

MMIWGT2S Family Wellness Project

Covering Southern Ontario

Summary Report of the 2019 Launch

Led by Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre (TCFNCC)



“This is sacred work
because it is about
the spirits of our loved ones”

- Terry Swan (Family Information Liaison Unit)





Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Trans and Two Spirits (MMIWGT2S)

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Acknowledgements

Chi Miigwetch Yaw[^]ko Nia:wen Nēhiyawēwin Kinanâskomitin

We send special acknowledgements to many individuals and organizations
for their contributions to this event.

Anthony Gladue and Elijah Pemmican for hand drumming and singing a song written by Anthony for the missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, trans and two-spirit people. Also chi miigwetch to Anthony for playing a beautiful song on the flute at the special evening event.

Ancestral Voices for giving traditional medicinal teas to participants. (included in the gift baskets.)

Indian Residential School Survivors group members of TCFNCC who beaded beautiful pins (i.e. red dresses and poppies) that were given as gifts to participants and presenters.

Indigenous Diabetes Health Circle for contributing to the gifts for participants. The gifts were portion-controlled plates that promote balanced meals and good physical health.

John T. Fox who shared his personal book entitled *The Fire Within: A Father's Struggle for Justice; Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women*.

Nicole Leveck and daughter, Nazarene Pope, Jingle Dress and Fancy Shawl Dancers who performed at the special evening event. Chi miigwetch to Nicole for sharing her heart-felt words.

Oneida First Nation cook house for providing the re-useable bamboo utensils that were included in the gift baskets.

Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA) for sharing copies of their *She is Wise* magazine for Launch participants.

TCFNCC Events Planner as well as Education, Awareness and Well-being Sector staff, program participants and volunteers who purchased food items and assembled the gift baskets.

Executive Summary

The issue of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, Trans and Two-Spirit (MMIWGT2S) people is becoming more recognized across Turtle Island. This heightened awareness is supported by the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls' Final Report that was released in June of 2019.

The MMIWG2S Family Wellness Project was established in 2019 to focus on Southern Ontario, as a geographical area that is not as widely recognized in comparison to other areas of Canada with respect to this issue. That is why, we were very excited to see so many Indigenous organizations participate in the Launch of this new project.

More than forty people from more than 20 Indigenous organizations came together for a three-day Project Launch on November 26 to 28, 2019 at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Toronto. The purpose of the launch was to learn more about the needs at the local level and to strengthen partnerships within southern Ontario. Our expectations were exceeded. Not only were participants open to networking and commenting on gaps in the system, they also showed great passion in sharing experiences, best practices, and working collaboratively to develop strong recommendations for southern Ontario communities.

We proudly share this report which includes informative presentations, valuable resources, details on program funding as well as information about access to funded health supports.

As a participant stated, "This is sacred work." We were so impressed by the passion and compassion that the participants demonstrated. It gives us great hope that collectively we can accomplish so much more.

We are thankful that you are taking an interest in the issue of MMIWG2S and look forward to hearing more about your good work.

Chi Miigwetch Yaw^ko Nia:wen Nēhiyawēwin Kinanâskomitin

From the MMIWG2S Family Wellness Project Team

Patricia Chrisjohn-Canzian, Team Lead
Chantal Maru, Project Navigator
Laurie Okimawinew, Cultural Resource Coordinator
Andrea Chrisjohn, Project Overseer
Mandy Wesley, Special Advisor

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Trans and Two Spirits (MMIWGT2S)

About MMIWGT2S Family Wellness Project

Toronto Council Fire (TCFNCC) is guided by our mission to improve the quality of life of Indigenous families by nurturing the development and creation of healthy opportunities. This entails recognizing our history, restoring our identities, honouring Mother Earth, and educating others. We base our philosophy from a place of strength and growth. This is made possible when we respect each of the four directions, by honouring the individual agency of each member that makes up our beautiful community, as we all have gifts and medicines that we carry in our bundles. To that extent, having diverse communities that are made up of unique gifts, medicines and needs, we all have a responsibility to create opportunities to come together collectively, and pool those resources together, in efforts to further complement each other's bundle.

In line with this, TCFNCC launched our Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women & Girls, Trans and Two-Spirited Family Wellness project in early 2019 to ensure that community members can safely access mental health and wellness supports grounded in culture. This, along with referring individuals to other culturally safe agencies that offer similar initiatives across Southern Ontario. At TCF we are constantly looking for ways to enter new partnerships with like-minded organizations, and to ensure that we maintain our responsibility for the celebration and protection of all living things, as that is the nature of the work we do. This worldview stems from a place of strength and growth, not from a deficit base. We acknowledge everyone's contribution, no matter what phase you are at within your healing journey.

Areas We Serve (Southern Ontario)

- 1. Central Ontario:** Greater Toronto Area (GTA)
- 2. Eastern Ontario:** Ottawa, Peterborough, Belleville areas
- 3. Northern Region:** Barrie, Orillia, Georgian Bay areas
- 4. South:** Hamilton, Brantford, Six Nations, Fort Erie and Niagara areas
- 5. South One:** Kitchener, London
- 6. South Two:** Chatham, Windsor, Owen Sound



Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Trans and Two Spirits (MMIWGT2S)

Key Statistics



TWO-SPIRIT PERSONS ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE SEXUALLY AND PHYSICALLY ASSAULTED THAN HETEROSEXUAL INDIGENOUS WOMEN, AND WHITE LESBIAN WOMEN.



INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS NOW MAKE UP

24%

OF FEMALE HOMICIDE VICTIMS.



INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS ARE

12x

MORE LIKELY TO BE MISSING OR MURDERED THAN ANY OTHER GROUP IN CANADA.

THE RATE IS EVEN HIGHER FOR TRANS AND TWO-SPIRIT PERSONS.



INDIGENOUS PERSONS

MAKE UP THE MAJORITY OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN THAT ARE SEX TRAFFICKED IN CANADA



90% **OF INCARCERATED INDIGENOUS WOMEN HAVE EXPERIENCED DOMESTIC PHYSICAL ABUSE.**

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Trans and Two Spirits (MMIWGT2S)

AGENDA

MMIWGT2S Southern Ontario Project Launch

Embassy Suites by Hilton Hotel, 262 Carlingview Drive, Toronto

November 26th – 28th, 2019

Tuesday, November 26	Wednesday, November 27	Thursday, November 28
Opening and Welcome.	Opening and Review of Day 1	Opening and Review of Day 2
<p>Project Overview Andrea Chrisjohn</p> <p>MMIWG Inquiry Key findings that relate to organizational work in the community. Mandy Wesley</p>	<p>Indigenous women in prison and the impact by MMIWG: Jo-Anne Absolon and Laini Lascelles.</p> <p>Sister Skirts Project, Kaeli Goldman, M’Wikwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre</p>	<p>Ancestral Voices: A community healing centre based on Six Nations. Update on development and service delivery plans. Gail Whitlow.</p>
<p>Presentation and video by Audrey Huntley Video: Not Just Another Case (No More Silence, It Starts With Us & Aboriginal Legal Services)</p> <p>Reflections of Self-Care by Elder</p>	<p>The Stages of Grief: An Indigenous Perspective by Elder Andrew Wesley</p>	<p>Indigenous Cultural Healing Supports: Virginia Toulouse</p> <p>Kanowaytowin OFIFC Program Learn about the program & funding: Lorena Garvey.</p>
<p>Gahnokwasra Family Assault Support Services: Presentation by Family Counsellor Amber Silversmith and a community member affected by MMIWG</p> <p>Reflections of Self-Care by Elder</p>	<p>Inter-Tribal Small Discussion Groups Exercise: Discussion topics included: -Current MMIWG services, -Gaps in services, -Current cultural supports and -Recommended resources.</p>	<p>Future Directions: In 2020, look towards formalizing the MMIWG2S Project with a traditional name</p> <p>Plan for a 2020 Spring Gathering</p>
<p>Terry Swan, Family Information Liaison Unit</p>		<p>Evaluations</p>
<p>Cultural support available. Massage appointments available.</p>	<p>Feast. Drumming and jingle dress and fancy shawl dancing. Social evening of games. Massage appointments.</p>	<p>Wrap Up and Closing</p> <p>Rest and relaxation.</p>

