women, girls, gender diverse people, survivors, their families and communities to participate in the development and delivery of programming that is key to building safe and healthy identities.

The Role of Elders

Often there is only a small group of people in community who keep knowledge of the stories, practices, and traditions of the Nation. Peers are encouraged to connect with Knowledge Keepers and Elders and invite them to participate in the Circles. A study carried out in Saskatoon found that when Elders participated in the treatment programs there was significant decreases in the incidents of domestic abuse.^{xviii}

Storytelling by the Elders was central to the process, helping program participants to move from seeing themselves as a victim to a place where traditional practices helped them to reject violence.

Why Circles?

Circles bring the community together to talk about building wellness programming designed to help heal the community and turn it into a safe, violence free space for families. Holding Circles also allows for community members to connect to culture, land, language, traditions, and ceremony, which provides opportunities to reclaim wellness and gain self-acceptance.

Talking Circles:

- bring together survivors who have lived experience(s) with violence and offers support and services in their healing journey;
- are a way to make new friends and connections, and sit with people who are also invested in healing themselves and their community;
- provide an opportunity for community members to come together in a safe environment, work on themselves, heal,

learn new things and work on the health and well-being of their community;

- are a way of reenergizing the passion for language, songs, legends, traditions, and ceremonies to build pathways to wellness;
- provides the opportunity to share knowledge and strategies to community service providers to engage in community wide activities towards the identification, prevention and healing of victims, perpetrators, and their families; and
- lifts everyone in the Circle and shifts the conversation from blame to understanding, support and forgiveness.

How Do You Create the Circle?

1. **Find a safe space** to hold a Circle.
2. **Start the conversation with a small group of people** who are clear on the purpose of the Circle and the vision. Decide who to invite.
3. **Share and agree on your vision.**
4. **Name the Circle** something that resonates with your community.
5. **Identify what you want to change** in your community. Are the right people around the Circle? Who else needs to be invited?
6. **Develop a plan** for moving the community towards health and safety.
7. **Write out and share the plan** with the broader community.

Keeping the Circle Safe:

- ✓ **Have a conversation** on how to maintain safety in the Circle.
- ✓ **Use cultural practices and connectedness** to ground people and create safety.

✓ **Share information on managing triggering situations.** A trigger is something that sets off a memory or flashback, transporting the person back to the original trauma.

Identifying Triggers

What are my triggers or stressors?
 What are my warning signs that tell me I'm becoming overwhelmed by intense emotions?
 What helps to ground me from the stress?
 What can others do to support me when I am experiencing intense emotions?
 Who can I turn to for support in my personal life?

4. REACHING THE NORTH: Following the Call to Action



The call to action is about reclaiming what is inherently ours: safety, security, well-being, culture, traditions, and healing intergenerational trauma within a trauma-informed approach.

“We recognize self-determination and self-governance as fundamental Indigenous and human rights and a best practice. Indigenous self-determination and self-governance in all areas of Indigenous society are required to properly serve and protect Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA people. This is particularly true in the delivery of services.”

Reclaiming Power and Place:
The Final Report of the National Inquiry into
Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women
and Girls - Calls for Justice

The development of a vision grew out of the voices of the women coming out of the shelter system. As women began to feel safer, looked after and less alone, their voices came together and grew in strength and volume. This happens when women are empowered.

The “call to action” is when community leadership and service providers step up, supporting and encouraging members within their communities to make change. The call to action requires skills, connection, and resources to move the community’s vision forward.

WHAT DOES COMMUNITY ACTION LOOK LIKE?

The Call to Action:

- gets the community engaged and establishes the community’s commitment to create a safe community for women and girls to be free of violence;
- outlines a set of guiding principles intended to help to guide successful planning and action;
- identifies the need for a full community needs assessment;

- identifies services available in the community that need to be included as well as the services that do not exist in community that need to be created; and
- outlines specific actions that can be included in an action plan designed to lead to the development of a holistic model of community healing for everyone – women, girls, men, boys, families and communities. This will include the identification of emerging space and infrastructure needs as well as staff resourcing.

MOVING FROM A COMMUNITY SHARING CIRCLE TO A MORE FORMALIZED, VIOLENCE FREE COMMUNITY ACTION WORK GROUP

This section outlines steps for engaging community service providers to take ownership and be part of the solution to protect women and girls, as well as supporting their families and advocating on their behalf.

The call to action requires the active support and leadership of one or more established, resourced and respected community service(s). These are the “champions” who will be asked by the community to step in and lead a more formalized “Violence Free Community Action Work Group”. The Group will develop and implement a plan to work towards a violence free community.

