

2016 National Roundtable on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls: Outcomes and Priorities for Action to Prevent and Address Violence Against Indigenous Women and Girls

Preamble

This document describes the outcomes and priorities for action in preventing and addressing violence against Inuit, Métis, First Nations women and girls in Canada as envisioned by the second National Roundtable on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) which gathered families of MMIWG, Premiers, federal, provincial and territorial ministers, Assembly of First Nations, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, Métis National Council, Native Women's Association of Canada, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, and Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak / Women of the Métis Nation in Winnipeg, Manitoba on February 26, 2016. All Roundtable participants committed to continuing to work with families and survivors. This document builds on the jointly developed Framework for Action to Prevent and Address Violence Against Indigenous Women and Girls released during the first National Roundtable in February 2015.

At the first National Roundtable on MMIWG in 2015, participants committed to jointly coordinate efforts toward tangible and measurable action plans to achieve immediate and long term results. The priority areas identified at the 2016 National Roundtable are not exhaustive or prescriptive; rather provide a foundation for an ongoing collaborative approach to addressing and preventing violence against Indigenous women and girls.

Outcomes

2015 National Roundtable on MMIWG Outcomes:

- Commitment to holding a second National Roundtable in 2016
- Development of a prevention and awareness campaign
- National forum on policing and justice responses

2016 National Roundtable on MMIWG Participants commit to work with families and local partners to:

- Continue with coordinated collaboration and action to prevent and address violence against Indigenous women and girls during the National Inquiry on MMIWG.
- The importance of a national inquiry on MMIWG, with federal, provincial and territorial governments committing to participation and full cooperation in the process.
- Build on the current Aboriginal Affairs Working Group to include the federal government as a co-Chair, with time dedicated to MMIWG issues including the ongoing coordination of efforts, monitoring progress, and identifying priorities for action, including appropriate F/P/T Ministers.
- Supporting the development of Indigenous-led cultural competency, anti-racism and anti-sexism training programs for all public servants across governments, police and the justice system to include components focused on Indigenous history, impacts of policies, legislation and historical trauma.

- Create and implement a set of common performance measures to assess progress toward addressing and reducing the socio-economic gaps experienced by Indigenous peoples.
- Work collaboratively to improve communication and coordination between Indigenous families and: communities; victim services; policing; prosecutions; women's groups; anti-violence groups; and shelter workers.
- Implement the proposed Canada-wide prevention and awareness campaign focused on changing public perception and attitudes to help end violence against Indigenous women and girls.

Priorities for Action

Prevention and Awareness

Both prevention and awareness approaches are needed to address the social and economic inequalities for Indigenous peoples that are part of the root issues that center on violence against Indigenous women. Preventing violence against Indigenous women requires improving fair access to a range of systems, including health, education, healing and employment, for all Indigenous people, as well as more immediate actions to make Indigenous women safer. We also need to bring greater social awareness to the issue of MMIWG, and continue our work on reconciliation, so that we can build understanding of the role all people in Canada have in stopping this violence. Building on the work of the First National Roundtable, the National Aboriginal Women's Summits, the Aboriginal Affairs Working Groups, as well as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and other efforts federally, regionally and from a community basis, the following actions will be considered by jurisdictions as priority measures:

Improving Safety for Indigenous Women and Girls

- 1. Improve culturally-appropriate responses to violence within families and relationships.** Holistic healing, wellness and restorative justice are important culturally-appropriate tools for addressing trauma, mental health and addictions challenges in Indigenous families that have resulted from experiences of colonization, including the residential school experience, and racism.
- 2. Improve access to emergency and transitional shelters, particularly for remote and rural communities.** In times of crisis, Indigenous women need access to culturally appropriate safety supports closer to their communities.
- 3. Develop a strategy that engages all men and boys** in addressing violence against Indigenous women and girls.

Building Awareness

- 4. Implement a Canada-wide prevention and awareness campaign** focused on changing public perception and attitudes to help end violence against Indigenous women and girls.

