

Government of Saskatchewan

Introduction

The Government of Saskatchewan continues to work towards reducing violence against Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) and Two-spirited, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, Asexual plus (2SLGBTQQA+) and other gender-diverse people. Saskatchewan is also working to address other forms of gender-based violence and to reduce the underlying causes of the violence facing MMIWG+ people.

Progress and Key Highlights from June 2022 – 2023

- On November 7, 2022, Saskatchewan announced the new MMIWG+ Community Response Fund, committing \$400,000 for 2022-23, which supported 12 projects. The Community Response Fund has been renewed for 2023-24. It aligns with Call for Justice 15.6, which is to “Protect, support and promote the safety of women, girls and 2SLGBTQQA+¹ people by acknowledging and respecting the value of every person and every community, as well as the right of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQA+ people to generate their own, self-determined solutions.” Fund criteria and supporting documents were co-developed with Indigenous community representatives living and/or working in northern, central, and southern Saskatchewan.
- Sapohtewan House, owned and operated by the La Ronge Native Women’s Council Inc., has been allocated operational funding for second stage housing as part of Budget 2023. Second stage housing provides safe, affordable, longer-term support (generally between 18 and 24 months) for women and their children to break the cycle of violence and help them rebuild their lives. In addition, clients receive counselling, connections to education and employment, and programs for their children (Call for Justice 4.7 and 5.6).
- Phase two of Saskatchewan’s multiyear public awareness campaign, *Face the Issue*, launched in 2022. The key goal of the campaign is to address underlying attitudes, behaviours, and beliefs that contribute to interpersonal violence with the aim of creating a safer Saskatchewan. The initial phase was designed to increase awareness and focus on prevention. The second phase continues to build awareness and education by ensuring Saskatchewan people understand what is and is not acceptable in a relationship. The

¹ The acronym 2SLGBTQQA+ refers to people who are Two Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex and/or asexual.

campaign was translated into Cree and Dene, and it has had over 2.2 million views on social media (Call for Justice 1.9).

- Saskatchewan supported the Piwapan Women's Center with their Women's Wellness Conference. The Piwapan Women's Center provides resources and services to individuals experiencing interpersonal violence and abuse. The Women's Wellness Conference offered tools to increase women's safety and awareness of MMIWG (Call for Justice 4.7 and 5.6).
- In 2023-24, the Government, in partnership with the First Nations University of Canada, the University of Regina, Clearwater River Dene Nation and Northern Lights School Division is delivering the second cohort of the Dene Teacher Education Program. Upon graduating from Dene Teacher Education Program, newly trained teachers are able to instruct their students in the Dene language as part of the K-12 curriculum. This, in turn, is expected to increase student participation and graduation rates at the elementary and secondary levels in northern Saskatchewan (Call for Justice 2.3).
- Saskatchewan is supporting the preservation and revitalization of Indigenous languages by providing annual funding to the First Nations University of Canada for new Indigenous Language Scholarships. The scholarships will encourage and enable students and instructors to study Indigenous languages (Call for Justice 2.3).
- In 2023-24, Mitacs is receiving funding for its Indigenous Pathways internship program to help leverage Indigenous innovation in Canada. These Indigenous internships will assist an Indigenous business to overcome an innovation challenge or conduct an innovative research project (Call for Justice 4.4).
- Cowessess First Nation signed off on the first Coordination Agreement in Canada in July 2021 related to *An Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families*. Saskatchewan continues to work closely with Indigenous communities to help keep families together, build capacity for extended family caregivers, and keep children connected to their culture and community. Seven notices to exercise jurisdiction under Section 20 (1) have been received from the following First Nations: Pasqua, Whitecap, Fishing Lake, Kawacatoose, Zagime Anishinabek, George Gordon, and Key. In addition, formal written notices pursuant to Section 20 (2) requesting a Coordination Agreement process have been received from the First Nations of Cowessess, Muskeg Lake Cree, and Okanese. Approximately 45 First Nations in Saskatchewan accessed federal funding for capacity-building to begin preparing for a trilateral Coordination Agreement process in assuming independent jurisdiction (Call for Justice 12.1).
- Saskatchewan recognizes that all citizens need to feel safe and have confidence in municipal police services and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The Saskatchewan Serious Incident Response Team is an independent, civilian-led unit responsible for investigating serious incidents involving municipal police officers, Royal Canadian

Mountain Police officers operating in Saskatchewan, and certain classes of special constables such as conservation and traffic officers. The Saskatchewan Serious Incident Response Team's mandate includes incidents resulting in serious injury or death, as well as allegations of sexual assault or interpersonal violence, and includes both on-duty and off-duty actions of police and special constables. Saskatchewan Serious Incident Response Team investigations require a First Nations or Métis community liaison to be appointed when the individual involved is of Indigenous descent. The Commission which oversees the Saskatchewan Serious Incident Response Team also includes mandatory Indigenous representation. (Call for Justice 5.7).