Participating Organizations

Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto (ALST) (Toronto)
Ancestral Voices Healing Centre (Six Nations)
Anishnawbe Health Toronto (AHT) (Toronto)
Association for Native Development in the Performing and Visual Arts (ANDPVA) (Toronto)
Can-Am Indian Friendship Centre (Windsor)
First Nations Health Authority (British Columbia)
Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre (Fort Erie)
Gahnokwasra Family Assault Support Services (Six Nations)
Georgian Bay Native Friendship Centre (Georgian Bay)
Grand Valley Institution for Women, Correctional Service Canada (Kitchener)
Hamilton Regional Indigenous Centre (Hamilton)
Indigenous Diabetes Health Circle (St. Catharines)
Ministry of Attorney General- Indigenous Justice Division, Family Information Liaison Unit (FILU) (Toronto)
M'Wikwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre (Owen Sound)
Native Women's Resource Centre of Toronto (NWRCT) (Toronto)
Niagara Regional Native Centre (Niagara-on-the-lake)
Nogojwanong Friendship Centre (Peterborough)
Odawa Native Friendship Centre (Ottawa)
Ontario Indian Residential School Survivors Service (London)
Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC) (Toronto)
The Indigenous Network (also known as the Peel Aboriginal Network (PAN) Indigenous Friendship Centre (Mississauga)
Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre (TCFNCC) (Toronto)
Tungasuuvingat Inuit (TI)- Mamisavik Healing Centre (Ottawa)

List of Participants

1. Tajjah Abbotosoway (TCFNCC)
2. Jo-Anne Absolon (Grand Valley Institute)
3. Anita Armstrong (Odawa Native Friendship Centre)
4. Pamela Carter (TCFNCC)
5. Liana Canzian (TCFNCC)
6. Patricia Chrisjohn-Canzian (TCFNCC)
7. Andrea Chrisjohn (TCFNCC)
8. Audrey Davis (Hamilton Regional Indigenous Centre)
9. Jennifer Dockstater (Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre)
10. Lorena Garvey (OFIFC)
11. Anthony Gladue (TCFNCC)
12. Kaeli Goldman (M'WIKwedong Native Cultural Resource Centre)
13. Faith Hale (Can-Am)
14. Jocelyn Kagige (Native Women's Resource Centre of Toronto)
15. Millie Knapp (Association for Native Development in the Performing Arts)
16. Laini Lascelles (Grand Valley)
17. Amanda Lipinski (Indigenous Diabetes Health Circle)
18. Christa Lewis (Nogojiwanong Friendship Centre)
19. Chantal Maru (TCFNCC)
20. Chantal McGregor (TCFNCC)
21. Trudy Monague (Georgian Bay Native Friendship Centre)
22. Elizabeth Sault (Niagara Regional Native Centre)
23. Sheila Nobakht (Hamilton Regional Indigenous Centre)
24. Laurie Okimawinew (TCFNCC)
25. Samantha Pinder (M'WIKwedong Native Cultural Resource Centre)
26. Barbra Sevigny (Tungasuvvingat Inuit: Mamisarvik Healing Centre)
27. Amber Silversmith (Gahnokwasra Family Assault Support Services)
28. Tabitha Shergold (The Indigenous Network)
29. Melissa Stevenson (Anishnawbe Health Toronto)
30. Vivian Timmins (Ontario Indian Residential Schools Survivor Services)
31. Virginia Toulouse (First Nations Health Authority)
32. Mandy Wesley (TCFNCC)
33. Gail Whitlow (Ancestral Voices)

Keynote Speakers



Mandy Wesley

Mandy Wesley is a member of Bearskin Lake First Nation who currently resides in Toronto with her husband Stan and their daughters Maya and Tenona.

In 2006, Mandy graduated from Western University's Faculty of Law, where she was that year's recipient of the Mary Warner Award for Human Rights. That same year, she clerked for the Pueblo of Isleta Appellate Court in New Mexico.

In 2007, Mandy was called to the Ontario Bar. Prior to attending law school, she worked in media and communications. Mandy also worked at Aboriginal Legal Services (then known as Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto), in several positions including the country's first Gladue Caseworker, which inspired her to pursue a career in law. During and post law school, she worked at Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto in a variety of positions including Staff Lawyer and Acting Executive Director. She has appeared before various Tribunals and Courts including the Ontario Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court of Canada.

Until late 2014, she worked with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada as the Senior Advisor – Public Engagement where she used her skill set of public speaking combined with research and writing to educate and inform Canadians about the Indian Residential School system and its legacy. In this role, Mandy also liaised with government and non-government entities to coordinate reconciliation events bringing together various communities for cross-cultural dialogues.

From 2015 to 2018, Mandy worked with the Indigenous Justice Division of the Ministry of Attorney General - Ontario as Legal Counsel and Executive Advisor to the Assistant Deputy Attorney General. The Division is the first of its kind anywhere in the country with an entire team of counsel, policy and program advisors dedicated to advancing Indigenous justice issues and fostering reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in the province.

Mandy remains committed to working with and for Indigenous peoples. Currently, she works as an independent consultant to continue the good work.

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Trans and Two Spirits (MMIWGT2S)



Audrey Huntley

Audrey Huntley is a filmmaker and the co-founder of the Toronto based network No More Silence - the group works to honour MMIWGT2S and support community efforts to end violence, land reclamation and land defense while asserting sovereignty. In her day job, she is the Victim Rights Paralegal at Aboriginal Legal Services. She lives in Toronto with her street rescue dog, Kimei.



Terry Swan

Terry Swan - *Star Keeper of the Fish Clan*, is Cree/Saulteaux and a member of Cold Lake First Nation in Alberta. A visionary leader, she brings over 25 years' experience in violence prevention and promoting healing initiatives within Indigenous communities. For the past three years, she worked for the Ministry of Attorney General and led the development and implementation of an innovative, trauma informed and family centered approach to delivering services to families of MMIWG. In 2019, the Family Information Liaison Unit was awarded the coveted Amethyst Award of the Ontario Public Service. Today, she dedicates her time to writing and offers her services as a Holistic Wellness Practitioner and Trainer based out of Toronto.



Elder Andrew Wesley

Elder Andrew Wesley (Omushego Cree from James Bay) has been a recognized Elder at Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre for over six years, providing healing and grief counselling to members of our community. Elder Wesley is also an Anglican priest with a master's degree in Divinity from the University of Toronto and was also trained as a civil engineering technician.



Gail Whitlow

Gail Whitlow is the Founder of Ancestral Voices Healing Centre and the soon to be Dancing Deer Healing Village. She is Bear Clan (Mohawk Nation), Mother of 5, Grandmother of 13. Gail inspires others on their healing journey by sharing ancestral wisdom that vibrate within our souls as we reconstruct the beauty of peace within our hearts and minds.



Jo-Anne Absolon

Jo-Anne Absolon is a multi-National person whose matrilineal side of the family is Ojibway from Flying Post First Nation in Northern Ontario, and patrilineal side is British originating from the Borough of Hackney in London, England. Her spirit name is Bebungdekikikwe which means, Woman Who Walks Leaving Footprints. She lives a traditional life with ceremonies, teachings and walks a good life. Jo-Anne is a graduate of Wilfrid Laurier University Indigenous Field of Study with a Masters in Social Work. She currently works for the Federal Government, in the department of Corrections Canada, working with incarcerated

Indigenous Women in a multi-level facility. Twice per month Jo-Anne facilitates a Grief and Loss Circle, part time, at Hospice of Waterloo Region for Indigenous people. She is also a mother of three adult children and one grandchild.

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Trans and Two Spirits (MMIWGT2S)



Laini Lascelles

Laini Lascelles is a Spiritual advisor at Grand Valley Institution for Women. She is Ojibwe (Aamjiwnaang Chippewas of Sarnia) and Lenape (Eelunaapeewi Lahkeewiit) from the Delaware Nation and has Mohawk ancestry from Six Nations of the Grand River Territory.

