

A close-up photograph of a red beaded handprint on a dark, textured background. The handprint is made of many small, round red beads, with some white beads used for the fingers. The background is a dark, fibrous material, possibly fur or a similar texture, with some lighter, reddish-brown fibers visible.

Ontario's 2022-23 Pathways to Safety Progress Report

December 2023

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Honouring missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls (MMIWG) and two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex and asexual (2SLGBTQQIA+) people and survivors

We honour First Nation, Métis and Inuit women, daughters, sisters, mothers, grandmothers, aunties, friends, and two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex and asexual (2SLGBTQQIA+) people whose lives ended through violence. We recognize that gender-based violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people is a crisis rooted in colonialism and perpetuated through racism.

In May 2021, unmarked burials were identified in British Columbia near the site of the Kamloops Indian Residential School on the lands of the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation. There are 18 former Indian Residential School locations in Ontario and Survivor-led work is ongoing at these sites. The legacy of the Indian Residential School system continues to retraumatize Indigenous communities and people across Ontario, and across Canada, and is a contributing factor to the disproportionate rate of violence they experience.

Ontario will continue to honour missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people by working with Indigenous communities and partners to build a province where all First Nation, Métis and Inuit women, children, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people live in safety and security, free from violence, racism and exploitation.

Honouring the land and strength of Indigenous peoples

We acknowledge the First Nation peoples who have inhabited these lands for thousands of years: the Anishinaabe (including Algonquin, Mississauga, Ojibway, Odawa and Pottowatomi peoples), the Lenape and Omushkego peoples, and the peoples of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy (Mohawk, Onondaga, Oneida, Cayuga, Tuscarora and Seneca). We also acknowledge the 133 First Nation communities, Métis communities, and Inuit people living in Ontario across 46 Treaties.

We recognize the role First Nation, Métis and Inuit women have played in their nations throughout history. Indigenous women are leaders in their communities, responsible for preserving culture, caring for Mother Earth (land, plants, trees and water), passing on knowledge, and making decisions in the spirit of consideration and respect for the Seventh Generation. We also recognize that colonialism, past and present, has led to the oppression of Indigenous peoples. Ontario strives to work collaboratively with Indigenous women, in the spirit of reconciliation, to end violence against Indigenous women. We recognize that Ontario has a special responsibility to keep Indigenous women and their safety centred in this work, particularly as they are at the centre of their families and communities.

As we honour the lives of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people lost as a result of violence, this report serves as an opportunity to be accountable to Indigenous communities for the progress achieved and the work yet to be done as Indigenous women continue to go missing or lose their lives every day.

Joint ministers' message



Charmaine Williams

Associate Minister of Women's
Social and Economic Opportunity



Greg Rickford

Minister of Indigenous Affairs

Ontario is taking action to build a future where all Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people live in safety, free from fear, violence, and exploitation.

We are keeping Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people at the centre of this important work by building relationships with First Nations, Métis and Inuit partners and working in partnership with the Indigenous Women's Advisory Council (IWAC).

Our continued progress being made under [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 being measured with data and performance measures collected in collaboration with our partners. Tracking progress will enhance Ontario's efforts to identify successes and gaps in current systems to support the safety of all Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.

Last year, Ontario released the [first annual Pathways to Safety Progress Report](#), which outlined our initial advancements in the province's strategy. Over the past year, our government continued to work with Indigenous partners to implement and support culturally relevant and responsive cross-government programs and services that are directly responsive to

the recommendations of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. This second annual report highlights the headway we are continuing to make on key Indigenous-led initiatives in the Pathways to Safety Strategy in areas such as justice, economic security, health and well-being, and safety and security.

We have heard from Indigenous partners that Indigenous communities experience heightened rates of violence – including intimate partner violence, human trafficking, sexual assault, and femicide. We are working to support Indigenous women who have experienced economic insecurity and/or gender-based violence by providing culturally based programs and services with multifaceted supports to help them rebuild their lives, gain skills, and secure better jobs.

We thank IWAC, and the Indigenous partners, organizations and communities who have shaped the vision for Ontario's path forward to address the root causes of violence against Indigenous women, children, and gender-diverse people. We also want to thank partner ministries for their continued collaboration and tireless efforts in moving the government-wide Pathways to Safety Strategy forward.

Honouring missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people means working even harder in allyship and reconciliation to build a future that supports their safety and success.



Charmaine Williams

Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity



Greg Rickford

Minister of Indigenous Affairs

Joint message from the co-chairs of the Indigenous Women's Advisory Council

The Indigenous Women's Advisory Council (IWAC) recognizes the inherent worth, gifts, and uniqueness of every Indigenous woman, girl, and child. We collectively grieve the beloved Indigenous women and girls who were taken as a result of violence toward MMIWG and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, and we honour and stand in unity with the families who are grieving the loss of their loved ones, and all those who continue to search for their missing women and girls.

We want to thank and acknowledge all the fearless and resilient women for their wisdom which was the guiding force of IWAC. As a Council, we will continue to advocate so that every Indigenous woman, girl and 2SLGBTQQIA+ person and their families can live their lives free from fear and violence. Together, we will continue to work collectively towards improving the safety, well-being, and healing of Indigenous women and girls and towards advancing positive systemic outcomes to prevent MMIWG and violence against 2SLGBTQQIA+ people and protect their inherent right to safety.

We need to continue to focus on addressing root causes and prevention against these tragedies by supporting Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit people – protecting their rights, and assisting in reclaiming their leadership roles within their communities. We must work together, starting within our own communities to ensure Indigenous women and girls are safe, no matter where they live in Ontario.

Cora-lee McGuire-Cyrette (Co-Chair),
Ontario Native Women's Association

Sandra Montour (Co-Chair),
Six Nations of the Grand River

IWAC's mandate

The Indigenous Women's Advisory Council, created in June 2020, provides guidance and input on violence prevention priorities within the Associate Minister's mandate, including human trafficking, child, youth and family well-being, Ontario's response to the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and broader violence prevention.

2022-23 Council Members

Cora-lee McGuire-Cyrette

(Co-Chair), Ontario Native Women's Association

Sandra Montour (Co-Chair),
Six Nations of the Grand River

Gertie Mai Muise,
Ontario Federation of Indigenous
Friendship Centres

Lyndia Jones,
Independent First Nations

Chief Laurie Carr,
Association of Iroquois and Allied
Indians

Nancy Johnson,
Chiefs of Ontario

Jennifer St. Germain,
Métis Nation of Ontario

**Deputy Grand Chief Anna Betty
Achneepineskum**,
Nishnawbe Aski Nation

Rebecca Timms,
Anishinabek Nation (interim)

Debbie Lipscombe,
Grand Council Treaty #3 (interim)
Tungasuvvingat Inuit (vacant)



Introduction

Communities across Ontario continue to be deeply impacted by ongoing violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, as well as the traumatic work associated with the identification of unmarked graves at former Indian Residential Schools. The Government of Ontario extends our condolences to the families and communities experiencing pain and suffering as a result of ongoing violence and the lasting impact of colonization. The ongoing intergenerational trauma of Indian Residential Schools and the discoveries of residential school burials across Canada resurface trauma and pain for Indigenous children, families and communities.

The lasting impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to disproportionately affect First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities. Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people have faced an increase of violence, as well as economic uncertainty and barriers to accessing

supports at a time when mental health and addictions challenges have increased.

Indigenous people experience inequity of access, which unfavourably shapes their outcomes, particularly in the areas of education, employment, safe housing, and accessing mental health and addiction services and supports. All these and other intersectional factors contribute to the systemic vulnerability of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, placing them at a heightened risk of experiencing violence and disproportionately targeted by human traffickers.

On June 21, 2023, a monument dedicated to MMIWG and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people was unveiled in Whitefish River and a second monument was unveiled in Kenora on October 4, 2023. The creation of both monuments is in response to the MMIWG National Inquiry Interim Report recommendation that the federal government establish the Women and Gender Equality MMIWG Commemoration Fund. Ontario's Ministry of Indigenous Affairs is honoured to contribute to the only two monuments east of Manitoba dedicated to MMIWG and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people and their families.

