

OFIFC

Ontario Federation of
Indigenous Friendship Centres

Closing Submission to the
National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls

December 2018

Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres

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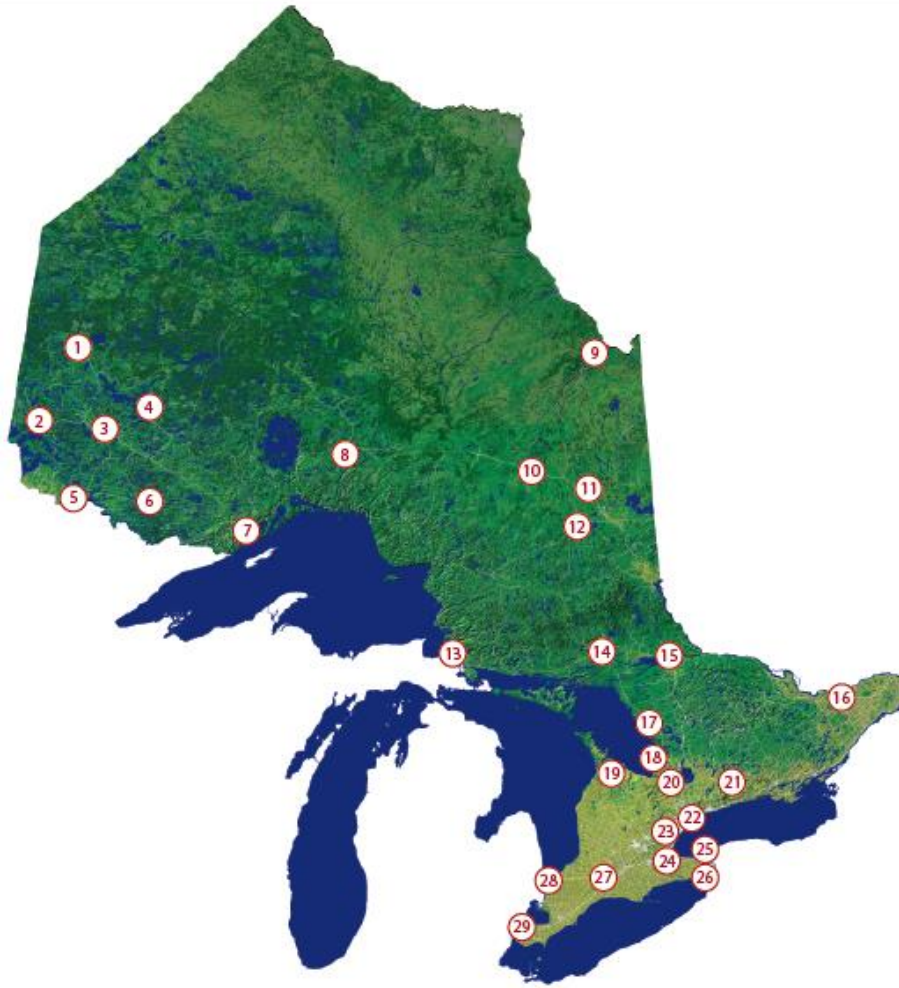
Table of Contents

About the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres and the Friendship Centre Movement in Ontario	3
Introduction	5
Ending Violence Against Indigenous Women in Ontario: The role of OFIFC	7
Recommendations to the National Inquiry.....	10
Problematic Nature of Utilising the “Three-stream Approach” and Nation-to-Nation” Relationship with Indigenous Peoples	10
“Nothing for us, without us”: Ensuring the inclusion of Indigenous Women’s Voices in Decision-Making	12
Lasting Change: A National Response	14
National Strategy	16
Co-Development.....	16
Culturally-Relevant Foundation	17
Role of the Entire Community	22
Cross-Sectoral Approach	29
Sexual Violence and Human Trafficking.....	31
Capacity Development for Communities	33
Improved Data and Research.....	34
Recognising Colonialism: Past, Present and Prevention for our Future Generations	36
Our Culture is Our Resiliency.....	39
Appendix	40
Endnotes.....	41