Laini is a proud Nokomis, Grandmother of two Granddaughters and Mother of two children. Laini has worked under various Elders and Mentors who taught her about her healing journey and the importance of living a good way of life. The Elders saw her potential as a Healer, and she began to understand what it meant to be a Helper. Today, Laini works with Indigenous women who are in prison and conducts Sweat Lodge Ceremonies. She continues to work with the Sundance Ceremonies and offers help and support to our communities. She enjoys working with our youth and is currently working toward obtaining her bachelor's degree in social work.



Lorena Garvey

Lorena is an Anishinaabe Kwe born and raised in Windsor, Ontario. She is both Ojibway on her mother's side and Mayan from her father's side. Lorena currently lives in Toronto and has been working at the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres for the past 4 years.

Lorena has been involved in the Friendship Centre Movement since 1994. Lorena has been involved in Indigenous Youth Councils and on Board of Directors for the Friendships Centre Movement locally, provincially and nationally. She has worked with the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS) on the Ontario's Youth Policy Framework as part of the Youth Development Committee; with the Centre for Addictions and Mental Health (CAMH) on the Pathways to Effective Depression Treatment for the LGBT2 Community; and with Pathway to Potential in Windsor with the Voices against Poverty group.

Lorena strives to ensure that a balance is met in all areas of her life, and believes that culture, family, and community in a large part has helped her become who she is today.



Gordon Peters

Gordon Peters is Lenape from the Delaware Nation Moravian of the Thames and a member of the turtle clan family.

Over the past 35 years, Gordon has worked with First Nations on a regional, national and international levels (both politically and non-politically). He currently holds the position of Deputy Grand Chief for the Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians (AIAI), and actively participates in the political realm within his own community serving as an elected Councilor.

Gordon previously served as the Ontario Regional Chief for 12 years, representing 133 First Nations through the Chiefs of Ontario as well as President/Grand Chief for AIAI for 10 years. In 1997, he founded the Centre for Indigenous Sovereignty (CFIS), a federal non-profit corporation with its own board of directors who worked towards the rebuilding of Indigenous communities, nations, governments and organizations. His hobbies include cultural undertakings, public education, and enjoying a round of golf during his leisure time.

Virginia Toulouse

Virginia Toulouse is from Sagamok Anishnawbek First Nation. She has over 30 years' experience in health working with First Nations at the community, regional and national levels. She is a mental wellness advocate for Indigenous people.

Presentations

Day 1: November 26

Mandy Wesley

TCFNCC- MMIWG Inquiry Key findings that relate to organizational work in the community

Day one was a heavy day of storytelling. We first heard a presentation by Mandy Wesley, who gave an overview of the findings of the MMIWG report that stemmed from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

Mandy spoke to the major themes surrounding the 231 Calls to Justice. A key takeaway from Mandy's presentation were the practical ways for agencies to start implementing the Calls for Justice in ways that are applicable to their own unique needs.

Mandy also gave participants guiding instructions and toolkits on how to fill out a funding proposal for their own projects, along with an introductory letter template to follow (see Appendix).

Background: National Inquiry

- On **June 3, 2019**, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Women and Girls (MMIWG) delivered its final report to the federal government.
- The Final Report is comprised of the **truths of more than 2,380 family members, survivors of violence, experts and Knowledge Keepers** shared over two years of cross-country public hearings and evidence gathering.
- It delivers **231 individual Calls for Justice** directed at governments, institutions, social service providers, industries and all Canadians.

“The Report is about the deliberate race, identity, and gender-based genocide”¹

– Chief Commissioner Marion Buller

¹ https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Executive_Summary.pdf

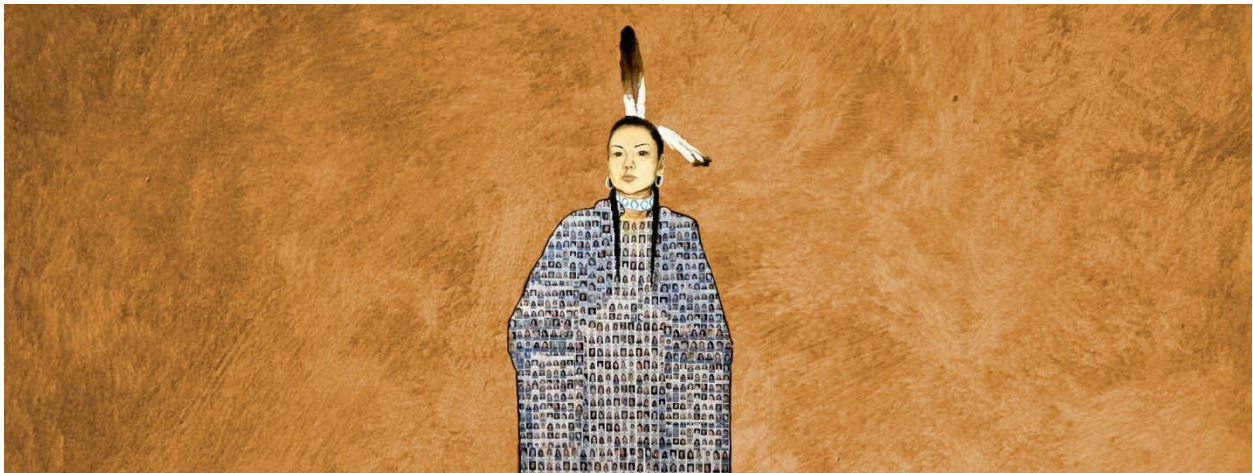
“The violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people is a national tragedy of epic proportion...

The truth is that we live in a country whose laws and institutions perpetuate violations of basic human and Indigenous rights...This is not what Canada is supposed to be about”

- Chief Commissioner Marion Buller, National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls



“We demand a world within which First Nations, Inuit, and Métis families can raise their children with the same safety, security, and human rights that non-Indigenous families do, along with full respect for the Indigenous and human rights of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis families.” – *National Inquiry Calls for Justice*



Artwork by Jonathan Labillois

Defining Genocide

“As the evidence gathered by the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Women and Girls demonstrates, human rights and Indigenous rights abuses committed and condoned by the Canadian state represent genocide against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA people.”²

Genocide is “A coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves.”³

The *United Nations* adopted the *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide* (PPCG) and it was ratified in 1952.

Genocide means any of the following acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, such as:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.⁴

² Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (p.51)

³ Presentation by Mandy Wesley on the Calls for Justice (2019), TCFNCC MMIWG Family Wellness Launch. Definition of Genocide -*Raphael Lemkin, Legal Scholar, was known to first use the term genocide at a conference in Madrid in 1933 and further defined genocide across several fields after the Second World War.*

⁴ Ibid.

Audrey Huntley

ALST, No More Silence, It Starts with Us

Audrey demonstrated ways to get involved when a family member has gone missing, along with advice on how to raise awareness through a video entitled **“Not Just Another Case: When your Loved One Goes Missing or Murdered”**. The video was designed to assist Indigenous communities and individuals in negotiating the legal and justice systems when a loved one has gone missing or have been murdered. It also delves into how communities can find ways forward for collective healing after the loss of a loved one.⁵

Audrey also provided the group with key insights into the *No More Silence* movement, along with the Strawberry Ceremony that takes place every February to honour the spirits of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, Trans and Two-Spirited Persons.

In speaking of the court case process, one family member stated,

"It was hard to be alive while this was happening"

-Family Member of MMIWG (Not Just Another Case).

“We learned how to honour her and to carry on.”

-Family Member of MMIWG (Not Just Another Case).