The Government of Ontario acknowledges that Indigenous peoples, particularly women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, continue to suffer from the legacy of colonialism. There continues to be a disproportionate number of Indigenous children in Ontario's child and family services system, but through culturally based and community-driven prevention approaches, there are opportunities to better meet the needs of Indigenous children and youth.

The Government of Ontario recognizes that progress will only come through action-oriented collaborative work that is measurable and accountable. Ontario is committed to continued collaboration with Indigenous partners and, to enhance the impact of this work, government ministries will work together on related strategies, such as the Anti-Hate Plan. The Government of Ontario is also committed to listening to and learning from the lived experiences of Indigenous women, Indian Residential School Survivors, Elders, Knowledge Holders, leaders and communities, to guide our path toward reconciliation.



Accountability, collaborative data collection and measurement

Honouring missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIAA+ people demands that we commit to collaborative data collection and measurement of the progress being made to achieve the goals of the Pathways to Safety Strategy. The focus of the past year has been increasing the province's accountability mechanisms and developing capacity to effectively measure real progress. Strong accountability to Indigenous women, the families of missing and murdered loved ones, survivors of gender-based violence, and Indigenous communities across the province is critical to creating sustainable and systemic change.

Since the release of the Pathways to Safety Strategy, Ontario has continued to build strong relationships with IWAC and all Indigenous partners involved

in the Relationship Tables. Together with IWAC, Ontario has begun designing and implementing mechanisms to build accountability and effectively monitor progress from a shared set of principles and goals. This includes partnering to take steps to actively increase the ability of the Ontario Public Service (OPS) to:

- recognize and address systemic barriers and inequities
- co-design locally led Women's Circles, and Family and Survivors' Circles to support communities and keep the voices of survivors and families at the centre of Pathways' work
- facilitate an Indigenous Performance Measurement Framework (PMF)

Ontario also continues to monitor key initiatives included in the Pathways to Safety Strategy to address the root causes of violence with a focus on increasing accountability, as well as increasing programming and new investments since its release in May 2021.

Ontario continues to collaborate with the government of Canada's Federal/ Provincial/ Territorial Working Group on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People. This group is establishing a formal and collaborative approach across jurisdictions and with Indigenous partners to ensure the voices of survivors and family members are heard and the knowledge and wisdom of Indigenous communities lead the way forward in Canada's response to MMIWG and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.

A gender and diversity analysis Indigenous module (GDA-I)

Ontario recognizes that Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people experience unique systemic inequalities. Ontario has acknowledged the need to actively increase the ability of those working within the OPS to be educated about and equipped to recognize and address systemic barriers and inequities. Ontario is working with Indigenous communities and Council members to develop a learning module that explores the critical needs of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people to educate and enhance understanding of the OPS.

Work to date:

- learnings from Indigenous partners and literature review
- preliminary conversations with IWAC members and Indigenous organizations
- engagement with colleagues within the OPS with existing equity tools

Ontario recognizes that Indigenous gender-based analysis frameworks have been developed and led by key Indigenous women organizations across Canada, including the Ontario Native Women's Association, Native Women's Association of Canada, and Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada.

Early discussions with IWAC members, Indigenous organizations and ministry colleagues were held on an approach to creating a foundational GDA-I online learning module within the OPS Gender and Diversity Analysis suite of tools. Work with partners to inform the development of this tool continues.

Women's Circles and Family and Survivors' Circles

The first Pathways to Safety Progress Report committed to establishing locally-led Women's Circles and Family and Survivors' Circles. Circles allow for the collection of qualitative data that supports diverse ways of knowing and learning by showcasing the role of experiential knowledge and personal narratives in understanding complex issues. This approach ensures the voices of survivors and families are at the centre of this work and enables local communities to determine how this may best be achieved. Ontario has worked with IWAC through a co-development process to set out the purpose and design of Circles. Circles would:

- address local barriers to safety, security, and healing for Indigenous women, families, and survivors including 2SLGBTQQIA+ people and urban, rural, remote, and Northern communities affected by the issue of MMIWG
- respond to currently unmet or unfunded needs

The design of Circles would be Indigenous-led, locally determined, culturally appropriate, trauma- and evidence-informed, and responsive to the individuals and/or community.

Ontario will continue to work with IWAC on next steps.

Indigenous-led Performance Measurement

Framework (PMF)

Over the course of the Pathways to Safety Strategy's first year (2021), partners emphasized the importance of ensuring that performance measurement to track progress and ensure work is Indigenous-led and anchored in First Nations, Métis and Inuit ways of knowing. In the first progress report released in March 2022, Ontario committed to working jointly with Indigenous leaders to collect baseline data, using Indigenous-led principles and approaches, and identifying and using culturally relevant indicators to monitor and assess the Pathways to Safety Strategy's progress.

Ontario is working across ministries to identify and understand the key performance indicators currently in use to help improve the data landscape on violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.

However, the province recognizes that government-identified key performance indicators or outcomes are not sufficient or necessarily appropriate to measure the effectiveness of Indigenous-led work. These measures may not ensure that initiatives are culturally relevant, responsive, and increase the safety of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.

As part of the Pathways to Safety Strategy, the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs will collaborate with IWAC to develop a broader PMF to define clear and measurable outcomes informed by Indigenous knowledge that serve as a roadmap for efforts aimed at prevention, support, justice, and systemic change towards the safety of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.

This work will also help to establish baseline data to guide programs under the Pathways to Safety Strategy and increase understanding of desired

outcomes towards the safety of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. In addition, this approach will contribute to a response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action no. 55 (TRC 55), that calls on all levels of government to regularly and publicly report on several key indicators related to education, health, and child welfare, for which there are existing disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations.

Engaging with both urban and remote Indigenous communities and partner organizations is crucial to enhancing the current data landscape for violence against Indigenous women, children and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. The province will continue working in partnership with IWAC and other Indigenous partners to meet these goals.

Through the development and implementation of an Indigenous-led PMF, we anticipate:

- improvements to the wider data environment in relation to violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, with the goal of providing ongoing support for evidence-based policy and program decisions across government
- an ability to measure current and future progress under the Pathways to Safety Strategy using culturally relevant and responsive indicators and outcomes
- strengthened relationships and partnerships with Indigenous partners including IWAC and urban and remote Indigenous communities and organizations

Work in partnership with IWAC to establish a workplan for developing the PMF is underway.



Ontario-STANDS: Standing Together Against gender-based violence Now through Decisive actions, prevention, empowerment and Supports

Ontario has released a four-year action plan [Ontario-STANDS: Standing Together Against gender-based violence Now through Decisive actions, prevention, empowerment and Supports](#). The plan focuses on preventing gender-based violence and addressing the root causes, while also supporting the healing and longer-term needs of survivors, their children and families.

Gender-based violence is a complex, multi-faceted and pervasive issue affecting people of all backgrounds, genders and ages. While gender-based violence can happen to anyone regardless of culture, religion or economic status, some women are more at risk of gender-based violence than others. Specifically, Indigenous women are three times more likely to experience violent victimization compared to non-Indigenous women.¹

Ontario's action plan supports culturally responsive and trauma-informed initiatives and programs for Indigenous and rural and remote communities. It will help increase the availability of services and supports to reach the most underserved and at-risk populations.

Ontario's action plan will enhance gender-based violence prevention by:

- intervening early
- strengthening service coordination
- investing in local community-led, culturally responsive solutions
- providing educational supports to promote healthy relationships and disrupt attitudes fostering gender-based violence

The action plan leverages \$162 million in funding from the federal government over four years through a bilateral agreement to support the implementation of the National Action Plan to End Gender-based Violence. The action plan will use this federal funding to build upon Ontario's existing investments of \$1.4 billion over the lifetime of the agreement to support gender-based violence services.

This year, Ontario will allocate \$18.7 million to providers delivering services to prevent and address gender-based violence and support survivors and their families. Over \$6 million of new investments in year one will go towards Indigenous-led services and initiatives.