About the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres and the Friendship Centre Movement in Ontario

1. Founded in 1971, the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC) works to support, advocate for, and build the capacity of member Friendship Centres across Ontario.
2. Emerging from a nation-wide, grass-roots movement dating back to the 1950's, Friendship Centres are community hubs where Indigenous people living in towns, cities, and urban centres can access culturally-based and culturally-appropriate programs and services every day. Today, Friendship Centres are dynamic hubs of economic and social convergence that create space for Indigenous communities to thrive. Friendship Centres are idea incubators for young Indigenous people attaining their education and employment goals, they are sites of cultural resurgence for Indigenous families who want to raise their children to be proud of who they are, and they are safe havens for Indigenous community members requiring supports.
3. In Ontario more than 85 per cent of Indigenous people live in urban communities. The OFIFC is the largest urban Indigenous service network in the province supporting this vibrant, diverse, and quickly-growing population through programs and initiatives that span justice, health, family support, long-term care, healing and wellness, employment and training, education, research, and more.
4. Friendship Centres receive their mandate from their communities, and they are inclusive of all Indigenous people – First Nation, Status/Non-Status, Métis, Inuit, and those who self-identify as Indigenous from Turtle Island.

Ontario Friendship Centres



1 Red Lake Indian Friendship Centre **2** Ne-Chee Friendship Centre (Kenora) **3** Dryden Native Friendship Centre **4** Nishnawbe-Gamik Friendship Centre (Sioux Lookout) **5** United Native Friendship Centre (Fort Frances) **6** Atikokan Native Friendship Centre **7** Thunder Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre **8** Thunderbird Friendship Centre (Geraldton) **9** Timmins Native Friendship Centre Satellite Office (Moosonee) **10** Kapuskasing Indian Friendship Centre **11** Ininew Friendship Centre (Cochrane) **12** Timmins Native Friendship Centre **13** Indian Friendship Centre (Sault Ste. Marie) **14** N'Swakamok Native Friendship Centre (Sudbury) **15** North Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre **16** Odawa Native Friendship Centre (Ottawa) **17** Parry Sound Friendship Centre **18** Georgian Bay Native Friendship Centre (Midland) **19** M'Wikwedong Native Cultural Resource Centre (Owen Sound) **20** Barrie Native Friendship Centre **21** Nogojiwanong Friendship Centre (Peterborough) **22** Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre **23** Peel Aboriginal Network (Mississauga) **24** Hamilton Regional Indian Centre **25** Niagara Regional Native Centre (Niagara-on-the-Lake) **26** Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre **27** N'Amerind Friendship Centre (London) **28** Sarnia-Lambton Native Friendship Centre **29** Can-Am Indian Friendship Centre of Windsor

Introduction

5. The OFIFC is pleased to share our closing submission to the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. We would like to honour the spirits of our stolen sisters and acknowledge the resiliency of survivors and their families across Turtle Island. OFIFC recognizes the unassailable courage and strength it has taken for families and individuals to share their truth with the Commissioners and the public at large. No longer can Canada plead ignorance on the abhorrent violence that continues against Indigenous women and girls and the complete neglect of attention to the human rights violations that continue to this day. OFIFC, on behalf of its member Friendship Centres, urges the Commissioners to consider the following closing submission with deep reflection as it is concerned with the true decolonization and self-determination of Indigenous people.

Summary of Key Recommendations

6. A) In order to actively erase the notion of colonial mentality, the federal, provincial/territorial governments can no longer utilise the three-stream approach (i.e. First Nations, Métis and Inuit) as way to fulfil their obligations to Indigenous peoples.
7. B) Indigenous women must be part of all decision-making processes when it informs their safety, well-being and is related to ending violence against Indigenous women in all its forms.
 - i. Investment in building leadership capacity and mentorship for Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQ+ individuals.