⁵ <https://www.aboriginallegal.ca/notjustanothercase.html>

Not Just Another Case

The video entitled Not Just Another Case can be found on the Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto website. It is a collaboration between Aboriginal Legal Services and No More Silence. It has numerous tips and advice to help families who are dealing with a loved one who is missing or murdered. The following points are just a few of the many helpful suggestions that are outlined in the video:

- If you feel someone you love is missing, trust your gut. Often our instincts are accurate. Call everyone you know immediately.
- Call the police to report and constantly obtain updates.
- Make a poster with a picture of your loved one in a really casual setting that will reflect how they are most likely to be seen and recognized.
- For those who are trans or two-spirited, honour them by showing photos as they wish to be seen.
- Facebook and twitter are very useful. Ask your family and friends to post the information about your missing loved one and to include a phone number for people to contact if they have any information to share.
- Have a strategy in place and then approach the TV stations. Appoint a spokesperson for your family who will be able to speak in front of the cameras.
- Your voice can be very strong. Vigils can be a powerful community action that can move the investigation forward.
- Make sure supports including spiritual and ceremonial supports are readily available.
- Losing a friend or family member is an extremely stressful experience.
- Know that help is available. Look for people, places and activities that can help you feel safe.
- Try your best to take care of your body, even though this can be difficult.
- Find a health or mental health provider to assist you in your healing.
- If you need to go to court, you should check to see if you can obtain time off from work through programs that offer monetary support at Employment and Immigration Canada.

Please view the full video Not Just Another Case to hear all of the advice that is shared by many Indigenous families. <https://www.aboriginallegal.ca/notjustanothercase.html>

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Trans and Two Spirits (MMIWGT2S)

2020 Annual Strawberry Ceremony

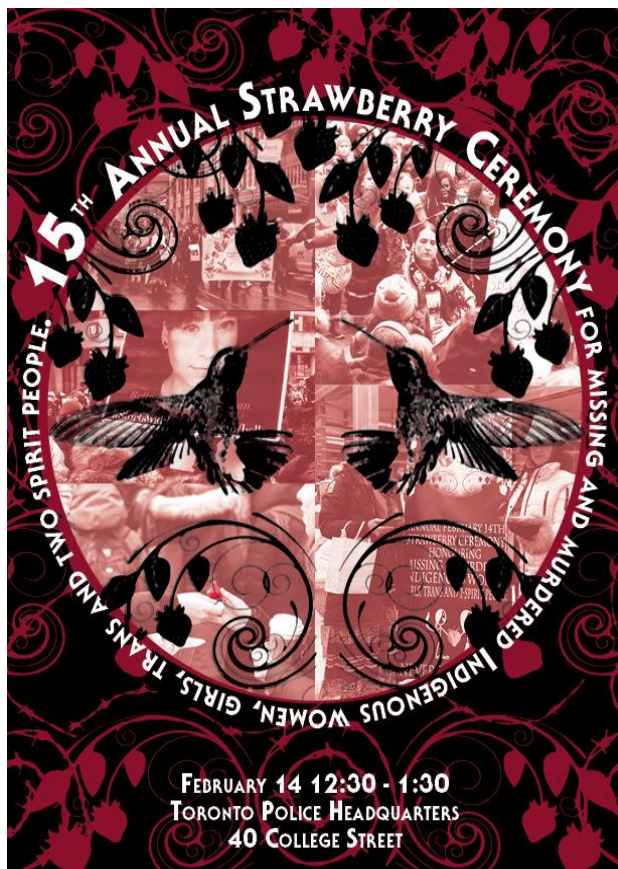
Friday, February 14th, 2020

12:30 to 1:30 pm

40 College Street in front of the Toronto Police Head Quarters

On February 14th, people come together in solidarity with the women who started this vigil over 20 years ago in Vancouver, and with the marches and rallies that will be taking place across this land.

We stand in defense of our lives and to demonstrate against the complicity of the state in the ongoing genocide of Indigenous women and the impunity of state institutions and actors (police, RCMP, coroners' offices, the courts, and an indifferent federal government) that prevents justice for all Indigenous peoples.



Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Trans and Two Spirits (MMIWGT2S)

No More Silence

No More Silence aims to develop an inter/national network to support the work being done by activists, academics, researchers, agencies and communities to stop the murders and disappearances of Indigenous women -

No More Silence was co-founded in 2004 by Audrey Huntley and ally Barbara Williams. The Elder who provides ongoing leadership is Wanda Whitebird. Membership includes a mix of academics, professionals and community members. Currently, our active members include Carol Lynne D'Arcangelis, Wanda Whitebird, Sheryl Lindsay, Terri Monture and Audrey Huntley.

Contact Info:

E-mail: nomoresilenceorg@gmail.com

Website: <http://itstartswithus-mmiw.com/>

Blog: <http://itstartswithus-mmiw.com/no-more-silence-blog/>



Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Trans and Two Spirits (MMIWGT2S)

Amber Silversmith

Gahnokwasra Family Assault Support Services

In the afternoon, we heard from the team at Gahnokwasra Family Assault Support Services. Gahnokwasra offers a program called *Embrace Them with Love* along with a Women's Group called *Love Starts with Us*. The support provided by Gahnokwasra integrates traditional culture. Our group was welcomed by some traditional singing and drumming led by Eddie Thomas. Amber highlighted the positive strength that songs can carry, and their ability to uplift people even in the darkest of times.

"There is healing power of music and song. It is uplifting. It has a healing vibration"

-Amber Silversmith, Gahnokwasra

Amber Silversmith brought a family member affected by MMIWG to share their story and personal healing journey. Amber walked us through the phases an individual goes through when they lose someone. For some experiencing loss, they may function by running on fear or anger. They may be in survival mode, but Amber stresses the importance to work with them to get out of that survival brain mindset.

Amber also highlighted how part of the grieving process entails acknowledging that for some, their spirits are detached from their bodies. Amber stressed that part of our collective work is grounded in helping community members bring their spirits back to their bodies. Amber reminds us to acknowledge that the families of the MMIWG are the experts, and that should always be emphasized no matter what interactions take shape.



Gahnokwasra⁷
Family Assault Support Services

Terry Swan

Family Information Liaison Unit, Ministry of Attorney General, Indigenous Justice Division

Terry spoke to the fact that the Family Information Liaison Units bring a deep understanding of the historical context of Indigenous women and girls, and the unique needs of families who have suffered the loss of a loved one, where all services are provided in a culturally safe and respectful manner. Terry emphasized that we are the examples for all the work that is necessary to move forward with the family process. To date, there are still **11** people missing in Ontario. She reminds us of the following:

“The violence in our homes does not have roots in our teachings. It has roots in colonization” – Terry Swan

About Family Information Liaison Units (FILUs):

Family members of Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women & Girls can access Ontario’s Family Information Liaison Unit (FILU) for confidential, culturally responsive, trauma-informed and victim-centered assistance. FILU’s can be accessed in Toronto, Sudbury, Sioux Lookout, and Thunder Bay.

FILU facilitates the gathering of case-specific information about police investigations, coroner’s reports/reviews, court proceedings, or other government processes and provides information to families.⁶

The Units help families access available information about their missing and murdered loved ones from multiple government sources. The Units are available in every province and territory and build on the existing victim services frameworks in each region.

“The most important thing is our spirit, and our spirit never dies”

-Terry Swan (as taught to her by Grandmother Pauline Shirt)

Toll-free number: 1-844-888- 8610

⁶ <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/fund-fina/cj-ip/fund-fond/mmiw-fada/info.html>



Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Trans and Two Spirits (MMIWGT2S)

Presentations:

Day 2: November 27, 2019

Jo-Anne Absolon and Laini Lascelles

Indigenous Women in Prison- Grand Valley Institution for Women, Correctional Service Canada

Both Jo-Anne Absolon and Laini Lascelles spoke on the issues that Indigenous women face in prison, and the relationship to MMIWG, namely the systemic discrimination they face, coupled with layers of trauma. This becomes exacerbated when some women are seriously affected by feelings of abandonment, prostitution, and are subject to very poor living conditions.

While Indigenous people account for roughly 5 percent of Canada's total population, they represent 27 percent of its prison population in 2016-2017 — an increase of 8 percentage points over the previous decade. It is clear- the number of Indigenous women being incarcerated have continued to rise, but the resources, supports and services have not risen. Thus, in many ways, incarceration has become the new form of residential school.

As a result of being subjected to this treatment and abuse, the women experience a disconnect of identity. This disconnect is perpetuated by the lingering effects of colonization. In other words, necessary components to the restoration of identity, involves peeling away layers of trauma, along with the creation of a safe community exit plan that begins inside and outside of institutions, and proper support to allow for reintegration to occur.

Currently, Jo-Anne and Laini try to give the women a sense of family, along with incorporating cultural teachings, however more support is needed through the form of counsellors, traditional speakers for workshops, escorted temporary absences and volunteers.