This funding will help Ontario strengthen sectors supporting survivors and people at risk of gender-based violence through enhancements to existing programs and services. This includes enriching Indigenous-led approaches that address gender-based violence through healing, health and wellness programming, expanding programs that foster women's economic security and investing in innovative prevention initiatives. Prevention initiatives will focus on addressing the underlying attitudes, behaviours and local community needs.

This action plan will help more survivors access the supports they need as well as increase prevention and recovery efforts. It is a sign of what can be achieved when governments, sector partners and stakeholders work together to build communities that are free of gender-based violence.

Ontario is committed to continued collaboration with Indigenous partners, sector stakeholders, municipalities, and local organizations. Their perspectives will help ensure the implementation of the action plan is responsive to diverse local contexts across the province and makes meaningful change in communities.



Progress on the Pathways to Safety Strategy

Introduction

Ontario's Pathways to Safety Strategy adopts an approach centred on the safety of all Indigenous women, children and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, with the goal of ending violence so that they can live freely and fully in all spaces in Ontario.

Guided by IWAC and Indigenous partners, the framework prioritizes and upholds the needs of MMIWG and 2SLGBTQQIA+ survivors and families and commits to solutions informed by Indigenous needs and perspectives.

Since the release of the Pathways to Safety Strategy, Ontario has continued to implement key government commitments and initiatives under the following six priority areas. The following diagram includes an overview of these six priority areas or pathways.

Overview of the six pathways and core principles under Ontario's Pathways to Safety Strategy



This year's progress report focuses on cross-government efforts that are Indigenous-led and/or designed and directly respond to the urgent needs of MMIWG and 2SLGBTQQIA+ survivors.

The initiatives profiled in this report reflect the vital importance of incorporating Indigenous perspectives and expertise and the strength of data-driven approaches, underscoring the importance of incorporating Indigenous-led principles, and evidence-based decision-making in our ongoing pursuit of justice, healing, and reconciliation.

In addition to strong and continued support for Indigenous-led initiatives, government-led initiatives can also play an important role in addressing the pressing issues related to MMIWG and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people in Ontario. This report also explores the broader government initiatives and strategies that support Indigenous communities across the six pathways.



Pathway to safety and security

This year's report profiles two Indigenous-led programs: the Indigenous Anti-Human Trafficking Liaisons and the Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin ("I Am a Kind Man") Program as well as initiatives funded under the Anti-Human Trafficking Indigenous-led Initiatives Fund. These initiatives prioritize Indigenous leadership, responsiveness to MMIWG and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, and evidence-based approaches that promote safety, healing and wellness through preventative resources and targeted interventions.

Indigenous Anti-Human Trafficking Liaisons - Indigenous Healing & Wellness Strategy (Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services)

The Indigenous Anti-Human Trafficking Liaisons (IAHTL) program is delivered by the Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA) in areas known to have increased reports of human trafficking: Thunder Bay, Akwesasne, Ottawa, Fort Frances, and Toronto. The IAHTL program assists communities to build capacity to address trafficking and support Indigenous survivors of human trafficking.

The program is designed, managed, and delivered by and for Indigenous peoples. It amplifies the voices of survivors and roots their knowledge through culture to support them in reclaiming their roles as leaders in community safety. Liaisons use culture-based, strengths-based and trauma-informed approaches and are responsive to the needs of Indigenous communities in rural, remote and fly-in communities. This includes responding to trends around mining and resource extraction and the increased risk of trafficking in communities that are affected. Programming is voluntary and recognizes the complexity of human trafficking and the autonomy of survivors and their right to self-determination. It is available to human trafficking survivors regardless of age or status and is inclusive of two-spirit/transgender individuals.

The IAHTL program continues to build capacity and provide resource supports to organizations, service providers and communities in the prevention of human trafficking. Community presentations have been

delivered to frontline workers and organizations with a cross-sectoral approach from community-based programming, health, education, and judicial systems, and building and equipping front line staff and organizations.

In addition, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the IAHTL program continued to support the Mindimooyenh Health Clinic. The IAHTL provided education, awareness and capacity building on strength-based survivor supports training for Health Clinic staff due to the increase in Indigenous women being trafficked during the pandemic.

In fiscal year 2021-22, the IAHTL program expanded with the addition of two mental health and addictions support positions. These services will increase the capacity of the IAHTL program through continued survivor support, capacity building and resource development for staff, membership, and community partners to increase Indigenous women's safety. In fiscal year 2022-23, this program received an annualized amount of \$700,000. Reports indicated that 428 survivors were engaged and supported, and 2,231 individuals received training, education, and participated in awareness activities. In fiscal year 2023-24, the annualized funding for this initiative will increase by \$300,000 for a total of \$1 million.

Building on this momentum, in 2023-24 the Indigenous Anti-Human Trafficking Liaisons will continue to:

- increase knowledge and awareness of human trafficking in Indigenous communities and related services and supports
- support service providers and frontline workers to have the knowledge, skills, attitudes and tools needed to identify and meet the needs of Indigenous survivors of human trafficking
- provide Indigenous survivors of human trafficking increased access to culturally safe and trauma informed services and supports
- increase knowledge and awareness of mental health and addictions services to support Indigenous survivors of human trafficking
- build capacity amongst the Indigenous Anti-Human Trafficking Liaisons to increase awareness and knowledge on the complex trauma and long-term effects of human trafficking

The Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres' Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin ("I Am a Kind Man") Program (Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, Ministry of the Attorney General)

The Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin (an Ojibway phrase translating to "I Am a Kind Man") program is a community action initiative developed and delivered by the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC) to address violence in Indigenous communities and foster overall community wellness. The program engages Indigenous men and youth to end violence against Indigenous women and girls by increasing men's understanding of traditional roles and responsibilities in ending violence, promoting resiliency, and resolving trauma.

The program is a holistic healing program that includes a public education campaign and community-based programming focusing on five major themes: self-esteem and identity, social supports, education and prevention, alternatives to institutional involvement, and increasing pathways to service. The program offers a 12-week culturally guided curriculum, one-on-one peer counselling, education and group activities.

In 2022-23, the program served 839 men and male youth, with 405 referrals from the justice system, Children's Aid Societies, and local Friendship Centres. Among those participating, 713 received client-based services in their communities.

OFIFC regularly reviews data for program impact and adjusts programming based on direct user feedback, ensuring adaptability to user and community needs. Program Evaluation results indicate that the Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin program has significant influence on behavioural change and overall well-being of its direct service users by providing resources to address negative behaviour and incorporating cultural teachings on traditional roles for positive identities. Through culturally founded tools, the program not only revitalizes healthy identities but also fosters community well-being.

In 2023-24, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services is investing \$2.3 million in the program.

“I feel the program has taught me a lot about letting out what's going in my life. Sharing with others and relating helps me out with my trouble and learning about how to deal with anger/domestic violence in a traditional way. The program covers addictions (which was) also a big help to me. The kind man program has and still impacts my life in a positive way.”

– Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin Participant



In late 2022, the program was designated as an Indigenous-specific Intimate Partner Violence Prevention (IPVP) program by the Ministry of the Attorney General and will serve as an alternative for Indigenous people who are court-ordered to attend an intimate partner violence education and/or counselling program beginning in 2023-24. In 2023-24, program outcomes will be modified to monitor uptake of the program as an Indigenous-specific IPVP.

Anti-Human Trafficking Indigenous-led Initiatives Fund - Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy (Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services)

Ontario records the highest total number of incidents of police-reported human trafficking in Canada and has one of the highest rates of reported incidents (2.3 per 100,000 population) . In response to this problem, Ontario continues to implement the province's five-year [Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy \(2020-2025\)](#).

In 2022-23 (Year 2), the Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy continued to implement its commitment of investing \$96 million in services for survivors of human trafficking over five years (2020-2025). This includes its investment over five-years of up to \$46 million in funding under the Anti-Human Trafficking Community Supports and Indigenous-led Initiatives Fund for community-based services. The Indigenous-led Initiatives Fund prioritizes projects that are Indigenous- and survivor-led and designed, are culturally responsive and provide direct services and supports (including prevention and intervention) for children and youth who have been sexually exploited.