8. C) A national body must be legislated in order to create a formalized structure and indicate the critical importance of Ending Violence of Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQ+ individuals.
 - i. Through this office, a sustained Indigenous-specific national strategy to end violence should be co-developed with Indigenous organizations, peoples and nations across the country.
 - ii. Any national strategy must consider the role of the entire community in ending violence against Indigenous women and girls.
 - iii. There must be a component of the strategy that addresses the specific nature of sexual violence and human trafficking.
 - iv. The national strategy must be cross-sectoral and include regional perspectives as it is necessary to be responsive to all Indigenous women and girls.
 - v. In order to address inequities there must be the capacity funding filtered directly to Indigenous community organizations to participate as well as core, sustainable funding for their programs.
 - vi. Specific attention paid must be paid to improving data collection and research.
9. D) In recognition of the past and present-day colonialism that has infiltrated the Canadian government and its related infrastructure, there must be a federal, provincial and territorial gender-based analysis and review of all laws, policies, and institutions under the purview of the government to ensure that they consider

how the aforementioned impacts the safety of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQ+ individuals.

Ending Violence Against Indigenous Women in Ontario: The role of OFIFC

10. The epidemic of violence that has invaded Indigenous communities for decades, came to the forefront of mainstream Ontario consciousness with the 1989 release of “Breaking Free” a report by the Ontario Native Women’s Association.ⁱ This report garnered much needed attention on the issue of family violence in Indigenous communities and called for immediate action.ⁱⁱ In response, the Aboriginal Family Violence Joint Steering Committee was established in June 1991, a partnership between the Government of Ontario and eight Indigenous organizations.ⁱⁱⁱ After community consultations with over six thousand Indigenous people and two-hundred fifty communities, the Aboriginal Family Healing Strategy was created to address family violence in a culturally-responsive way for Indigenous communities in Ontario and continues to this day [See Appendix A].^{iv} The OFIFC, as co-chair to the Joint Steering Committee, played a critical role in the development of this ground-breaking strategy to address family violence, and continues this work in the fight to end violence against Indigenous women.
11. As heard throughout the span of the Truth Gathering Process of the National Inquiry and numerous reports entered in as exhibits, the rate at which Indigenous women experience violence is disproportionately higher than non-Indigenous women and Indigenous men.^v This ongoing disparity and lack of progress in addressing the issue prompted the OFIFC and the Ontario Native Women’s

Association (ONWA) to host “A Summit to End Violence Against Aboriginal Women” on March 20, 2007.^{vi} The Summit brought together Indigenous community leadership^{vii} from across Ontario to develop a framework for a strategy to end violence against Aboriginal women.^{viii} The *Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Aboriginal Women* (hereinafter *Strategic Framework*) is based on eleven foundational principles and addresses eight strategic directions, it was critical to participants, and remains so, that the framework be flexible in nature and based on a continuum of approaches [See Appendix B]. This first Summit spurred five additional gatherings between 2008-2012 where Indigenous women came together to advocate for change within key areas relating to violence (i.e. Justice, Child Welfare).^{ix} As issues of violence against Indigenous women came to the forefront the provincial government became more cognizant that in order to address the issue, Indigenous partner organizations and ministries must collectivize.

12. In 2010 the Ontario government formally adopted the *Strategic Framework* and formed alongside, five Indigenous provincial organizations^x, the Joint Working Group on Violence Against Aboriginal Women (JWG).^{xi} The ten provincial ministries and five Indigenous organisations met quarterly to discuss and strategize on how best to address and prevent violence against Indigenous women in Ontario. Despite best efforts of those at the table, it became apparent that one strategic policy committee was not efficient to discuss all of the intersecting issues that relate to violence, nor did it bring together key decision-making authorities on the ministry-side. The critical nature of process and

methodology of implementing initiatives was a key consideration in developing next steps for the JWG.