Of all federally sentenced women, 43 percent are Indigenous, making them the fastest growing prison population in Canada, according to the Office of the Correctional Investigator, a watchdog for the correctional services.

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Trans and Two Spirits (MMIWGT2S)

Kaeli Goldman

Sister Skirts: Women's Transitional Program M'Wikwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre

Sister Skirts began as part of the Indigenous Women's Transitional Program at the M'Wikwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre.

The Women in the program honour themselves and their journeys by sewing their own ribbon skirts for their bundles and are asked to make a sister skirt for an Indigenous woman being incarcerated. It is a way to send comfort and strength to our women who are overrepresented in both the provincial and federal colonial criminalization institutions; to acknowledge our shared experiences, challenges, traumas and survival. To remind them that they are loved, needed, sacred.

As we sew our skirts, we think about how far we've come and what has brought us to that place: our resilience, our bravery, our love for ourselves and our families and our communities, the love we receive from others, our ancestors, our medicines, traditions and ceremony. We think about what we needed during times of loneliness, fear and despair. We think about all the ways we love and what makes us happy. We think about ways that we can protect ourselves and keep ourselves and families safe. As we sew our skirts, we laugh and cry and grieve and share and comfort and pray. All the energy and medicine and love and prayer that we generate while we sew, all those gifts we are giving to ourselves, we sew into our sister skirt with each stitch so that we can share with a sister so she can find her path and strength. Whenever a woman wears her skirt, she will think of the woman who wears her Sister Skirt.



Elder Andrew Wesley

TCFNCC- The Stages of Grief: An Indigenous Perspective

Elder Andrew Wesley discussed the various ways in which individuals can experience grief, in the context of MMIWGT2S, by sharing his own personal experience with a missing family member. Andrew shared that grief came with us when we were born. It is part of our burden. He shared a word in Cree – “**anomissowin**” which means a time of difficulty in your life, by further highlighting the anxiety and pain of “not knowing” what happened to his loved one and if that loved one will be found. The following are key points that elder Wesley shared with us to help us cope with grief.

Everyone has their own timetable and style of grieving, and that the depth and duration of each experience looks different for everyone. There are many feelings one can experience when they are grieving. Our self-esteem may be low, and we will want to be alone. Guilt is dangerous. It can destroy you if you don't deal with it. It leads to self-hate. Anger is like an animal that keeps attacking us. He also advised that children grieve differently. Pay special attention to them. Do not treat them like adults.

It is important to be patient with yourself, and part of the healing journey involves learning and re-discovering traditional ways, (e.g. smudging). However, no matter how overwhelming it may be, his message was that we all have the power to control our grief, and once we see a glimpse of hope, we are starting to see the light, and a new life of ours appears.

"When we start to see hope, we are starting to see the light. Meaning new life is starting to appear" – Andrew Wesley

From our evaluation forms, participants made the following comments:

“Grateful that a gentle, kind man like Andrew Wesley showed us an Indigenous perspective as to how to grieve.”

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Trans and Two Spirits (MMIWGT2S)

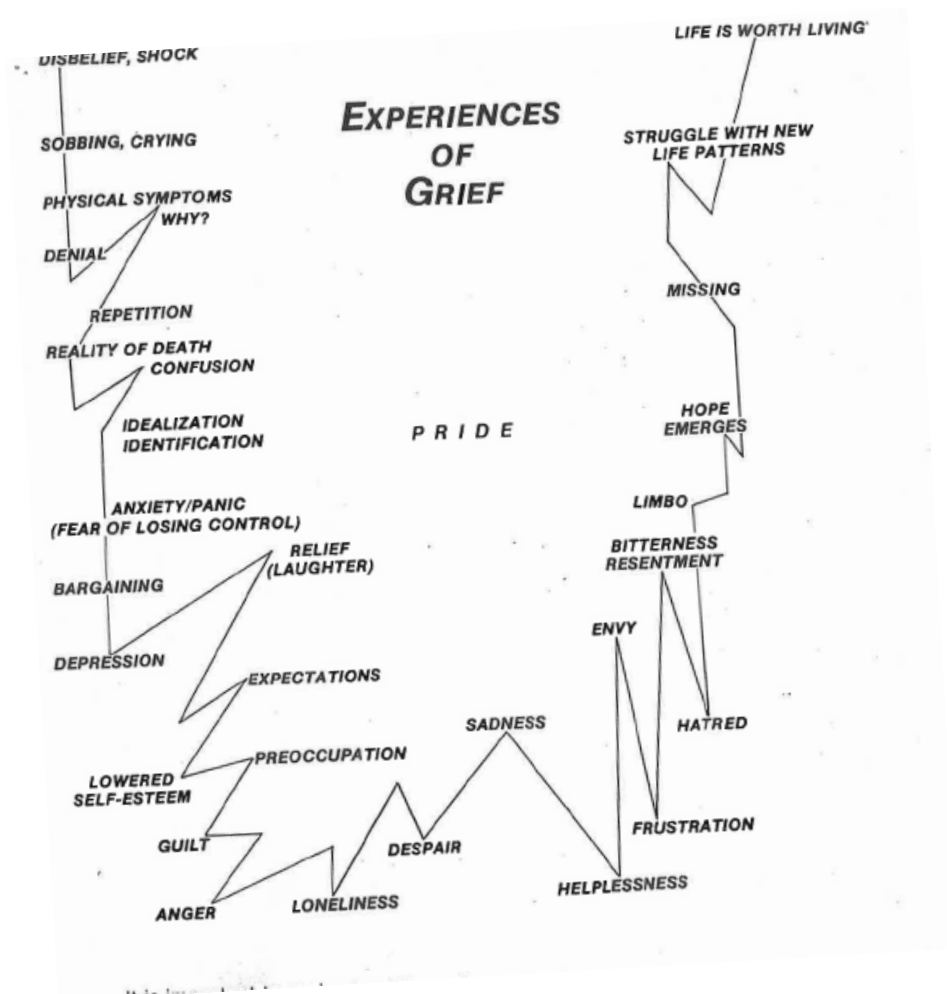


Figure 1: The above illustration was based on Elder Andrew Wesley's presentation. You can see a full breakdown of each of the experiences of Grief (see Appendix).



Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Trans and Two Spirits (MMIWGT2S)

Gail Whitlow

Ancestral Voices Healing Centre

Gail shared her personal journey creating Ancestral Voices, and her efforts and challenges seeking healing by advocating for natural healing to be more accessible for community members within and around Six Nations. Gail detailed the many barriers she faced with the launch of her *methadone program*, and the experience undergoing stigma by providing these services. Gail is a prime example of a community member who saw that challenge to further advocate for community members who need these services the most, by taking her vision to the next level.

Ancestral Voices offers a variety of products and services ranging from healing medicines such as ceremonial teas, First Nations counselling services, conducting pipe ceremonies, Mayan ceremonies and more.

Gail also announced the launch of the *Land of the Dancing Deer Sanctuary Resort and Healing Village* that will provide a space for healing and learning traditional teachings that will provide support for many community members affected by MMIWGT2S.⁷



Contact information:

Phone number: 519-900-1993

Email: ancestralvoicesac@gmail.com

⁷⁷ <https://landofthedancingdeer.com/>

Presentations

Day 3: November 28, 2019

Virginia Toulouse

Indigenous Cultural Healing Supports

Virginia walked us through the various health supports that participants and community members can access via Health Canada, by highlighting the three streams of coverage through which counselling can be accessed.⁸

1. Mental Wellness and Counselling Program:

In 2017-2018, the First Nations Health Board (FNHB) provided funding to each region to develop a process for traditional healers and elders.

2. Indian Residential School Resolution Health Support Program

The provides mental health, emotional and cultural support services to eligible former Indian Residential School students and their families throughout all phases of the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement.

3. Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Health Support Services


The program provides counselling services to address mental distress and trauma resulting from the issue of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada.

Transportation Arrangements:

Virginia also noted that medical transportation is available to access counselling along with traditional healing that is not available in-community to increase accessibility of services jurisdictionally. (See appendix for full breakdown).