1. Who to invite to a Violence Free Community Action Work Group?

Before inviting people in the community to participate:

- Engage with a service provider, like a Health Director, who agrees to call a meeting of service providers to start the

conversation and identify the “champion(s)”. Be clear when speaking to them about why they are being asked to participate and what the level of commitment will be. Include representatives from: community services, police, health, housing, mental health, child welfare, gender diverse people, and those with lived experience(s). At this point, Chief and Council should also be actively engaged.

The following groups should also be engaged in the Violence Free Community Action Work Group:

- ☑ Community members that supported the original Circle.
- ☑ Elders and leadership.
- ☑ Supporting community members.
- ☑ Service providers.
- ☑ The “champion” service provider(s) who have an interest in or knowledge about violence against women and girls, and who can provide the leadership required to move towards action. They can also be a positive role model for other service providers.

2. Establishing Guiding Principles.

The Violence Free Community Action Work Group needs to be supported and guided by a set of beliefs or principles designed to keep the Group safe, relevant, respectful and grounded in culture and tradition.

The Seven Grandfather Teachings may be used here as core principles. Additional Guiding principles may include^{xix}:

- ***Collaboration***: working together to develop mutual respect and trust.
- ***Clarity and transparency in communication***: clear and open messaging.
- ***Community engagement***: meaningful connections with all members of the community.

- ***Community development***: empowering communities by giving them skills and tools to help them address violence against women and to girls.

- ***Strengths-based approaches***: focusing on and valuing the knowledge and skills that individuals and communities hold, in addition to acknowledging challenges.

- ***Evidence-based practice***: using the best information available to guide planning, e.g. research and/or individuals in the community.

- ***Holistic worldview***: honouring the contributions of Elders by recognizing culture, traditions, and language as the foundation to healthy families and communities.

3. Conducting a Community Needs Assessment.

The “Community Circle” called together by the women of the community will identify and talk about many of the needs of the community in relation to violence against women and girls.

These needs are many and complex as identified earlier in this Toolkit. A more formalized needs assessment will capture all the lessons learned earlier in this process as well as explore any areas that require further development. The purpose of a needs assessment is to:

- ***Identify resources*** in the community.
- ***Identify gaps*** in community resources and/or programs.
- ***Set priorities for*** new services and programming.

Things to think about when conducting a needs assessment:

- ✓ **Build on information** that is already available.
- ✓ **Identify community risk factors** associated with partner abuse.
- ✓ **List services available** to abused women, their children, and abusive partners.
- ✓ **Identify the kinds of programs** and protective measures that will help the community reduce instances of IPV.
- ✓ **Get input** from as many different individuals as possible.
- ✓ **Use as many different ways of engaging** the community as possible, e.g., focus groups, feasts, interviews, surveys, social media, etc.
- ✓ **Recognize the gifts and strengths** of individuals and communities.
- ✓ **Be respectful** of each community's current state of development.

4. Creating the Action Plan.

An action plan describes the steps to address the priorities for new services and programming as identified in a needs assessment.

An important element of an action plan will be to: identify financial resources and the people that have the skills necessary to make change happen.

Action plans help to:

- **Understand** what needs to be done, when, how and by whom.
- **Identify** the resources you will need, e.g. skills, space, finances, etc.
- **Show** the community that you are well organized and focused.
- **Help** to get support from funders.

It is important to make sure that your action plan:

- builds on existing community strengths and successes;
- is holistic and culturally-grounded;
- is realistic and attainable; and
- brings together both the results of your Community Circle, needs assessment, and wise practices.

Things to think about when developing an action plan:

- Start with the changes that are most likely to reduce violence in the community.
- Choose a few easy changes so that you can see some early successes and earn credibility within the community.
- Give yourself time for the more difficult actions, particularly those that require increased finances and/or new relationships to be built.

Key questions to ask when developing an action plan.^{xx}

- ✓ **Activities/actions:** what will happen in your project?
- ✓ **Culture:** how can culture be integrated?
- ✓ **Responsibilities:** who will do what?
- ✓ **Date to be completed:** when and how long will it take?
- ✓ **Resources required:** what resources and supports are needed?
- ✓ **Resources available:** what resources, strengths and supports are available that can be borrowed or built on?