The Anti-Human Trafficking Indigenous-led Initiatives Fund supports Indigenous survivors of human trafficking and children and youth who have been sexually exploited through:

- Mobile crisis response units, for example:
 - **Ontario Native Women's Association** operates a youth response team comprising specialized workers and peer mentors with lived experience to provide early intervention, street-based outreach, immediate response and referrals in 10 locations across the province (including Kenora, Sioux Lookout, Thunder Bay and Timmins) for youth who have been sexually exploited. Since 2020-21, 268 youth have been served through this program.
- Direct services for children and youth, for example:
 - **Giishkaandago'ikwe Health Services (formerly Fort Frances Tribal Health):** Prevention, intervention and aftercare for children and youth (aged 12 and up), including follow-up support and community integration. Since 2020-21, 65 children and youth have received support through this program.
- Other culturally responsive services, for example:
 - **Minwaashin Lodge:** Counselling, cultural teachings and ceremonies, guidance support, employment training, and street outreach. Elders incorporate Indigenous knowledge into programs and services. Since 2020-21, over 3,000 individuals have been supported through this program.
 - **Ganohkwasra (Six Nations of the Grand River):** Protection and early intervention services including a two-year youth housing program, youth retreats, and culturally responsive individual and group counselling for Indigenous survivors of human trafficking and youth who have been sexually exploited. Since 2020-21, 125 individuals have been supported through this program.

Delivery of a six-day intensive anti-human trafficking training, *Understanding and Working with Sexually Exploited Youth*, to frontline professionals has continued. One full day of training is led by an Indigenous survivor of human trafficking and is dedicated to Indigenous Cultural Competency which focuses on the historical and contemporary factors contributing to the trafficking of Indigenous persons. As of summer 2023, approximately 600 frontline professionals have completed the training and are able to utilize the Sexually Exploited Youth risk assessment tool to help identify youth at risk of sex trafficking.

Other government initiatives for systems transformation

Victim Quick Response Program+ (Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, Ministry of the Attorney General)

The Victim Quick Response Program+ (VQRP+) supports direct victims, their immediate family members, and witnesses in the immediate aftermath of violent crimes by providing short-term support with essential expenses to lessen the impact of the crime, enhance safety, and meet immediate practical needs arising from the commission of the crime.

54 service providers across the province deliver VQRP+ of which five are Indigenous.

Mushkegowuk Tribal Council

Mushkegowuk Indigenous Victim Services staff have continued to provide VQRP+ support and services for the four Mushkegowuk coastal member First Nations: Moose Cree, Fort Albany, Kashechewan, and Attawapiskat.

Matawa First Nations Management

The Matawa First Nations Management Tribal Council's Indigenous Victim Services Program is integral to the delivery of the VQRP+ program to their nine member First Nations: Aroland, Long Lake No. 58, Ginoogaming, Constance Lake, Marten Falls, Neskantaga, Nibinamik, Eabametoong and Webequie as well as supporting community members who reside in the city of Thunder Bay.

Six Nations of the Grand River

The Six Nations of the Grand River continue to provide outreach and support to community members of the Six Nations of the Grand River Territory and surrounding areas.

Nokiiwin Tribal Council

Nokiiwin Tribal Council Indigenous Victim Services program provides support and services to their five member First Nations: Animbiigo Zaagi'igan Anishinaabek (Lake Nipigon Ojibway),

Biinjitiwaabik Zaaging Anishinaabek (Rocky Bay), Bingwi Neyaashi Anishinaabek (Sand Point First), Netmizaaggamig Nishnaabeg (Pic Mobert) and Fort William.

Nishnawbe-Aski Legal Services Corporation

The Nishnawbe-Aski Legal Services Victim Witness Liaison staff are responsible for supporting the members of the 49 Nishnawbe-Aski Nation member First Nations communities with access to services and supports offered through the VQRP+ program.

These five Indigenous service providers provide VQRP+ services as part of their victim services program. These programs provide trauma-informed and culturally relevant supports for Indigenous victims. The Victim Witness Liaison staff ensure that individuals are aware of the supports provided by the VQRP+ program and provide assistance with the application process, ensuring applicants have access to healing and other necessities in the aftermath of a crime.

Indigenous-specific victim services organizations provide supports specifically designed for Indigenous survivors of human trafficking and consider factors such as language and cultural barriers and the remote geographic location of communities.

As VQRP+ providers, these five Indigenous service providers assist survivors of human trafficking by ensuring access to enhanced support for necessities, safe accommodations and travel.

Indigenous survivors of human trafficking involved in the court process can also access supports through Ontario's Vulnerable Victims and Family Fund.

In 2022-23 the investment for VQRP+ was \$12.5 million.

Transitional Housing and Support Program (Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services)

The Transitional and Housing Support Program (THSP) allows survivors to identify, access and maintain safe and secure housing and connects them to socially and culturally responsive services in their community. The 2021

Budget included an enhancement of \$18.5 million over three years to help victims of domestic violence and survivors of human trafficking find and maintain housing and transition to independence. In 2021-22 approximately 18,890 individuals were served through 121 providers across the province. Through this program, Indigenous survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking, including survivors accessing violence against women shelters on- and off-reserve, were supported in accessing and navigating housing services from a culturally appropriate wraparound model. This included safety planning, counselling, health and wellness, social assistance, education, childcare, legal services and social assistance.

Indigenous Targeted Initiatives Fund (Ministry of Colleges and Universities)

The Indigenous Targeted Initiatives Fund (ITIF) seeks to fund innovative projects that support access for, and the success of, Indigenous learners in postsecondary education and training. Priority areas include support for Indigenous women in postsecondary education and supporting Indigenous learners in their transitions from secondary to postsecondary education and from postsecondary education to employment.

This initiative funded 20 projects with Indigenous organizations, Indigenous Institutes, colleges and universities in 2020-21 and 2021-22. An additional seven projects were funded in 2022-23. Three of these projects are specifically focused on providing access to and support with postsecondary education for Indigenous women.

Supporting Access to Transportation (Ministry of Transportation)

The Indigenous Transportation Initiatives Fund (ITIF) is an application-based funding program to help Indigenous communities and organizations in Ontario advance locally driven transportation projects that support economic development, mobility and safety.

One of the three transportation-focused themes for 2022-23 was community well-being and transportation safety, including Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and Anti-Human Trafficking.

In 2022-23, just over \$350,000 was provided to Indigenous communities and organizations to fund additional projects under the Indigenous Transportation Initiatives Fund, which included:

- \$29,995 for an initiative to help Indigenous youth get their drivers' licences by covering the costs of driver education and test fees, licence renewals and vehicle rentals for driving tests
- \$57,960 for a transportation program to help urban Indigenous Elders access medical appointments, social events and other services
- \$63,000 for an on-demand transit app to allow Indigenous community members, in particular vulnerable community members, to utilize a local public transit service ensuring they can access essential services.

Anti-Human Trafficking Efforts/Initiatives in the Transportation Sector (Ministry of Transportation)

Indigenous women and girls experience heightened risks of being targeted by traffickers and comprise a disproportionate number of persons trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation in Canada. Transportation initiatives include providing anti-human trafficking training to Ministry of Transportation (MTO) staff, including front-line remote airports staff. The training delivered to remote airports staff focused on human trafficking in Canada and Northern Ontario, specifically the signs to look out for and how the transportation sector is implicated.

Decals with the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline have been developed in collaboration with MTO's agencies (Metrolinx and the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission) to place on their vehicles and at stations, in addition to ongoing support of other anti-human trafficking initiatives by agencies. Ontario has also worked with its agencies (Metrolinx and Ontario Northland Transportation Commission) to support efforts to educate front-line staff about the signs of human trafficking. Additionally, MTO's Transportation Enforcement Officers participate in the Annual Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance (CVSA) Human Trafficking Awareness Campaign that includes providing awareness materials to drivers while conducting daily inspections.

