

Government of Ontario

Introduction

Pathways to Safety: Ontario's Strategy in Response to the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, co-developed with the Indigenous Women's Advisory Council, was released in May 2021.

Ontario has since continued to work collaboratively with the Indigenous Women's Advisory Council to implement the identified steps by strengthening relationships with Indigenous communities and organizations, and working with them to collect baseline data and develop a performance measurement framework using Indigenous approaches and principles.

Progress and Key Highlights from June 2022 – 2023

Together with the Indigenous Women's Advisory Council, Ontario is designing and implementing accountability mechanisms to effectively monitor progress on the six areas for action under the *Pathways to Safety* - Justice, Safety and Security, Health and Well-Being, Culture, Identifying and Addressing Systemic Anti-Indigenous Racism, and Collaborative Responsibility and Accountability.

Ontario has made progress on key initiatives that are responsive to these pillars, including safety and security initiatives such as the Indigenous Anti-Human Trafficking Liaison Program and the Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin ("I am a Kind Man") program; justice initiatives such as Specialized Abuse Issues Investigative Supports for First Nations Police Services; health and well-being initiatives such as the Family Well-Being Program; culture initiatives such as Youth Culture Camps; anti-racism initiatives such as Trauma-Informed Training to Build Indigenous Cultural Competency Across the Education Sector; and collaborative responsibility and accountability initiatives such as working with the Indigenous Women's Advisory Council to support Women's Circles and Family and Survivors' Circles.

Testimonials

"I was a miserable [and] submissive [woman] who did not know she mattered. TRUE SELF taught me and educated me on who as a human I was. They worked hard to build a new confident woman in me at the age of 45. Now I will graduate in less than a month from the social service worker program and I am already in a different program at Nipissing University. [Name of staff] saved me, my spirit and I will make sure I pass her knowledge to my daughter." – Nipissing First Nation participant, Women's Economic Security 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.” – participant, Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin (“I am a Kind Man”) program

Other examples of key actions and investments Ontario has made to address areas for action under *Pathways to Safety* include:

- The Anti-Human Trafficking Indigenous-led Initiatives Fund supports community-focused anti-human trafficking services and supports designed for, and by, First Nation, Métis, Inuit, and urban Indigenous organizations and communities. Ontario is investing \$46 million over five years in 27 new projects across the province, bringing the total invested in community-based services for victims and survivors of human trafficking to \$96 million.
- The Indigenous Healing and Wellness Strategy provides annual funding to support 23 programs that are designed and delivered by and for Indigenous people to reduce family violence and violence against Indigenous women and children and improve Indigenous healing, health, and wellness. Ontario is investing \$80.3 million in 2022-23 in this Strategy.
- The Family Well-Being Program provides \$35.4M in annual funding to 36 First Nations, Inuit, Métis and urban Indigenous partners and reaches over 200 sites across Ontario. The program was co-developed with Indigenous partners to help children, youth and their families heal and recover from the effects of intergenerational violence and trauma, reduce violence, and address the overrepresentation of Indigenous children and youth in child welfare and youth justice systems.

As Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada conducted bilateral conversations across Canada, soliciting input on the structure and mandate of a Federal-Provincial-Territorial-Indigenous table on MMIWG2S+ people, Ontario helped to facilitate meetings between Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada and the Indigenous Women’s Advisory Council. At a January 2023 virtual Roundtable of Indigenous Leaders and Representatives and Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ People, hosted by Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, Ontario demonstrated its commitment to keeping Indigenous women’s voices at the centre of the discussion by ceding its allotted speaking time to the Indigenous Women’s Advisory Council.

Ontario will continue to work with Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada through the FPT Officials Committee on MMIWG 2SLGBTQIA+ to identify areas of interest for cross-jurisdictional and multilateral collaboration and/or coordination, to respond to the Calls for Justice, and to address violence against Indigenous women and girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ people.

Priorities June 2023 – 2024

Ontario recognizes the need to increase programming and new investments under *Ontario's Pathways to Safety* Strategy. The legacy of the Indian Residential School system continues to impact and retraumatize Indigenous people and communities across Ontario. Furthermore, data suggests that the lingering impacts of the pandemic have increased the rates of violence experienced by Indigenous communities. Partners continue to be vocal on the slow progress made at both the federal and provincial levels when it comes to investments for new and sustained on-the-ground programs and services aimed at addressing or preventing violence, particularly for Indigenous women's organizations. Indigenous women and Indigenous women's organizations continue to call for a distinctions-based/nation-to-nation PLUS approach.

Ontario recognizes the federal appointment of Ministerial Special Representative Jennifer Moore Rattray in support of Call for Justice 1.7 to create an Indigenous and Human Rights Ombudsperson, and looks forward to supporting this work and ensuring the voices of Ontario's Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people are heard.

First Nation, Inuit, Métis and urban Indigenous partners in Ontario have continued to emphasize the importance of developing an Indigenous-led performance measurement framework to track the progress and effectiveness of the Pathways to Safety Strategy. To meet this goal, Ontario is procuring an Indigenous researcher or Indigenous-led firm to guide the development and evaluation of initiatives. This approach will improve the data landscape on violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people and effectively respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action no. 55 (TRC 55).

Ontario will continue to work with the federal government on shared priorities and to enhance cross-jurisdictional collaboration, amplify Indigenous voices, and highlight areas of future work. Ontario will also continue to work with Indigenous 2SLGBTQQIA+ communities, and to build on conversations held to date to ensure that the needs of gender-diverse Indigenous peoples are met under the province's Strategy.

Linkages to National Action Plan Priorities and Calls For Justice

The pillars of the National Action Plan (support for victims, survivors and families; prevention; responsive justice system; implementing Indigenous-led approaches; and social infrastructure and enabling environment) and the rights identified in the Calls to Justice (culture, security, health and justice) are clearly linked to Ontario's six pathways to safety.

Like the National Action Plan and Calls for Justice, Ontario's Strategy has been developed with Indigenous partners and the Strategy's implementation continues to be guided by them.

Ontario is procuring an Indigenous researcher or Indigenous-led firm to develop culturally relevant indicators to measure progress and outcomes through the Pathways to Safety Strategy. This procurement supports The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls' Calls for Justice to amend data collection to gather distinctions-based and intersectional data about Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, and ensure monitoring and data collection recognize Indigenous self-determination, knowledge, and experiences, and are conducted in partnership with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities.

Closing Statement

Ontario continues to engage with Indigenous women, girls, 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, as well as Indigenous communities and organizations to identify gaps, develop culturally relevant measures to effectively track progress, amplify Indigenous voices, and advance shared priorities to address the root causes of violence.

Ontario will release its next Pathways to Safety Progress Report in Fall 2023, highlighting the progress made in the Strategy's second year.

Reports and Publications

Ontario's [2021-22 Pathways to Safety Progress Report](#), released on March 31, 2022, highlights the progress and ongoing commitments made since the Strategy's release and profiles the collaborative implementation of key initiatives and investments made to address the root causes of violence under the Strategy.