- ☑ **Barriers or resistance:** what might be keeping you from doing the work and how can you overcome these things?
- ☑ **Communication:** who else should know about this action plan, how, and when?
- ☑ **Check-ins:** have action step tasks been completed? How can you help support each other to make sure things are getting done?
- ☑ **Is the plan sustainable:** if external resources are brought in, will they ensure that the community has the knowledge and ability to continue the work? Has a mentoring plan been built in?
- ☑ **Is the plan realistic:** are the activities and timelines doable for the community? Will extra resources be required? Can the resources be obtained?
- ☑ **Collaboration:** are the partnerships that will need to be developed mutually beneficial and reciprocal?
- ☑ **Evaluation:** what does the funder ask for around the program evaluation? What is important for your community to evaluate?

5. Demonstrating Success.

Much pain and suffering has been caused to First Nation communities in the name of research and evaluation. Developed to protect First Nations from any further harm, the principles of ownership, control, access, and possession – more commonly known as OCAP^{xxi} - assert that First Nations have control over data collection processes, and that they own and control how this information can be used.

It is important that the community sets their own standards for evaluation and success.

The purpose of an evaluation is to demonstrate that the call to action is making a change in the community – they are safer and healthier. Build an evaluation into your action plan to:

- The community will want to know whether the plan is making a difference.
- Your funders will want to know how the money is being spent and whether it is a good investment.
- It gives you information on what is working well and what can be done differently to make your program be the best that it can be.

When thinking about when, what and how to evaluate, consider the following:

- ☑ Who are you evaluating for? Funders will have different requirements than communities. This will help to determine what data you collect.
- ☑ What are you evaluating? Outcomes, how the program is delivered or both?
- ☑ What are the project goals and objectives?
- ☑ Who will collect the data, when and how?
- ☑ How will the results of the evaluation be shared?

Appendix A: Example Workplan for Violence Free Community Action Circles

STEPS	KEY ACTIVITIES
1. ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY	<p>CREATE A VIOLENCE FREE COMMUNITY ACTION WORK GROUP.</p> <p>DEFINE A PURPOSE.</p> <p>IDENTIFY GUIDING PRINCIPLES.</p> <p>IDENTIFY A "CHAMPION" TO LEAD.</p>
2. IDENTIFYING PRIORITY/IMMEDIATE NEEDS	<p>CONDUCT A COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT.</p> <p>REVIEW THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT IN A CIRCLE WITH THE COMMUNITY ACTION WORKING GROUP AND IDENTIFY PRIORITY AREAS FOR ACTION.</p>
PRIORITIZE THE NEEDS (3 OR 4 SHORT TO MEDIUM TERM ACTIVITIES.)	<p>ACTION A</p> <p>ACTION B</p> <p>ACTION C</p> <p>ACTION D</p>
EVALUATE	<p>DEVELOP AN EVALUATION PLAN.</p> <p>IMPLEMENT THE PLAN.</p> <p>SHARE OUT THE RESULTS.</p>

Appendix B: Additional Resources for Families of MMIWG

Resources for Families of MMIWG

Native Women's Association of Canada, "Community Resource Guide What Can I Do to Help the Families of Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women and Girls?" Native Women's Association of Canada, 2010. Retrieved at:

- <https://www.nwac.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/2012.NWAC.Community.Resource.Guide.MMAWG.pdf>

The full MMIWG final report:

- [MMIWG Final Report](#)

The full report of the National Inquiry:

- [Violence Against Indigenous Women: Literature, Activism, Resistance by Allison Hargreaves](#)

Filled with the voices of contemporary Indigenous women writers, this book argues for the important role that literature and storytelling can play in response to gendered colonial violence.

- [Forever Loved: Exposing the Hidden Crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada](#) edited by D. Memee Lavell-Harvard and Jennifer Brant

This collection brings together the voices of Indigenous and non-Indigenous academics, frontline workers and activists who weave together academic and personal narratives, spoken word and poetry in the spirit of demanding immediate action to honour the missing and murdered and their families, to honour their lives and their stories.

- [Tribal Community Response When a Woman Is Missing: A Toolkit for Action](#)

With a talk that encourages hope, love, empowerment and igniting a new way of learning together as a nation, Tamara lays bare the world of violence impacting indigenous women.

- [We are more than murdered and missing TEDx with Tamara Bernard](#)

This website, hosted by the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC), has great fact sheet backed up by references on violence against indigenous women, MMIWG statistics, and root causes of violence against Indigenous Women and Girls.

- [Fact Sheet on Violence Against Indigenous Women](#)

NWAC fact sheet on LGBTQ+ and Two-Spirit peoples.

- [Fact Sheet LGBTQ+ and Two-Spirit](#)

NWAC fact sheets, PowerPoints, and other publications (provincially specific information).

- [MMIWG & Violence Prevention](#)

An interactive map of cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls to collect data and help identify patterns of violence in geographic areas. An initiative of the Native Women's Association of Canada.