⁸ <https://www.fnha.ca/benefits/mental-health>





First Nations Health Authority
Health through wellness

Mental Health Counselling Prior Approval Form

Please DO NOT e-mail completed prior approval requests to the FNHA as the document will contain your client's confidential information and identifiers. Instead, please submit by fax (preferred) or regular mail.

Complete this form to apply for prior approval before commencing counselling funded through First Nations Health Benefits (FNHB). **Incomplete or illegible forms will not be processed**

Please note that all counselling, including the initial client assessment, must be conducted by a provider who is already registered with the FNHA in order to be eligible for payment.

Counselling services must be provided in accordance with the terms and conditions in the Guide to Mental Health Counselling Services – First Nations Health Benefits. Treatment should start within two weeks of the FNHA's approval.

Please complete the form and fax to the following number: 604.658.2833 **OR mail to:** First Nations Health Authority
HB Mental Health Program
540 - 757 West Hastings Street
Vancouver, BC V6C 1A1

For Billing Purposes, FNHA Assessors will route eligible clients to one of the following programs:

- Mental Wellness and Counselling Program
- Indian Residential Schools Resolution Health Support Program
- Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Health Services Support Program

This request is for: Initial Assessment (no client signature required) Treatment Sessions (client signature required)

Note: Once the approved number of sessions are completed, a new Prior Approval Form must be submitted in advance of further sessions.

SECTION A - PROVIDER INFORMATION

NAME OF PROVIDER	PHONE NUMBER
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SECTION B - CLIENT INFORMATION

NAME OF CLIENT	DATE OF BIRTH (YYYY / MM / DD)
ADDRESS	
INDIAN STATUS NUMBER (FOR FIRST NATIONS)	PHONE NUMBER
PERSONAL HEALTH NUMBER (PHN)	

Please indicate whether the client is eligible to receive counselling from any other service/program:
 YES NO

If applicable, indicate that the client is a:

Former Indian residential school student Family Member of a former Indian residential school student

DATE OF BIRTH OF FORMER STUDENT: (YYYY/MM/DD)	NAME OF SCHOOL ATTENDED
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If the client is a family member of the former student, please also provide the following:

NAME OF FORMER STUDENT	RELATIONSHIP TO CLIENT
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Figure 2: Mental Health Counselling Prior Approval Form (First Nations Health Authority).



First Nations Health Authority
Health through wellness



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Lorena Garvey

Kanawaytowin program

Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC)

Lorena talked about the *Kanawayhitowin Program “Taking Care of Each other’s Spirit”* -an Indigenous prevention and education initiative to raise awareness about the signs of woman abuse in our communities. The goal of the program is for community members to be better equipped to identify the signs and risk factors of woman abuse, along with being able to better make referrals and offer support.⁹

Lorena highlighted the various ways for communities to get involved through community-based training, where organizations can apply for funding to best suit their needs:

1. Two-day Kanawayhitowin **Adult** Facilitator Training
2. Two-day Kanawayhitowin **Youth** Facilitator Training
3. Community-based Workshops and Events Training

The community-based training budget **application form** along with a facilitator training budget form as funding is available through the OFIFC (see Appendix).



Contact information:

Phone: 416-956-7575 ex. 233

Email: kanawayhitowin@ofifc.org

⁹ <http://www.kanawayhitowin.ca/>

Needs and Recommendations

The following sections presents the needs and recommendations that combine what we heard from:

- The inter-tribal small group discussions, along with
- The summary of key findings within the evaluation



Inter-Tribal Small Group Discussion

In the afternoon, we grouped participants into four rotating table groupings to take part in an inter-tribal discussion, each led by a group facilitator. The goal of the exercise was to get at the root of where we are seeing some common gaps in service provision, what is currently being offered in terms of cultural support, and what are some helpful resources and realistic goals we can set to help move protocols forward.

The following is a thematic summary of what we heard from each of the groups:

1. *What services does your organization provide to support MMIWGT2S affected community members?*
2. *What are the gaps in services for your region?*
3. *Describe the types of cultural support services that your organization provides, and ways of ensuring that cultural support, elders and knowledge keepers are appropriate.*
4. *What kind of resources would benefit your organization (best practices, information guides, toolkits, etc.)?*



1. What services does your organization provide to support MMIWGT2S affected community members?

- One-on-one grief counselling
- Family counselling
- Sharing circles
- Prevention of human trafficking of girls through programming at schools. Focus on young girls at risk. Program includes sewing, circles, discussion of safety, respect for us, and how to deal with people approaching the young girls in a sexual manner or with sex being part of the conversation
- Community living and a healing program in another city
- Collaboration between two First Nations jails in two cities
- Notices that the local Walmart has numerous posters of missing persons
- Programs targeted toward teaching positive healthy relationships
- Home visits for community members (e.g. dealing with CAS)
- Medicine walks
- Wellness days to promote mental health and well-being of staff and community (e.g. Implementing nutritional meals, healthy exercise, recognizing low iron levels, etc.).
- Spaces to commemorate MMIWG (murals, mosaics, posters, pictures, banners).
- Arts based healing (beading red dresses, attached with a card of a woman, poetry, storytelling).
- Medicine gardens that raise awareness for women experiencing violence
- Sisters in spirit-candlelit vigils with community members to honour MMIWG
- Land-based healing – reconnecting with the land
- Toolkits e.g. “You are not Alone”
- Preventative programming for men -reconnecting the men with culture, land-based healing to reignite their sense of purpose

2. What are the gaps in services for your region?

Lack of Safe Spaces

Many participants identified the need for space to arrange for one-on-one counselling, along with private space for family counseling. In many ways this can cause overcrowding and feel as though people are being “stacked”, which does not cultivate an environment of safety or confidentiality.

Lack of shelters for women and children who are not abused

Lack of affordable housing for low income people



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Lack of police services in an area of this border city where human trafficking is a huge concern (Windsor, the areas travelled by the Chi Chi Mon).

Lack of long-term counselling services for families. There is a cap of only 6 months, which is not sustainable for those deeply impacted by trauma.

Lack of clothing, food and blankets for people living in poverty

Lack of space in shelters

Lack of supports for kids living in poverty to stay in school

Lack of trauma education. Lack of understanding what trauma is, and how it affects brain development. In addition to a lack of understanding of intergenerational trauma.

Lack of connection to the land and animals which will help to gain respect for creation

Lack of programming that is focused on controlling emotions

Gap in grief and loss sessions

Gap of cultural teachings in safe, sacred spaces

Timing

Some participants outlined that for some clients working 9am-5pm, meaning the timing of programming can conflict with their work schedules, thereby limiting their participation.

Capacity

It is important to note the variance in each agency's capacity, as their number of staff can range anywhere between 15-86 people per agency and that needs to be considered when replicating a program or service.

"If you have a program, you are the program"

– Liz Sault (Niagara Regional Friendship Centre).

Lack of Transportation in Rural Communities

For many agencies in southern Ontario, there is a need to often drive and pick up clients for them to access services and care, and as a result can put staff members at risk.

Lack of Community Trust

A big component of community trust includes acknowledging cultural safety and ensuring that community members feel safe seeking out these services. We heard several protocols to ensure elders and traditional knowledge keepers are screened prior to offering their services in communities. Some agencies talked about conducting CPIC's on new people, whereas others rely on word of mouth, or directly speak with Executive Directors. There was consensus surrounding having a list of approved knowledge keepers and elders, as the reputation of a new cultural person is considered. All components tie into building and nurturing community trust.

Lack of Program Expertise

In many instances, staff may not have qualified skills or expertise in an area of programming but are required to deliver for the sake of meeting the program's needs.

Lack of programming and support services for Men

A need for targeted programming and support services that are targeted toward men and boys to be encouraged to express their unique roles in our communities – such as outings, fasting, medicine walks. In addition to that, the lack of a positive father figures and other male role models who know their cultural ways. This is further compounded when young men are not exposed to seeing positive relationships between couples, it then becomes a breeding ground for reinforcing cycles of abuse.

Lack of programming and support services for Inuit Persons

There is an overall lack in Inuit-specific programming and services offered for Inuit persons leaving the North and the language barrier they may face when trying to access services in the South. This is further amplified by the lack of Inuit elders that are accessible to pass down traditional teachings.