5. **Dedicate resources within governments for Indigenous women's issues with special attention to preventing and ending violence against Indigenous women and girls and supporting the issues related to MMIWG families**, in order to strengthen connections between government, Indigenous organizations and families.
6. Support the development of **Indigenous cultural competency and anti-racism training programs** for all public servants across governments, police and Justice system professionals to include components focused on Indigenous history, impacts of policies, legislation and historical trauma.

Reconciliation

7. **Work to implement recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.** Reconciliation is fundamental to both preventing and addressing violence against Indigenous women and girls, as we continue to rebuild relationships of trust among both people and nations in Canada.
8. **Support new and existing Indigenous women's councils and/or organizations, within their own jurisdictions**, in order to strengthen their ability to provide advice and guidance to governments on improving Indigenous women's economic security, including safety and ending violence.

Addressing Social and Economic Inequalities

9. **Improve the social determinants of health for Indigenous peoples.** This will be supported by enhancing access to: education and training opportunities; safe and affordable housing; early childhood development programs and services; programming supports for parents, children, youth and families; and health care including mental health and addiction services. Improving access to these services for all Indigenous peoples will improve their social and economic status, which will in the long term reduce Indigenous women's unequal vulnerability to violence.
10. Create and implement **common performance measures for use in assessing progress** towards reducing the social and economic inequalities experienced by Indigenous peoples.

Community Safety

Developing safety initiatives that respond to the unique cultural, traditional, and socio-economic needs and realities of Indigenous communities, organizations, and individuals is a critical component for addressing and preventing violence against Indigenous women and girls. This would include supporting initiatives that work to prevent and respond to incidents of violence against Indigenous women and girls. Building on the work at the first National Roundtable, the following actions will be considered by jurisdictions as priority measures to improve community safety measures for indigenous persons, families, and communities:

11. **Support the development of Community Safety Planning to help define the risks that lead to crime and victimization, build on existing community supports, and identify gaps in responding to risks.** This would be accomplished through coordinated engagement between Indigenous communities, inclusive of rural, remote, reserve, and settlement communities, and Indigenous, provincial, territorial and federal governments.

12. Expand **Indigenous healing centres and holistic healing programming, including post-traumatic programming** to be reflective and respectful of the experiences and healing practices of Indigenous peoples. This approach would include supports at the community and individual level, including addressing the inter-generational impacts of residential schools.
13. Continue coordinated efforts to **reduce the high number of Indigenous children in care**, and the provision of quality, monitored, and culturally-grounded care to those children in the child welfare system.
14. Enhancing **community-based supports for Indigenous parents, children and families** (such as parenting skills, child care, respite, nutrition, and self-care). Federal / Provincial / Territorial governments could work with Indigenous communities, inclusive of rural, remote, reserve, and settlement communities, to assess the availability and quality of community-level supports for parents, children and families and address any gaps that are identified.
15. Improve coordination of **holistic front-line services for Indigenous victims** and **encourage the recruitment and retention of Indigenous front-line workers** to provide these services.

Culturally Relevant Policing Measures and Justice Responses

Opportunities to respond to violence against Indigenous women and girls exist at every stage of the justice system and where there is contact with other systems. A number of reports have been critical of how the justice system has dealt with the issue of violence against Indigenous women and girls. Building on the work at the First National Roundtable, work completed by Federal / Provincial / Territorial Justice Ministers, as well as being informed by the outcomes from the 2016 Justice Practitioners' Summit, the following actions will be considered by jurisdictions as priority measures to improve policing measures and justice responses to indigenous persons, families, and communities:

16. **Improve the victim services available to MMIWG families so that they are “culturally-safe”**, and linking these services with community-based justice and healing programs, where available. This would mean ensuring that victim services are spiritually, socially, and emotionally safe, in addition to being physically safe for Indigenous peoples. Cultural safety focuses on mutual respect, trust, and sharing and on the history of Indigenous peoples.
17. Support the development of **community engagement protocols for respectful communication** between Indigenous communities and policing, criminal justice, and other organizations in the design and development of policies, programs and services which could affect Indigenous women and girls.
18. Promote equitable and sustainable resources for **First Nation police services** through the First Nations Policing Programs.
19. Review and enhance, in collaboration with Indigenous partners, **accurate and reliable data collection systems and databases** at the local and inter-jurisdictional level to track the prevalence of violence against Indigenous (First Nations-regardless of residency, Métis, Inuit) women and girls, including missing and murdered women and girls.
20. Examine all recommendations contained within the 2016 **Justice Practitioners' Summit**, and continue to work collaboratively to improve communication and coordination between Indigenous families and communities, victim services, policing, prosecutions, and other justice system professionals.

BACKGROUND

As part of the first roundtable, there was consensus **that action must be taken urgently** and increased efforts need to be made to assess our progress while ensuring that everything possible is being done for the safety and security of Indigenous women and girls. The National Roundtable(s) have presented a unique opportunity for federal, provincial and territorial, and Indigenous governments and organizations to come together with the families and loved ones of murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls to move on coordinated actions, prevention and solutions.

The goals of the National Roundtables are to:

1. Continue the dialogue with all levels of government, Indigenous representatives and families to effectively address the crisis of violence against Indigenous women and girls.
2. Identify solutions and collaborative means of moving them forward, including the ongoing engagement of Indigenous Peoples, families and communities in reducing and eliminating all forms of violence.

As noted in the *2014 Federal Action Plan to Address Family Violence and Violent Crimes Against Aboriginal Women and Girls* "...no organization or level of government alone can eradicate this violence. This work must be done in partnership across federal organizations, with provinces and territories and through the leadership of Aboriginal communities and organizations."

To move this dialogue forward and initiate coordinated action, the following three priority areas have been identified for discussion at the National Roundtable(s) to address the disproportionate number of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls:

1. Prevention and Awareness
2. Community Safety
3. Policing Measures and Justice Responses

FOUNDING PRINCIPLES

Parties to the National Roundtable(s) believe an important foundation for this Framework is agreement on a set of common principles that guide how the Parties work together to prevent and address violence against Indigenous women and girls. Parties to the National Roundtable endorse the following principles:

Human Rights: Violence against Indigenous women and girls implicates numerous human rights including the right to life, to security, to equality and to be free of discrimination.

Shared responsibility: Preventing and addressing violence against Indigenous women and children is a shared responsibility, requiring shared commitments across governments and communities.

Community-based solutions: Solutions to prevent and end violence against Indigenous women and girls must be community-based and led, recognizing the diversity of community situations, and appropriate support given to building community capacity.

A focus on healing: Addressing violence against Indigenous women and children acknowledges the need for improved relationships based on respect and understanding among Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous Canadians, and the need for holistic approaches in concert with support for the healing of individuals and communities.

A collaborative focus: Indigenous Peoples must be partners in developing and implementing responses to addressing violence against Indigenous women and girls.

Bringing about behavioral change: Addressing and preventing violence against Indigenous women and girls requires a shift in societal attitudes and behaviours, within individuals, institutions and organizations, including men and boys, who are key agents of that change.

Changing the discourse: Mobilizing Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities to change how we talk about the issues can help re-frame institutional responses, community perspectives and individual attitudes.

FOLLOW-UP AND SHARING OF OUTCOMES

All Parties to the National Roundtable commit to continuing to work together in coordinating action to prevent and end violence against Indigenous women and girls. All Parties commit to work directly with Indigenous families, communities and organizations to move forward on these outcomes and priorities on a distinctions-based approach.

Public accountability is paramount to the continued progress in addressing violence against Indigenous women and girls, including the tragedy of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. Accordingly, Parties to the National Roundtable commit to using their respective reporting and accountability mechanisms to report on their activities and progress and will increase efforts at enhanced public reporting, and sharing information on effective collaboration efforts both within and across jurisdictions, organizations and communities.