

# POVERTY REDUCTION



Native Women's  
Association of Canada

L'Association des  
femmes autochtones  
du Canada

## CULTURE AND GROWTH

- Indigenous women are excluded from decision-making positions and forced into financially vulnerable positions which poses further challenges to economic and social development.
- Culture is a human right that has long been obstructed for Indigenous people because of assimilation policies developed by the Canadian government.
- Poverty, especially for Indigenous women, means being vulnerable: to violence, to the lack of autonomy and access to services. Poverty is social disconnection, which is why cultural identity and social inclusion are absolutely necessary to poverty reduction.
- Increased participation in society and the labour market is essential for growth, especially for those who face additional barriers such as Indigenous women with a disability or LGBTQ2S+ individuals. This means increasing access to culture will increase social inclusion and economic security through appropriate employment and social services.

## INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND CONDITIONS OF POVERTY

- Gender, race, and social status are all factors that play a critical role in determining poverty. In Canada, Indigenous women are more likely to live in conditions of poverty than anyone else.
- Indigenous women are more likely to experience conditions of poverty because of the dominance of colonial systems and the continuation of societal discrimination based not only on race and gender, but also on class and culture.
- According to the 2006 census, more than 37% of Indigenous women, compared with 17% of non-Indigenous women were living in poverty.
- Women living in poverty are especially vulnerable to domestic violence because their financial instability makes it difficult for them to escape violence at home. This can lead to Indigenous women and girls being sexually exploited, or go missing or murdered.
- Poverty can be exacerbated for Indigenous women with compounding layers of discrimination such as, youth, LGBTQ2S+ individuals, and women with disabilities.
- Invisible poverty: Many First Nations, Inuit, and Metis women live in invisible poverty. This includes food insecurity, lack of reliable health care, presence of fear in accessing services, low wages, and social exclusion.

## TO LEARN MORE, PLEASE CONTACT:

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## NWAC AND THE POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY

NWAC worked closely with Employment and Social Development Canada to engage with Indigenous women on the development of a new Poverty Reduction Strategy. NWAC met with Indigenous women with lived experiences of poverty, engaged with women in an online survey, and consulted Indigenous women leaders from every province/ territory. Some of the core themes from the engagement are: Access to culture/cultural supports, accurate data, and need for consideration concerning intersectionality and marginalization.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Increase food security and sustainability projects in communities, including gardening, access to affordable healthy foods and traditional food gathering
- Invest in rewarding employment opportunities for Indigenous women that provide a living wage and foster pride
- Explore the additional intersectionality of Indigenous women with disabilities, LGBTQ and two-spirit folks, and those who are disenfranchised such as youth
- Need for self-determination of First Nations governments, and control over programming for Indigenous women. Programs need to be holistic and women-centered
- Take a 'housing first' model to provide stable and safe housing for Indigenous women and their families
- Provide northern communities with the same access to and quality of programs and services, especially in areas of water, healthcare, the mental wellness of children
- Empower Indigenous women in their fields of passion and support Indigenous women business owners, especially women in northern and isolated communities
- Invest in better training Indigenous service providers to create more reliable Indigenous service providers and reduce barriers to Indigenous-led programming
- Policies must be proactive in providing culturally appropriate services and programs to prevent violence perpetrated against Indigenous women and their families