13. A key recommendation cited in the *Strategic Framework* came to fruition almost a decade later through *Walking Together: Ontario's Long-term Strategy to End Violence Against Indigenous Women* (hereinafter "*Walking Together*") (See Appendix C).^{xii} Largely based on the work of Indigenous partners through the JWG^{xiii} and the *Strategic Framework*, this strategy was the first of its kind in Ontario as well as to other jurisdictions across Canada.^{xiv} Based on six key pillars of change^{xv}, *Walking Together* was a cross-sectoral, \$100 million dollar commitment by Ontario to work with Indigenous communities on joint efforts to end violence.
14. A new implementation structure was developed to ensure the pitfalls of the JWG were resolved, this meant creating six provincial committees^{xvi} to address each of the key priority areas and an oversight body, the Executive Committee to End Violence Against Indigenous Women, as a strategic way to ensure all senior ministry officials (i.e. Deputy Ministers and Assistant Deputy Ministers) and Indigenous partner organization leadership were together for decision-making purposes.^{xvii} The Executive Committee and each of the Provincial Committees are structured to ensure all voices are heard at the table, with a co-chair from each the Indigenous and ministry partners' sides.^{xviii} The OFIFC is the Chair of the Indigenous Caucus (i.e. the Executive Committee Co-Chair) as well as the Provincial Committee Co-Chair on the Improved Data and Research Committee. The work being undertaken in Ontario to end violence has been a journey of

building relationships and finding how to reconcile differences while keeping at the centre the common goal of keeping Indigenous women safe. As identified during the Truth Gathering process of the Inquiry, Assistant Deputy Attorney General Juanita Dobson in her testimony spoke to the challenges government partners faced in the process of co-development and collaboration.^{xix} It is not an easy journey to unlearn stereotypes while trying to understand the true nature of Indigenous communities' realities and of the violence that Indigenous women are confronted with on a daily basis. It has been recognized by government and Indigenous leadership through this strategy, that relationship-based practice must be at the foundation of the work and something that must be undertaken together.

Recommendations to the National Inquiry

15. The OFIFC on behalf of member Friendship Centres in Ontario would like to highlight the following strategic pathways to guide the Commissioners and the National Inquiry in understanding how best to address and prevent violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQ+ individuals.

The Problematic Nature of the Utilizing the “Three-Stream Approach” and “Nation to Nation” Relationship with Indigenous People

16. In the province of Ontario, 85 percent of Indigenous people live off-reserve, in cities and towns, while 79.7percent of Indigenous people live off-reserve across Canada.^{xx} The Friendship Centres in Ontario support this large and growing contingent of Indigenous people who practice their cultures and exercise their rights within an urban context. The trend of increased urbanization holds true

across Canada. Urban Indigenous communities today are multi-generational in origin and may organise themselves in distinct ways that reflect culture-based approaches to governance and their inherent rights to self-determination, as affirmed and recognized in the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People* (UNDRIP).^{xxi}

17. It is necessary for the federal government to take an approach to a framework for Indigenous rights that holds legitimacy for the high number of Indigenous people and communities who remain unrepresented through an exclusive ‘nation-to-nation’ relationship model. Conceptions of Indigenous nationhood limited to the political categories of “First Nations, Métis and Inuit” replicate colonial structures and fail to reflect the cultural diversity of Indigenous nations, Indigenous people’s right to self-determination, and the reality of the Indigenous governance landscape in urban communities. Furthermore, this approach stymies non-Indigenous Canadians’ understanding of Indigenous people’s cultural diversity, traditions, and contemporary histories.
18. Ontario Friendship Centres are inherently self-determined entities that have existed since the mid-twentieth century, and continue to this day, as decolonizing institutions. In order for Friendship Centres and other urban Indigenous community-based organizations across Canada to be equitably involved in decision-making processes regarding strategic long-term goals for the safety of Indigenous women, the Inquiry must leave the colonial-centred “three-stream approach” and concept of “nation-to-nation” behind.