- *Īkwēskīcik iskwēwak* (ah-gwee-ski-chick isk-way-wuk), Cree for “Women Turning Their Lives Around,” is a pilot program designed by Saskatoon Tribal Council to provide up to 18 months of intensive supports for female offenders who frequently return to custody for minor offences. The program can support a minimum of 30 women across Saskatchewan at a time. The program offers housing, transportation, and supports for mental health, substance misuse, culture, income assistance, education, employment, and family reunification with the goal of reducing returns to custody. The *Īkwēskīcik iskwēwak* housing has 18 units and offers onsite Elders, a full-time mental health worker and substance misuse worker. *Īkwēskīcik iskwēwak* also provides transportation for women going from Pine Grove Correctional Centre to their home communities, ensuring clients arrive safely at their destination (Call for Justice 4.4).
- Significant progress has been made on the construction of cultural lodges in correctional facilities. The lodges will provide dedicated space for year-round sweat lodge ceremonies and other cultural programming. A cultural lodge was previously completed at the Paul Dojack Youth Centre. The Regina Correctional Centre, Saskatoon Correctional Centre, Pine Grove Correctional Centre and Prince Albert Correctional Centre opened cultural lodges in 2022. The construction of the cultural lodge at Kilburn Hall Youth is nearing completion and set to open within summer 2023 (Call for Justice 15.2).

Priorities June 2023 – 2024

- Saskatchewan is working closely with First Nations and Métis education authorities, Elders, and Knowledge Keepers to develop and implement the provincial education plan. Representatives of 20 First Nations education authorities are participating in the provincial education plan to 2030. The four priorities that guide the building of the provincial education plan are: inclusive, safe, and welcoming learning environment;

ensuring students have the skills and knowledge for their future; forming connections and relationships; and supporting mental health and well-being (Call for Justice 11.1).

- Phase 3 of the *Face the Issue* campaign is being developed, and will focus on young adults between the ages of 18 and 24. *Face the Issue* is a public awareness campaign aimed at reducing and preventing interpersonal violence and abuse. As with previous phases of the campaign, messaging will be translated into Cree and Dene (Call for Justice 5.25 and 7.3).
- As part of the commitment to end interpersonal and gender-based violence and abuse, Saskatchewan endorsed the National Action Plan to End Gender Based Violence which links to supporting the MMIWG+ National Action Plan. Pillar Four of the National Action Plan is specifically focused on Indigenous-led approaches to end gender-based violence which disproportionately affects Indigenous women and girls.

Linkages To Nap Priorities And Calls For Justice

Instead of listing the specific Calls for Justice regarding each initiative in this section, they are included with the overview of progress and priorities for 2023-24.

Closing Statement

Saskatchewan is committed to reconciliation and reducing violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. Indigenous-led approaches to end gender-based violence are foundational to both the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People National Action Plan and the National Action Plan to End Gender-based Violence, which Saskatchewan has endorsed. By supporting Indigenous groups and organizations, local communities are empowered to bring forward solutions that address local needs. To this end, Saskatchewan has continued to support the MMIWG+ Community Response Fund.

Integrating Indigenous languages and culture into educational programming will help increase graduation rates and employment, and revitalize Indigenous languages. Coordination agreements and capacity building under the *Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families* will keep families together. Phase 3 of the *Face the Issue* campaign focuses on raising awareness of interpersonal violence and abuse and available supports, while second stage housing such as Sapohtewan House provides safety and longer-term supports for Indigenous women and children. Finally, Saskatchewan is continuing to implement initiatives that support

confidence in police and support healing and safer outcomes for individuals in the correctional system.

Reports and Publications

As reported in [Saskatchewan's 2021 Response To the National Inquiry Into Missing And Murdered Indigenous Women And Girls](#), the Ministry of Education has made the following online learning modules and toolkits available:

[Supporting Reconciliation in Saskatchewan Schools](#)

[Deepening the Discussion: Gender and Sexual Diversity Toolkit](#)