3. Describe the types of Cultural Support Services that your organization provides.

Participants identified a range of cultural supports that are offered within their regions and agencies, including the following:

- Counselling by elders
- One-on-one elder sessions
- ID clinics
- Teach how to make an offering
- Focus intention techniques
- Reiki
- Smudging
- Naming
- Colours
- Inuit teachings
- Share teachings with non-Indigenous nursing staff
- One centre makes it a practice to hire five staff members who are particularly strong in the culture and traditions. They can mentor other staff, and with their knowledge of the community and elders, they can also ensure that appropriate cultural supports are brought into the centre.
- Massages
- Socials
- Harvest Feasts and community feasts (fresh catch- Caribou, seal, char) once a month sharing those collective cravings for traditional foods
- Language programming
- Education through the courts (culturally aware judges and lawyers, Gladue case workers).
- Drumming
- Drum bag making
- Identify where people come from (to instill pride)
- Youth and Family cultural nights
- Naming ceremonies
- Canoe trips around the Grand River
- Medicine wheel teachings
- Cultural leave (5 days per year)
- Providing access to medicines and traditional teas
- Medicine gardens
- Chaga picking
- Seasonal fasting
- Strawberry teachings
- Fishing trips
- Regalia workshops (moccasin making).
- Fire-keeping teachings

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- Full moon ceremonies
- Creation and clan story workshops- connecting elders and artists by practicing healing through the arts
- Sacred fires
- Preparing spirit plates
- Sewing groups (sewing sealskin mittens, parkas, ribbon skirts).
- Ancestor ceremonies
- Ceremonial sweats- a place to deal with the grief, and ensuring there is continuous support around the grief
- Sun dances -with a bundle carrying each of the names of the women that were missing and murdered. Each woman has a chance to carry that bundle at sun dance and bring it to ceremony.





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Ways of ensuring that Cultural Support, Elders and Knowledge Keepers are appropriate:

- Do research on new people
- Conduct CPICs on new people
- The reputation of a new cultural person is taken into account
- If not aware of an elder's work in the community, will talk to Executive Director
- Have a list of approved knowledge keepers and elders
- If there are new Elders and Knowledge Keepers who are being considered, key mentors (i.e. staff with more knowledge of culture and protocols will conduct an assessment).
- View resumes, review credentials
- Some families request a specific elder
- Parents who wish to accompany kids on an outing must have a CPIC
- The organization has policies and procedures regarding elders
- Have 2 elders on the Board of Directors
- Hold sessions with new people and staff- comprise the first session of participants (before they can lead sessions for the public).
- Elders can be removed for showing intolerance and unkindness to two-spirited people and couples of mixed races
- For one-on-one sessions with elders, the following rules are applied: a person who is aged 15 or under must be accompanied by an adult, the door is left open, for sessions with adults, a recorder/scribe is offered
- Rates of honorarium. Some organizations have rates set and consider travel and meals. One staff person asks the elder what amount would be appropriate. Practices and amounts vary.

4. What kind of resources would benefit your organization (best practices, information guides, toolkits, etc.)?

Training

We heard that training (at all staff levels) from executive level to front-line support workers require consistent, and relevant training that can equip them to keep up with the needs of their program (for instance, grief counselling). This can take shape through a train the trainer workshops similar to OFIFC (see Appendix, Lorena Garvey's presentation).

Funding Templates

Participants mentioned that examples of funding templates to apply for specific funding streams and projects would be beneficial for their staff, including ways to effectively fill out those forms would serve to be useful.

Grant Writers

There was mention of having a funded position in each agency specifically geared toward a general grant writer, to ensure consistency and capacity needs are weighed in on, and filtered through that individual, as opposed to having individuals from each sector or program write their own grants and proposals.

Funding

Funding limitations were a recurring theme stated by many agencies. It is important to note that non-profits do not fall into the same category as for profits in terms of organizational structure and the distribution of funds. This places an emphasis on targeting direct training and supports needed for a program.

Toolkits

Through the form of bilingual toolkits- to ensure others understand why Inuit practices are conducted, why certain protocols are used, as a way of bridging the gap of Inuit teachings offered in communities. This can take form in hand outs, brochures at events, or online resources.



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Transitional Housing

Participants identified the transient nature of some of the lives of MMIWGT2S, and how more focus should be on preventative measures such as building relationships with shelters, including non-Indigenous shelters.

Healing Centres

Particularly for incarcerated women. The need for more in Ontario, as correctional officers are sending women to Saskatchewan to go to a healing lodge, and sometimes end up right back in jail due to their abstinent-based policies.

Fact Sheets

MMIWGT2S facts and statistics will be useful as part of the awareness campaign.

Wrap-Around Supports

We heard there are oftentimes duplication of services offered and/or multiple organizations offering ad-hoc service. Community members could really benefit from having a one-stop-shop when accessing services, in order to avoid having to shop around, or look far to complement an existing service they are currently accessing. Another example includes, providing in-house supports for community members engaged with CAS, having someone go into their homes, help them with parenting skills, as opposed to having them go to a workshop or class where they don't know anybody, or are unfamiliar with the language. It is providing that safety net.

Elder Workshops

It was said that there needs to be more resources dedicated to training this generation on what it takes to be an elder, by exemplifying how to be respectful and teach the traditional protocols, so generations are not left in the dark. If we are not taught by our own elders, it is difficult to bring knowledge of traditional teachings and pass that on.

Directory

A list or directory of services for Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations, key contacts, elders to contact, where services are offered, who offers what exactly. For larger cities, or regions, in addition to the directory of services, it would be helpful for an organization to host a workshop for staff from other



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agencies to attend. The workshop can be delivered as a train-the-trainer style and will share information about MMIWGT2S for new staff and provide an overview of all related services in the city or region.

Counselling Services for Staff

Participants stressed the importance of self-care and aftercare through the form of counselling and debriefing either with an elder, a therapist, and/or debriefing with other team members and colleagues in order to avoid carrying the trauma of the stories they are told.

Funded Positions for MMIWG Team

We consistently heard from participants that there is a need to have a dedicated team within each organization responsible for MMIWGT2S related matters. As it currently stands, there are community outreach workers, wellness workers and health support staff who are already stretched so thin, making it challenging to address program needs holistically when the demand is so high. If there was a funded position or multiple positions dedicated for MMIWG staff, they can potentially mitigate burnout. In some agencies, they might benefit from having an Indigenous manager. It would also be beneficial to have staff, including teacher/trainer/animations travelling to communities as a mobile

Pay Equity

We heard from participants that the dollars going out to the agencies can oftentimes be deemed unreasonable. The frontline workers of these agencies who are expected to carry huge workloads yet are not making adequate salaries or earnings and more thought needs to be put into setting realistic expectations for salaries through funding proposals and negotiating with government.

Social Media Networks

Social media is an excellent way to share information with regard to notices of missing individuals as well as sharing resources, contacts, services, etc.

Videos

Videos sharing personal real experiences is more impactful than statistics. A list of videos would be very helpful. Videos also complement statistics and fact sheets.

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Study Guide to the National Inquiry

It would be helpful to have a shorter version or key fact sheets that are more reader and user friendly. It is easier to share and more practical to use in information sessions.

Information Kits

Information kits with statistics sheets, fact sheets, and activities on a USB would be very beneficial. This type of resource could be made collectively.

Family Circles

Sessions for individual families can be more intimate and personal. It can include condolence ceremonies, releasing ceremonies, and family restoration.



Evaluation -Key Findings:

The evaluation forms show that there is a strong recognition of the issue. MMIWGT2S cases exist in all areas. All participants who responded to the evaluation indicated that they know of MMIWGT2S cases in their areas and in total, all 15 respondents indicated that there are more than 147 people who are affected by MMIWGT2S.

The following summarizes the comments regarding major needs and recommendations that apply to participants' communities.