“Nothing for us, without us”: Ensuring the inclusion of Indigenous Women’s Voices in Decision-Making

19. Indigenous women in cities and towns across Ontario are community leaders, drivers of community economic development, knowledge keepers, mothers and grandmothers – and inhabit many other roles that women occupy in their communities. Many Friendship Centres are led by highly-skilled Indigenous women who actively advocate for the inclusion of Indigenous voices in local, municipal, regional, and provincial fora. To understand the significance of this ongoing resiliency and change in some spaces, it is important to acknowledge that Indigenous women’s voices historically have been ignored by the imposition of patriarchal colonial mentality. A stark example of this can be seen in the evolution of voting rights and the extension of the franchise in Canada. Indigenous women with Indian status were not allowed to hold office or vote for local Band governments until 1951, when amendments to the federal *Indian Act* removed the restriction.^{xxii} While non-Indigenous women were granted the right to vote in federal elections in 1921,^{xxiii} Indigenous women were allowed to vote in federal elections in 1960, when Canadian government extended the right to vote to all Indigenous people.^{xxiv}

20. We know that the ongoing process of colonisation has worked to strip power from Indigenous women and impose harmful Western cultural conceptions of gender roles and power. To combat this, governments (on all levels), institutions, organizations and other bureaucracies must be re-evaluated to ensure that the voices Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQ+ individuals are included in

decision-making that impacts their lives, particularly with regards to their safety and ending violence.

21. One of the foundational principles in the *Strategic Framework* states that “to be effective, all activities required to address violence against [Indigenous] women must be directed, designed, implemented and controlled by [Indigenous] women.^{xxv} This principle has been implemented as standard practice in all work that OFIFC continues to pursue under *Walking Together* and other initiatives that involve the needs of urban Indigenous women, girls and Friendship Centre communities at large.

22. Due to the lack of historical investment by governments in Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQ+ individuals, in order to have confidence and be empowered in spaces of decision-making and in priority settings, there must be leadership capacity-building for these individuals in a culturally-responsive way. Building the leadership capacity of women in urban Indigenous communities means creating supportive, safe, inclusive environments where Indigenous women are not forced to navigate and overcome colonial or patriarchal views about their lives. Evidence of this can be seen across Friendship Centre communities, where Indigenous women take leadership roles across sectors in community economic development, advocacy, service delivery, and Traditional Knowledge, in culturally-safe environments that seek to empower women.

23. It also means supporting Indigenous women and youth to pursue a wide-range of mentorship opportunities. Indigenous youth are the fastest growing population in

Canada, with 42% of Indigenous people in Ontario under the age of 25 and a median age of 29.8 in off-reserve communities (compared to a median age of 40.2 for non-Indigenous people).^{xxvi} Further, youth under the age of 25 account for approximately 40% of the Indigenous female population living off-reserve across Canada.^{xxvii} This indicates the significant potential in urban Indigenous communities, and the urgent need to better support young Indigenous women to build their careers, connect to their culture, and build their communities. It is critical that a breadth of mentorship opportunities are available to Indigenous youth as it will improve choice in labour market, access to meaningful work, and greater participation in one's community and larger society.

Indigenous Education Knowledge Network

24. Mentorship for Indigenous female youth is the focus of the OFIFC's Indigenous Education Knowledge Network (IEKN) research initiative. The IEKN supports Indigenous mentors in four Friendship Centre communities across Ontario.^{xxviii} The Indigenous Mentors are using culture-based approaches to support Indigenous students, helping them to achieve self-defined success, and address systemic violence against Indigenous girls and young women through project activities. The four sites for this project span across Ontario. The project also includes knowledge mobilization activities and the development of resources for educators and other stakeholders.

Lasting Change: A National Response

25. It was a consistent theme throughout the Truth Gathering Process of the Inquiry that in order to find solutions to issues that exacerbate violence faced by

Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQ+ individuals there must be strong political will and leadership. For example, Dr. Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond recognized the vital need for leadership on the federal level for matters relating to child welfare, and posited the requirement for an independent officer as a national Indigenous children’s commissioner.^{xxix} Recently, outside of the scope of the National Inquiry Hearings, as it was released shortly thereafter, the federal Office of the Criminal Investigator published its 45th annual report”.^{xxx} Ivan Zinger, the Correctional Investigator of Canada spoke to the lack of progress on the justice-specific Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action . In response he states explicitly that,

“Devolution of correctional power will only happen if there is courageous and visionary leadership at the top of the Correctional Service – a vision and commitment that must be duly supported and directed by the Government of Canada.”^{xxxi}

We have seen that the lack of appropriate federal, provincial and territorial leadership can create debilitating harm to Indigenous communities and can exacerbate the issues that allow violence to persist.