Racialized and Indigenous Supports for Entrepreneurs (Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism)

Between 2021-23, Ontario's RAISE pilot program supported 23 Indigenous entrepreneurs to scale and grow their businesses by providing access to business development training, culturally responsive coaching services and \$10,000 in grant funding. 16 of these businesses are owned and operated by Indigenous women. In addition to supporting Indigenous women entrepreneurs in building their economic security, RAISE has helped scale and grow Indigenous businesses that focus on education and empowering Indigenous identity.

Ontario Grant to Support Anti-Hate Security Measures for Faith-Based and Cultural Organizations (Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism)

In 2022-23, this grant provided up to \$10,000 to help eligible faith-based, cultural, 2SLGBTQQIA+, and Indigenous organizations and communities better protect and secure their facilities from hate-motivated incidents, graffiti, vandalism or other damage. This funding supported Indigenous recipients to increase physical security and offer a safe space for their communities to gather and attend to their social, spiritual, mental and physical needs.

Safer and Vital Communities Grant Program (Ministry of Solicitor General)

The Ministry of the Solicitor General is supporting non-profit, community organizations and First Nations Chiefs and Band Councils by investing approximately \$1.5 million over two years (2022-23 to 2023-24) in the Safer and Vital Communities (SVC) Grant program to fund local projects that enhance community safety and well-being.

The following Indigenous projects are being funded under this cycle of SVC:

- **Whitefish River - Safer, Vital Community: Preventing Cybercrime through Community Partnership**
Funding is being used to enhance awareness, educate and provide resources on cybercrime to Whitefish River First Nation community members. Initiatives include workshops and community events designed to help increase supports for community members who are at high-risk for cybercrime, educate on how to prevent and report cybercrime, and bring healing to those who may have been affected by cybercrime.
- **Kenora Chiefs Advisory - Kenora Makwa Patrol**
The project will provide an opportunity for people to share their own stories and engage with local service providers and law enforcement. The project aims to address hate motivated speech in social media and counteract it with true stories and an understanding of the effects of systemic and structural racism.

Pathway to culture

Ontario is actively engaged in a range of initiatives under the pathway to culture to restore, reclaim, and revitalize Indigenous languages, cultures, and identities. The actions undertaken within this pathway are dedicated to promoting education and fostering a strong sense of cultural connection through grassroots, community-driven, and youth-centred approaches.

In this year's progress report, a spotlight shines on the impactful Youth Cultural Camps Program. This program exemplifies dedication to supporting the next generation by providing enriching experiences that strengthen cultural bonds, empower youth, and contribute to the preservation of Indigenous traditions and knowledge.

Youth Cultural Camps Program (Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport)

The Youth Cultural Camps (YCC) is a community-based program that empowers Indigenous youth and young adults to become future leaders in their communities.

The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport provides \$2.5 million annually to up to 11 Indigenous organizations and communities to support cultural programming opportunities that enable Indigenous youth to expand their understanding of traditional knowledge and languages and develop leadership skills through hands-on and land-based activities.

YCCs support Indigenous youth and young adults to connect to their culture, learn from Knowledge Keepers and Elders in their community, build resiliency and gain a stronger sense of self and hope for the future.

Funded program delivery partners include Indigenous Sport & Wellness Ontario, Métis Nation of Ontario, the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres, First Nations Political Territorial Organizations, and two independent First Nations.

From 2017-18 to 2021-22, 28,000 youth and their families participated in more than 1,100 activities across the province, ranging from language workshops and traditional drumming, singing and dancing to medicine walks, harvesting, hunting and trapping.



"Before I went to these camps, I knew nothing about my culture. After these camps, I have found an honour and pride every time I mention I am Métis. I have gained strong confidence as a result of these camps and the community that they create."

– Camp Participant (Métis Nation of Ontario)

"Our kids need this ... to get a background and an understanding of where they come from, so they can walk with their heads held high and use all of their potential to make something of themselves."

– Standing Bear Youth Leadership Program Leader, Wallaceburg High School (Indigenous Sport & Wellness Ontario)

Other government initiatives for systems transformation

Promoting Safety and Success for Indigenous 2SLGBTQQIA+ Youth (Ministry of Education)

The Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA) continues to receive funding to promote safety and success for Indigenous 2SLGBTQQIA+ youth. This initiative supports mentorship, leadership and education support for Indigenous 2SLGBTQQIA+ youth, to support self-esteem, acceptance, and academic success. It also provides competency training and resources for parents, caregivers, and foster parents regarding Indigenous 2SLGBTQQIA+ identities, with a particular focus on the barriers to safety for these Indigenous youth.

Indigenous Graduation Coach Program (Ministry of Education)

The Indigenous Graduation Coach program supports the well-being and achievement of Indigenous students from grades 7 to 12 year-round with the ultimate goal of helping them obtain an Ontario Secondary School Diploma and transition into university, college, training or labour market opportunities. In 2023-24, Priorities and Partnerships Funding (PPF) has increased to over \$4.8 million to support intermediate and secondary students through a 12-month program. The PPF funding for 2023-24 supports 34 coaches in 25 boards.

Indigenous-Focused Curriculum Revisions to Social Studies, 1-3 (Ministry of Education)

Working with Indigenous partners through a co-development process, the province recently issued updates to the Social Studies, Grades 1 to 3 curriculum to introduce mandatory Indigenous-focused learning. These are being implemented as of September 2023. These updates to the curriculum will strengthen learning on Indian Residential Schools and foster greater understanding of the contributions of First Nations, Métis and Inuit individuals, communities and nations to our province and country while teaching about their histories and cultures. These revisions complement the mandatory learning already introduced in Social Studies, Grades 4 to 6, and

History in Grades 7, 8, and 10 introduced in 2018. In addition, the Ministry of Education has been incorporating more mandatory learning about the perspectives and contributions of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit individuals, communities, and nations through recent curriculum revisions, including the elementary Science and Technology Curriculum, Grade 9 Science course, Grade 10 Civics and Citizenship course, elementary Language curriculum and Grade 9 English course.

Pathway to health and well-being

The pathway to health and well-being within Ontario's strategy takes a holistic approach, acknowledging the inherent interconnectedness of safety, health and culture. The initiatives under this pathway recognize that promoting culturally safe healing practices is vital to strengthening individuals, families and communities through fostering meaningful relationships and enhancing community connectivity. In this year's progress report, we feature the impactful Family Well-Being program. This program showcases our commitment to supporting the overall well-being of Indigenous individuals and families by providing culturally appropriate resources, services, and support systems that nurture healthy relationships, resilience and holistic healing.

The Family Well-Being Program (Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services)

The Family Well-Being program (FWBp) is a key investment under the Ontario Indigenous Children and Youth Strategy and was co-developed with Indigenous partners to support Indigenous communities to self-determine how best to lead and deliver holistic programs and services that meet the unique needs of their local communities. The co-developed long-term objectives of the program are to:

- end violence against Indigenous women
- reduce the number of Indigenous children in child welfare and the youth justice systems
- improve the overall health and well-being of Indigenous communities

FWBp services and programming include traditional land-based teachings and ceremonies, trauma-informed counselling, addictions support, safe spaces, and coordination of services. These services and programs help children, youth and their families to heal and recover from the effects of intergenerational violence and trauma, reduce violence, and address the overrepresentation of Indigenous children and youth in the child welfare and youth justice systems. The goals and the design of the FWBp are responsive to both the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC),

and the Calls to Justice of the Final Report of the National Inquiry into MMIWG.

Through the FWBp, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services provides over \$35 million annually to 35 partners delivering programming in over 200 delivery sites across the province, supporting Indigenous communities across Ontario to design and deliver supports and services that best suit the unique needs and priorities of their communities.

In 2021-22, the FWBp served over 84,000 Indigenous clients and community members throughout the province, providing over 42,000 supports and services to Indigenous children, youth and adults, including approximately 25,500 one-to-one and individual counselling supports, 4,800 family support sessions, 6,900 group sessions, and 5,500 community events.