- [Safe Passage](#)

Related Guides

- [Concordia University Guide to Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Inquiry](#)
- [UBC Copyright Educational Resources Guide](#)
- [Red River College Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls Research Guide](#)
- [UBC First Nations and Indigenous Studies Research Guide](#)
- [UBC Gender, Race, Sexuality & Social Justice Research Guide](#)
- [University of Calgary Missing and Murdered Women Research Guide](#)
- [Vancouver Public Library Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Guide](#)
- [Winnipeg Public Library Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls & Two Spirit](#)

Organizations & Associations

FSIS is all-volunteer, grassroots, unfunded group of families of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people and ally-friends.

- [Families of Sisters in Spirit](#)

Mending the Sacred Hoop is a Native-owned and operated non-profit 501(c) 3 organization that exists to address violence against Native women and works to end it. Based in the US.

- [Mending the Sacred Hoop](#)

The National Inquiry must look into and report on the systemic causes of all forms of violence against Indigenous women and girls, including sexual violence. We must examine the underlying social, economic, cultural, institutional, and historical causes that contribute to the ongoing violence and particular vulnerabilities of Indigenous women and girls in Canada. The mandate also directs us to look into and report on existing institutional policies and practices to address violence, including those that are effective in reducing violence and increasing safety.

- [MMIWG National Inquiry Website](#)

The Moose Hide Campaign is a grassroots movement of Indigenous and non-Indigenous men and boys who are standing up against violence towards women and children. Over the years it has grown into a national campaign to engage all Canadians, with over 1,000 participating communities and organizations across the country.

- [Moose Hide Campaign](#)

NWA NWT is committed to being the voice of Native women in the Northwest Territories and to building relationships with all levels of government and other organizations to ensure all Native women and their families will live free from social and economic distress; to promote their sacred roles as valued and respected members in the community; and to preserve their culture, language and heritage.

- [Native Women's Association of the Northwest Territories](#)

The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) has worked for more than four decades to document the systemic violence impacting Indigenous women, girls, their families, and communities. From 2005 to 2010, NWAC's Sisters In Spirit (SIS) Initiative confirmed 582 cases of missing and/or murdered Indigenous women and girls over a span of twenty years and worked to raise awareness of this human rights issue.

- [Native Women's Association of Canada](#)

Amnesty International's 2004 Stolen Sisters report was one of the first reports to systematically document the pattern of violence experienced by Indigenous women and girls in Canada. Due to continued government inaction to end the violence, the findings and recommendations in the 2004 report, and its 2009 update, are as relevant today as they were at the time of publishing.

- [No More Stolen Sisters-Amnesty International](#)

Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA) has advocated for safety, equality and justice for Indigenous women. Our 1989 ground-breaking report, *Breaking Free*, exposed the true extent of the violence Indigenous women faced. After building on this work for nearly another three decades, ONWA was pleased at the announcement of *Walking Together* in 2016, and the opportunity for partnership with Ontario to address the issue of violence against Indigenous women.

- [Ontario Native Women's Association](#)

Our Bodies, Our Stories is a series of reports that details the scope of violence against Native women across the nation. The first report highlighted data relating to sexual violence against Native women in an urban setting—Seattle, Washington. The second report provided a snapshot of the missing and murdered Indigenous women & girls (MMIWG) crisis in—and the issues with data collection from—71 urban cities across the country. The third report will focus on the MMIWG crisis in a state setting.

- [Our Bodies, Our Stories at the Urban Indian Health Institute \(Washington State\)](#)

The Red Ribbon Project is an app designed to help aid in the search for missing Indigenous women through community networking.

- [Red Ribbon Alert Project](#)

ReMatriate works to put Indigenous women back in control of the way they are represented and to honour the respected traditional roles Indigenous women held before colonization.

- [ReMatriate Collective](#)

Sovereign Bodies Institute builds on Indigenous traditions of data gathering and knowledge transfer to create, disseminate, and put into action research on gender and sexual violence against Indigenous people.

- [Sovereign Body Institute](#)

The Yakama Nation Victim Resource Group provides resources and support to families with missing and murdered loved ones and to raise awareness of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

- [Yakama Nation Victim Resource Group REDgalia](#)

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- https://www.gspcs.ca/en/about-gspcs/resources/Documents/AODA-about-GSPS-documents/MissingPersonsToolkit2021-Apr30-WebVersion_Remediated.pdf

National Indigenous Women's Resource MMIW Toolkit for Families and Communities.

- <https://www.niwrc.org/resources/toolkit/mmiw-toolkit-families-and-communities>



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