Summary of Key Needs:

- **Awareness and Education:** While key Indigenous staff are knowledgeable of MMIWGT2S, in the broader Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities it is still an invisible issue and as such, there is a high need for an awareness and education campaign about MMIWGT2S issues. There must be more education on how to provide trauma informed culturally grounded and culturally safe services for MMIWGT2S and affected families and survivors, specifically by EMS, Health Care, policing, Courts, Crown, Defense Council, Hospitality Industry and social services on how to identify human trafficking and domestic violence.
- **Funding and dedicated staff:** There is a need for more funding to provide for dedicated staff and programming for families affected by MMIWGT2S as most organizations are trying to incorporate it into existing programs but can only do so in a minimal way. “Fund us to hire what we need to do this work. Stop expecting us to deal with this tragedy off the side of our desk.” We need specific counsellors or workers to help structure a plan – healing plan for families. We need staff to work solely for MMIWG to visit families for follow up.
- **Partnerships:** All respondents feel that partnerships are important to this work. Even though approximately half of the respondents are currently working with other organizations with regard to this issue, they believe that more support would improve enhance their work. A community partnership approach is recommended whereby community service agencies work together possibly in a task force with a common vision and protocol agreement. More partnerships will help to create a united front as to different ways to respond when MMIWGT2S happens in our communities.
 - **On-going Gatherings:** Bringing together everyone on a regular basis for ceremony and to build those friendships. Allows networking, acknowledgement for our work, self-care, sharing best practices, invites support for events from other organizations. We gather more strength from one another. Need to be re-energized for this kind of work.



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- **Respondents indicated major needs as follows:**
 - **Flexible funding:** More funding and the freedom, independence and flexibility to determine how best to utilize those funds and resources. Suggest combining funds for community events about healing for those impacted.
 - Need an up-to-date **inventory of services**, programs, tools, resources, counsellors, funding etc. (i.e. a go-to resource). This can be used for awareness and referral purposes and to allow for partnerships to develop. It should include information for on and off reserve as our population can be transient. Important that it has the financial support to keep this up to date. We need to know what is ongoing and what other organizations are doing, so that we can refer.
 - **More Programs and Services:**
 - **Health and cultural supports**, trauma informed care, after care, healing programs. treatment centres. access to culture, a crisis response team. MSW Indigenous Counsellors and funding to hire them. Need specific counsellor or worker to help structure a plan – healing plan for families. We need staff to work solely for MMIWG to visit families for follow up if needed. We need a crisis response team. We need MSW Indigenous Counsellors and funding to hire them. Healing programs. Treatment centre.
 - **Access to culture.** This is sacred work. Stay attached to the land and to our language. Have healing programs. Pauline Shirt was quoted as saying “the most important thing is our spirit and our spirit never dies.” We need group sessions and also more one-on-one support and cultural supports.
 - Weekly **family group sessions**. Immediate family only. Weekly extended family group session. Weekly open to the community group session. Staff to work solely for MMIWG to visit families for follow up if needed.
 - Support for **women who are incarcerated**. Need supports to come into the institutions. (i.e. counsellors/traditional speakers for workshops, partnerships for supports, escorted temporary absences, volunteers)
 - More programming for **youth**. Recognize that youth need strong grounding, a sense of identity and their cultural teachings in order to prepare them for adulthood. There is a need for adult male and female role models.
 - Establish protocols for **emergency responses**; Safe exiting for Human Trafficking and Domestic Violence Survivors;
 - **Self-Care** is paramount. Burnout is a reality in the work we do. In this kind of work, we often put others needs before our own. This is very noble and considerate however; the needs are so great that they can impact the workers and drain them without realizing it. Workers need to be well grounded, and spiritually, emotionally, mentally and physically healthy. There is a limit to what one can carry.

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Next Steps:

Finally, it must be noted that no two communities are identical, despite their similarities. There is no one-size fits all template to approach community wellbeing. All persons affected by MMIWGT2S are each on their own unique healing journey, and special considerations must be applied for varying coping mechanisms and grieving at both the individual and community levels.

The discussion, findings and feedback from evaluations have given the team great direction for future plans.

For the Greater Toronto Area, TCFNCC is beginning to explore activities such as:

- Collaborating with other like-minded organizations to share best-practices and referrals
- Regular MMIWGT2S community feasts to honour the family members and survivors
- Outreaching to the Toronto Police with regard to cultural sensitivity training to police officers
- Discussing a possible partnership with the Toronto Police to organize a Missing Persons Awareness Day event
- Participating in the 2020 Annual Strawberry Ceremony on February 14th
- Taking a stronger role in the October 4th Vigil honouring MMIWG that is led by Native Women's Resource Centre of Toronto
- Inviting Kanawayhitowin to facilitate a more detailed workshop at TCFNCC to allow Toronto-based groups and organizational staff on the ways in which they can apply for and access funding.
- Work with and help to guide the City of Toronto and their process as they implement the National Inquiry's Calls for Justice at a municipal level.

We welcome and encourage the involvement further partnerships and collaboration in all areas.



Participant Feedback

“Excellent networking opportunity and conversation around our own capacity to serve community”.

“Beautiful work being done with a lot of good people with good minds coming together to build healthier safer communities”.

“We gain community strength in helping families heal with our teachings and medicine”.

“I couldn’t thank Council Fire enough for these amazing three days. I felt wrapped in love with all that you put in place for us. Thank you”.

Miigwetch | Niá:wen | Nēhiyawēwin | Kinanâskomitin | Yaw^ko | Thank You | Merci





Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Trans and Two Spirits (MMIWGT2S)

Resources

If you, or someone you know has been affected, you can reach out for the following supports:

Family Information Liaison Unit (FILU for Ontario), Ministry of Attorney General

FILU facilitates the gathering of case-specific information about police investigations, coroner's reports/reviews, court proceedings, or other government processes and provides information to families.

Indigenous Justice Division

416.306.2266 (Toronto)

Toll free phone: **1.844.888.8610**

705.675.1658 (Sudbury)

807.737.4877 (Sioux Lookout)

807.624.1879 (Thunder Bay)

Talk4Healing Help Line

A culturally grounded, fully confidential helpline for Indigenous women, available in 14 languages across Ontario.

1.855.554 HEAL

www.talk4healing.com

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls 24/7 Crisis Line

Provided by Elders and Traditional Healers, skilled Indigenous community-based workers, and mental health workers who are enrolled with Indigenous Services Canada.

Ontario: **1.888.301.6426**

For immediate assistance: **1.844.413.6649**

Anishnawbe Health Toronto (AHT)

Services include:

Traditional Walk-in Counselling Services (3 days per week)

Switching Anger Around (an 8-week anger management group)

179 Gerrard Street East

Phone: **416.920.2605**

Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto (ALST)

Not Just Another Case: A Resource Video for community members with missing and murdered loved ones.

<https://www.aboriginallegal.ca/notjustanothercase.html>

211 Yonge Street (Suite 500)

416.408.3967

1.844.633.2886



Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Trans and Two Spirits (MMIWGT2S)

Native Women's Resource Centre of Toronto (NWRCT)

Community Wellness Workers (CWW) Assist community members to develop action plans to address their health and wellness concerns, undertake outreach supports, peer counselling, advocacy, and crisis intervention.

191 Gerrard Street East

416.963.9963

Native Child and Family Services of Toronto (NCFST)

Numerous programs for youth and parents with regard to Anti-human Trafficking; Holistic Family Violence Prevention; support for community members and their children who have witnessed and suffered from violence; Women's Empowerment Circle for women to begin healing from past trauma including family violence; Journey of the Peaceful Warrior is a group for men in the community who are interested in accepting responsibility for self-change and to gain control over their lives (how to develop healthy relationships with self and others, improve self-esteem and increase knowledge and pride in Indigenous identity); the PAR Program is a 12 week circle for those who are before the courts due to domestic violence. Etc.

Hope for Wellness Helpline

1-855-242-3310

The Hope for Wellness Help Line offers immediate mental health counselling and crisis intervention to all Indigenous peoples across Canada.

Experienced and culturally competent Help Line counsellors can help if you:

- Want to talk
- Are distressed
- Have strong emotional reactions
- Are triggered by painful memories

If asked, counsellors can also work with you to find other wellness supports that are available near you.

Phone and chat counselling is available in English and French. On request, phone counselling is also available in: Cree, Ojibway and Inuktitut.