“[The FWBp] has led to resurgence of the old ways of how we used to care for each other. We were so distant from each other before, now we have community. It is the FWBp that has helped to re-establish that.”

– Bingwi Neyaashi Anishinaabek First Nation



Other government initiatives for systems transformation

Children At-Risk of Exploitation (CARE) Units (Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, Ministry of Indigenous Affairs, Ministry of the Solicitor General)

On July 30, 2021, two CARE Units were launched for prototyping in the City of Toronto and Durham Region.

CARE Units pair police officers with child protection workers and Indigenous liaisons to proactively identify, locate and engage with children and youth who are at high risk of being sex trafficked to connect them to community-based and culturally specific services, as well as hold offenders accountable.

The Toronto CARE Unit is a partnership between Toronto Police Service, Children's Aid Society of Toronto and Native Child and Family Services of Toronto.

The Durham CARE Unit is a partnership between Durham Regional Police Service, Durham Children's Aid Society and Dnaagdawenmag Binnoojiiyag Child & Family Services.

Ontario Indigenous Children and Youth Strategy (Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services)

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, and families. It is rooted in holistic, preventative and culture-based programs that are designed and delivered by and for Indigenous peoples. Ontario continues to implement the OICYS through a distinct Indigenous approach to the government's Child Welfare Redesign Strategy (CWR), as announced in 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 of the Family Well-Being program across the province and implementing Indigenous-designed and led models for child and family services, including those governed under Indigenous laws.

Designation of Nijjaansinaanik Child and Family Services as an Indigenous Children's Aid Society (Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services)

In April 2021, Nijjaansinaanik Child and Family Services (NCFS) was designated as a Children's Aid Society, serving and providing culturally appropriate services to the First Nations communities of Magnetawan, Wasauksing, Shawanaga, Henvey Inlet, Dokis and Wahnapiatae. NCFS provides child protection services for the above First Nations throughout the District of Nipissing, Parry Sound and the City of Greater Sudbury. Nijjaansinaanik Child and Family Services is the 13th Indigenous society designated in Ontario.

Supporting the Implementation of Indigenous-led Child and Family Services Models Including Those Governed Under Indigenous Law (Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services)

The ministry works with representatives of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples as they develop and work towards implementing their own Indigenous-led models for child and family services, including those governed under Indigenous laws. This work may look different from community to community. It can include:

- Communities seeking to exercise jurisdiction and implement child well-being laws, including through the federal Indigenous child and family services legislation, and/or
- Developing unique service models that operate within the provincial system.

An Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis Children, Youth and Families (the federal Act) is federal legislation which sets out nationally applicable principles for the delivery of Indigenous child and family services and affirms an inherent right of self-government, which includes jurisdiction over child and family services. The federal Act also provides a pathway for Indigenous laws to gain the force of federal law.

Since the federal Act came into force, Ontario has worked in collaboration with the federal government to establish coordination agreements with two First Nations.

- Wabaseemoong Independent Nations' Customary Care Code went into effect on January 8, 2021.
- Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug Dibenjikewin Onaakonikewin (KIDO), Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug's child and family services law went into force on April 1, 2023.

Child Welfare Redesign Strategy (Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services)

One of the primary goals of the [Child Welfare Redesign Strategy \(CWR\)](#) is to address disproportionalities and outcome disparities in child welfare.

To address the unique needs of First Nations, Inuit and Métis (FNIM) children, youth and families, the ministry is taking a distinct Indigenous approach to CWR guided by the Ontario Indigenous Children and Youth Strategy (OICYS) which is a co-developed strategy that is responsive to the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action and the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Final Report's (MMIWG) Calls for Justice.

MCCSS has undertaken a number of priority initiatives in support of this goal, including supporting access to supports and services that integrate Indigenous cultures, heritages and traditions to achieve better opportunities and outcomes for First Nations, Inuit and Métis families.

In March 2022, the Legislature passed amendments to the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017 (CYFSA)* that, once in force, are intended to:

- Increase access to customary care, which helps children and youth to remain connected to their culture and traditions.
- Establish "circles of supportive persons".
- Improve access to complementary services.
- Strengthen the role of prevention-focused Indigenous service providers.

The ministry recently completed a round of engagements with Indigenous stakeholders, including representatives of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, Indigenous service providers, and children's aid societies, to inform regulations required to bring the new prevention-focused measures into force. More engagement to operationalize the CYFSA amendments is expected to continue, including on customary care.

New Supports for Kinship Service Placements (Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services)

Outcomes for children and youth are generally improved when they are cared for in family-based settings^{3,4,5}. In kinship service placements, a child is placed with a kin or community member with the agreement of the child's parent/caregiver, with the agreement of a child who is 16 or 17 years old, pursuant to a supervision order made by the court, or during the application process for a court order for legal custody. These placements can also

be more culturally appropriate for Indigenous children than foster care. Beginning in 2021-22, the ministry introduced new funding to support kinship service placements through start-up funding (up to \$1,000 per placement) to help with costs like furniture and home modifications, and episodic funding (up to \$1,000 a year⁶) to assist with the child's personal needs such as clothing, school needs, and recreation. Children's aid societies can also offer additional supports to families on top of these amounts.



Pathway to justice

We honour missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people by acknowledging the imperative to rebuild relationships, drive structural change, and foster trust between Indigenous peoples and justice institutions. The initiatives under this pathway demonstrate the need for targeted interventions that specifically address the overrepresentation of Indigenous women within justice systems.

Additionally, these actions embrace a systems-wide transformation informed by Indigenous perspectives. In this year's progress report, we highlight two significant initiatives: the Social Navigators for First Nation police services initiative and the Specialized Investigator and Survivor Supports for First Nation police services initiative. These programs help address the unique challenges faced by Indigenous communities, promoting culturally responsive justice practices and providing crucial support to survivors, investigators and First Nation police services.

Social Navigators for First Nation Police Services (Ministry of the Solicitor General)

In response to the need for trauma-informed, holistic supports and wraparound services in Indigenous communities, Ontario is continuing to fund First Nation police services to employ social navigators. Social navigators are civilian coordinators that help victims and at-risk individuals through partnerships with service agencies and community supports in areas of concern (for example, mental health, addictions, and homelessness). These navigators support early preventative access to community safety and well-being services that can divert at-risk individuals from cycles of incarceration and/or victimization.

To support this work, the province is investing nearly \$15.2 million over three years (2021-22 to 2023-24) through the MMIWG Fund grant program, which provides funding for both the Specialized Investigator and Survivor Supports and Social Navigator initiatives being delivered by First Nation police services. To enhance the responsiveness and impact of this investment, recipients are able to flexibly transfer funding between these two initiatives, dependent on community need.

Under this initiative, the Ministry of the Solicitor General invested approximately \$1.6 million in each of 2021-22 and 2022-23 to support First Nation police services to hire social navigators. Since the launch of this initiative, at least six First Nation police service recipients have recruited and onboarded social navigators who are enhancing police service capacity and supporting and coordinating access to important wraparound services through community partnerships. These social navigators will continue to work closely with Elders, police partners and community agencies to establish risk indicators, identify available resources and develop effective referral pathways for victims and at-risk individuals.

The Ministry of the Solicitor General is administering the third year of funding for this initiative for fiscal year 2023-24, with an investment of over \$1.6 million.

Specialized Investigator and Survivor Supports for First Nation Police Services (Ministry of the Solicitor General)

Ontario is continuing to provide funding to build the capacity of First Nations police services to deliver specialized investigative supports related to abuse issues (including for intimate partner violence, sexual assault and human trafficking investigations). These specialized supports are intended to enhance trauma-informed and culturally responsive policing throughout an investigation to better meet the needs of at-risk Indigenous women and girls.

Following an investment of nearly \$3.4 million to support Specialized Investigator and Survivor Supports in 2021-22, the ministry invested just over \$3.4 million in 2022-23 to continue support for this First Nation police services initiative.

Since the initial launch of this initiative, First Nation police services have been working to recruit dedicated staff and ensure that they are trained and resourced to perform specialized functions in relation to abuse issues. To date, these capacity-building efforts have supported specialized, victim-centred policing on over 3,600 calls for service impacting vulnerable populations. At least 87 community partnerships have also been established and strengthened by police services to support trauma-informed and culturally responsive investigative processes and reduce the risk of victimization.

The Ministry of the Solicitor General is administering the third year of funding for this initiative for fiscal year 2023-24, with an investment of over \$3.5 million.

Other government initiatives for systems transformation

Addressing the Overrepresentation of Indigenous Youth in the Justice System Through Culturally Relevant Community-based Programs and Services (Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services)

Gender-Based Violence Prevention Programming

In 2022-23, Ontario continued to deliver gender-based violence prevention-intervention programs serving male youth who have, or are at-risk of committing, gender-based violence.

Targeted gender-based violence programming for Indigenous youth is being delivered by Springboard Services and Nishnawbe-Aski Legal Services Corporation to communities within the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation (NAN). The targeted Indigenous gender-based violence prevention program uses the Seven Grandfather Teachings, to help youth move toward a framework of healing and harmony.

In 2022-23, a total of 59 Indigenous youth were served and successfully completed the program. The province committed to ongoing funding beyond 2022-23 to sustain the delivery of *Moving Towards Harmony* gender-based violence prevention programming.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Prevention Initiatives

Through the Youth Justice TRC Prevention initiatives, Ontario continues to develop relationships with First Nation communities by addressing self-identified community priorities and needs through prevention-based initiatives for Indigenous children, youth, and their families, and addressing issues of Indigenous youth overrepresentation in the youth justice system.

In 2022-23, Ontario partnered with four First Nation Communities to support community-driven prevention initiatives. A total of \$675,000 was allocated to communities, supporting a range of prevention-based initiatives which included: land-based activities, sport, fitness and recreation opportunities, and crisis response funding to address communities' imminent needs.

Anti-Human Trafficking Initiatives in Youth Justice

Ontario continues to deliver the [Youth Violence and Human Trafficking Prevention Program \(YVHTPP\)](#), which is funded by the Gun and Gang Violence Action Fund. Initially launched in July 2021, the YVHTPP includes four Indigenous-led, community-based anti-human trafficking prevention programs focused on building strengths, skills, and resiliency in youth and their families. The program has been extended for one additional year in 2023-24.

Anti-Racism Anti-Hate Grant Program (Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism)

In 2022-23, Ontario's [Anti-Racism Anti-Hate Grant program](#) supported 18 Indigenous community-led initiatives to address the impacts of racism and hate, support those impacted by it and create safer communities. These projects include public education through storytelling, ally awareness, and intercultural dialogues that helped to address anti-Indigenous racism in various sectors.

Victim Support Grant (Ministry of the Solicitor General)

Through the 2023-24 Victim Support Grant Program, the ministry is investing more than \$4 million across the province to help support victims and survivors of intimate partner violence, domestic violence, human trafficking and child exploitation. For the 2023-24 grant cycle, approximately one-third of the projects include an Indigenous-focus or feature collaboration with an Indigenous community.

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Fund (Ministry of the Solicitor General)

The province is investing nearly \$15.2 million over three years (2021-22 to 2023-24) through the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Fund grant program, which provides funding for both the Specialized Investigator and Survivor Supports and Social Navigator initiatives being delivered by First Nation police services (see Pathway to Justice section above for additional information on the Specialized Investigator and Survivor Supports and Social Navigator initiatives).

Since the initial launch of this initiative, First Nation police services have been working to recruit dedicated staff and ensure that they are trained and resourced to perform specialized functions in relation to abuse issues. To date, these capacity-building efforts have supported specialized, victim-centred policing on over 3,600 calls for service impacting vulnerable populations. At least 87 community partnerships have also been established and strengthened by police services to support trauma-informed and culturally responsive investigative processes and reduce the risk of victimization. In addition, at least six First Nation police service grant recipients have recruited and onboarded social navigators who work closely with Elders, police partners and community agencies to establish risk indicators, identify available resources and develop effective referral pathways for victims and at-risk individuals.

Gladue Courts / Indigenous Peoples' Courts (Ministry of the Attorney General)

Indigenous Peoples' Courts (also called Gladue Courts) are a response to the Supreme Court of Canada's 1999 decision in *R. v. Gladue*, where the Court held that sentencing judges needed to take into account the systemic, historical and personal factors that may have contributed to the Indigenous person appearing before them. Indigenous Peoples' Courts are staffed with legal personnel that have specialized training in bail and sentencing for Indigenous accused persons. Efforts are made to adopt a more restorative approach and involvement of Indigenous service providers, Elders and Knowledge Keepers are an integral part.

Family Information Liaison Unit (Ministry of the Attorney General)

The Family Information Liaison Unit (FILU) was established to support families of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls to access available information about their loved ones from multiple government sources. In 2023, the FILU received increased support to also serve men and boys. The FILU is the “single point” of access to more consistent, reliable and fulsome information related to the loss of loved ones. FILU connects family members with cultural advisors, Elders, counselling services and programs, housing, and legal services depending on the family's needs.

In May 2023, the federal government announced \$37.3 million over five years and \$7.75 million annually on an ongoing basis to ensure that FILU services across the country can continue to operate as well as expand services to families of Indigenous men and boys. Ontario's FILU continues to support Indigenous families and communities through this stabilized funding.

Pathway to identifying and addressing

anti-Indigenous racism

Anti-Indigenous racism is an ever-present legacy of colonialism. The pathway to identifying and addressing anti-Indigenous racism recognizes the profound connection between the crisis of MMIWG and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people and the prevalence of hate and anti-Indigenous racism, and the enduring intergenerational impacts of Indian Residential Schools.

Ontario is committed to collaborating with Indigenous partners to develop a comprehensive and impactful response that directly addresses the underlying causes of violence and hatred. In this year's progress report, the significant Cultural Competency and Trauma-Informed Education Training initiative is highlighted. This initiative demonstrates Ontario's dedication to promoting cultural competency, fostering understanding, and equipping service providers, professionals, and community members with the necessary knowledge and tools to provide trauma-informed care and support.

Cultural Competency and Trauma-Informed Education Training (Ministry of Education, Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres)

Indigenous Cultural Competency Training (ICCT) and Trauma-Informed Education (TIE) sessions are intended to provide system leaders, educators and school staff with tools to implement trauma-informed practices to better support Indigenous students and their families in the public education system. Training sessions and resources are designed to build competencies and raise awareness of education staff and system leaders on the historical and contemporary issues, challenges and strengths of Indigenous children, youth and their families within the education system in Ontario with a focus on the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action specific to education and tailored to the Indigenous history relevant to the location of the school board.

The three cycles of training include a focus on the early relationship between the Crown, Canada, and Indigenous peoples and an in-depth overview of legislative policies and how they impacted Indigenous communities.

Training sessions help to inform system planning and set the foundation for a comprehensive approach to addressing gaps and barriers for Indigenous students, recognizing that while the ICCT and the TIE presentations are focused on Indigenous experiences, trauma-informed practices will be supportive, inclusive and beneficial to all students, families and educators.

Intended outcomes for participants include, but are not limited to:

- enhanced knowledge on how intergenerational trauma impacts Indigenous peoples accessing supports and services within educational spaces
- increased understanding of the impacts of historical events on Indigenous communities (for example, policies and legislations that have impacted Indigenous communities)
- increased discussions on how relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples can be reframed through a trauma-informed lens
- increased knowledge and understanding of intergenerational trauma from voices of urban Indigenous community members
- practical application of initial learnings to current events impacting Indigenous students to better support positive student outcomes and provide safe and inclusive spaces
- increased awareness of wise practices for integrating Indigenous knowledge into schools through discussion and shared learning

The training is designed and delivered by the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC). In addition, the training is tailored to the Indigenous territorial history relevant to the location of the participating District School Boards.

Key objectives of the training include establishing and/or strengthening networks and relationships between school boards and Friendship Centres where Indigenous program supports for education attainment exist, as well as the development of the necessary skills, knowledge, attitudes and values that support meaningful and informed relationships with Indigenous communities.

In their 2021-22 Final Report, OFIFC reported that 91 per cent of participants stated that what they learned in the training is considerably relevant to their work and/or life and that 90 per cent of respondents would be highly likely

to use the information and knowledge they learned in the training. Educators further stated that they would use the information in their roles as teachers to incorporate the knowledge into curriculum, to share more resources with students and their communities, and to speak up about the “everyday colonial practices in schools.” In 2021-22, the funding total was \$408,300.

For 2022-23, requests by school boards for training have significantly exceeded performance targets identified by OFIFC for this period. In some cases, school boards request multiple sessions to allow for greater access to the training for staff throughout their school boards. School boards scheduled sessions for late summer 2023.

In 2023-24, \$408,300 has been allocated for training.

Other government initiatives for systems transformation

Anti-Racism Strategy Review (Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism)

Grounded in the findings of the 2022 review of Ontario's Anti-Racism Strategy, [Building a Stronger and More Inclusive Ontario: Ontario's Anti-Racism Strategic Plan](#) was released in August 2023 and outlines the government's renewed vision to break down barriers and address systemic challenges to ensure every Ontarian – from every corner of the province, urban and rural – can participate, contribute and succeed.

Population-specific anti-racism and anti-hate initiatives are a key area of action in the updated Strategy, and relationship-building with First Nations, Inuit, Métis, and urban Indigenous communities and organizations is an essential piece of this work. Ontario is continuing to work with Indigenous partners, recognizing the impact of colonialism and intergenerational trauma, to advance and partner on anti-racism and anti-hate initiatives that will help eliminate barriers and advance equity for Indigenous communities.

Bimickaway Training (Ministry of the Attorney General)

The overall goal of Bimickaway, which is an Anishinabemowin word that means “to leave footprints”, is to ensure that the Ontario government is advancing toward cultural competency and respectful interaction with Indigenous people within Ontario. Participation in Bimickaway training will enable justice sector and other OPS workers to take informed approaches to Indigenous programs, services and policy issues across government. It will also deepen understanding of historical grievances and help to provide nuanced and fulsome knowledge of the realities experienced by Indigenous Peoples within Ontario.

Over 1,400 participants completed a Bimickaway session in 2022-23. To date, there have been over 12,000 participants in the Bimickaway training.

Indigenous Relations Training (Ministry of Transportation)

MTO delivers a dedicated ministry-wide education and training program to help employees understand the history of Indigenous peoples in Canada, the legacies of colonization and MTO's role in building strong relationships with Indigenous communities. MTO and other OPS ministries use this training to support Ontario's commitment to Reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. Four e-learning modules have been developed and learning events have been organized to develop and enhance internal knowledge and capacity building in Indigenous relations.

Indigenous Cultural Safety Training for Healthcare Professionals and Administrators (Ministry of Health)

The Ministry of Health expanded funding to the Indigenous Primary Health Care Council (IPHCC) through an additional investment of \$1 million per year in 2023-24 and 2024-25. Training is provided to front-line health care providers and administrators who work with Indigenous people and communities.

To date, over 22,400 individuals have been trained using the online training modules in the Ontario health care sector. The Indigenous Cultural Safety (ICS) program is designed to improve client experiences and treatment

outcomes for Indigenous populations, improve access to services that Indigenous people need, where and when they need them, provide high quality services across the province, provide resource optimization through upstream investments, and provide more efficient client journeys to reduce hallway health care.

The Ministry of Health is also looking to increase cultural safety and address anti-Indigenous racism in the health system by investing in regional and local ICS training and other cultural safety initiatives that meets the unique needs based on region or community.



Pathway to collaborative responsibility and accountability

This report recognizes the importance of cooperation and allyship with Indigenous communities. Ontario is committed to the collaborative implementation of the Pathways to Safety Strategy. It is focused on increasing accountability and building relationships. Accountability to the families of missing and murdered loved ones, survivors of gender-based violence, and Indigenous communities across the province is critical to creating sustainable and systemic change.

Since the release of the Pathways to Safety Strategy, Ontario has continued to enhance strong relationships with IWAC and grow relationships with Indigenous partners. Ontario recognizes IWAC's critical role and has extended its mandate until March 31, 2025.

Together with the Council, Ontario has begun designing and implementing accountability mechanisms to effectively monitor progress from a common standpoint.

Other government initiatives for systems transformation

Support for Indian Residential School Burials Funding Program (Ministry of Indigenous Affairs)

To date, Ontario has committed \$62.3 million to support the identification, investigation, protection, and commemoration of burials at former Indian Residential Schools across the province. Through an Indigenous-led framework, Ontario is also ensuring that funding is available for culturally appropriate, trauma-informed mental health and wellness supports throughout this process.



Conclusion

Ontario will continue working with IWAC and Indigenous partners to implement the actions under the Pathways to Safety Strategy to identify and address causes of violence, systemic disparities and gaps in services experienced by Indigenous women, which impacts their health, education, and socioeconomic outcomes.

This includes:

- expanding collaboration with Indigenous and ministry partners in priority areas such as policing and justice, child welfare, housing, mental health and healing supports, and anti-Indigenous racism
- reviewing all initiatives under the Pathways to Safety Strategy and identifying gaps in funding, data collection, and reporting capacities alongside what has already been invested
- continuing work to develop a more culturally responsive and relevant data collection and accountability mechanism for the Pathways to Safety Strategy initiatives to strengthen evidence-based approaches to program development and better track the impact of those programs
- continuing to have a strong presence at Federal-Provincial-Territorial tables to help address gaps across provinces and territories as well as sharing and learning best practices
- ensuring the voices of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people remain centred in this work and helping to create safe spaces for these voices to be heard at the provincial and national level
- facilitating a relationship with the federal Ministerial Special Representative and supporting their work with the federal government to create an Indigenous and Human Rights Ombudsperson

In addition to these commitments, Ontario will continue to collaborate with and seek guidance from IWAC on additional opportunities and priorities to further identify and narrow gaps in supports and services needed for survivors of violence and in pursuit of eliminating violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.

We acknowledge that systemic change will take time and perseverance, but work has started, and it must continue. Ontario is committed to the safety of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, and efforts will continue to ensure that this priority is considered and centred in all policies and program development, especially for those related to Indigenous peoples.

We will also continue to support cross-government efforts that are Indigenous-led or designed, as well as broader government initiatives and strategies that help address the pressing issues related to MMIWG and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people in Ontario. This includes implementation of the Ontario-STANDS: Standing Together Against gender-based violence Now

through Decisive actions, prevention, empowerment and Supports, as well as other strategic initiatives that prevent and address violence gender-based violence.

Ontario will continue to support Indigenous communities and protect Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people from violence and exploitation.

We will be accountable to missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people and their families by continuing to consult annually on progress happening across the province, improve data collection and measurement, and centre their voices in this critical work.

The Ontario government would like to thank IWAC for their continued guidance and collaboration.

We look forward to our path ahead working together with Indigenous partners and we must continue to work towards achieving our shared goal of building an Ontario where all Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people can live free from fear, intimidation, and violence.

Footnotes

1. Brennan, S. (2011). [Violent victimization of Aboriginal women in the Canadian provinces](#). Statistics Canada.
2. Back to paragraph^ Statistics Canada, 2023
3. Rutman, Deborah et al. "When Youth Age Out of Care - A Report on Baseline Finding." National Crime Prevention Centre. 2005.
4. Stein, M. Joseph Rowntree Foundation. "Resilience and young people leaving care." Layerthorpe: York Publishing Services Ltd. 2005.
5. Winokur M, Holtan A, Batchelder K E. "Kinship Care for the Safety, Permanency and Well-Being of Children Removed from the Home for Maltreatment: A Systematic Review". Campbell Systematic Reviews 2014.
6. As the new funding was introduced in October 2021, for 2021-22 the financial assistance was up to \$500 per kinship service placement, for the six-month period, from October 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022.



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