26. OFIFC recommends a true commitment for change must be reflected with the creation of a National Secretariat for the Safety of Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQ+ individuals. Establishing a legislated formalized structure to address and prevent violence against Indigenous women will set a precedent and show not only to all Canadians but those in the international sphere that Canada acknowledges the issue is of national importance.

National Strategy

27. As indicated in the countless reports documented by the National Inquiry's Interim Report^{xxxii} and a key recommendation made by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, its Causes and its Consequences in her most recent official visit to Canada^{xxxiii}, there must be a nationally coordinated, cross-sectoral strategy to end violence against Indigenous women. OFIFC recommends that unlike other strategies with a fixed mandate, this National Strategy must be ongoing and sustainable initiative lead by the National Secretariat for the Safety of Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQ+ individuals. The following are key considerations that any national strategy must include:

i) Co-development

28. As it is explained in the *Urban Indigenous Action Plan* [See Appendix D], co-development requires that government partners directly involve Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQ+ individuals and organizations that represent their best interests, as equal partners in planning, developing, implementing and evaluating policies, programs and strategies that impact their lives. "This allows for more focus on Indigenous strengths, resiliency, autonomy and culture and builds on self-determining networks and infrastructures, thereby strengthening Indigenous communities and nurturing cultural identity."^{xxxiv}
29. It must be acknowledged by Canada that they alone are unable to create lasting and effective change for the safety of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQ+

individuals. In establishing a National Secretariat they must ensure that all facets of its infrastructure are guided by the assumption that Indigenous women's voices must be included at all decision-making levels and for policy levers to be implemented to ensure it is never overlooked. As discussed above, a prime example of co-development between government and Indigenous partners has been the creation and implementation of the *Walking Together Strategy*. This strategy ensures that each committee is co-chaired by both an Indigenous representative and by the relevant ministry lead (i.e. Policing and Justice is co-chaired by the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services). At all stages of overseeing the strategy, Indigenous partner organizations are at the table to ensure that the focus remains on the safety and well-being of Indigenous women.

ii) Culturally-relevant foundation

30. A National Strategy to end violence must be grounded in culturally-responsive approaches to address the safety concerns of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQ+ individuals. The presence of violence against Indigenous women is directly attributable to colonial structures that have disrupted Indigenous identity formation and have led to intergenerational trauma and cycles of violence.^{xxxv} Learning about and understanding one's roles and responsibilities is a key piece of identity formation, our communities hold a wealth of cultural teachings and practices which support this development. Culture is at the heart of the work being done in all Friendship Centres and with the recent addition of the Cultural

Resource Coordinator (CRC) Program, we have seen a heightened integration of all cultural programming and overall well-being in communities.

Cultural Resource Coordinator (CRC) Program

31. The CRC program was designed by the OFIFC to address the multigenerational effects of trauma while promoting reconciliation and healing through delivery of prevention-focused and culturally responsive supports. The program is guided by the principle that improving outcomes and opportunities for Indigenous children, youth, and families requires a fundamental system change that empowers Indigenous communities to take the lead in the design and delivery of effective, preventative, wholistic, and culturally grounded services. The CRC program coordinates and supports all aspects of cultural knowledge transfer and planning within the Friendship Centre and works to liaise with other local community-based service providers and organizations.

32. While many CRCs spend a lot of time engaging with children and youth, the program is also accessed by many adults who have not previously received cultural teachings as a result of residential school legacies or family disconnection. Program participants discuss the impact that the CRC program has had by involving youth in rites of passage and ceremonies that mark important life transitions. Participation in ceremonies is a vital part of a young person's education, as it invites them to step into new roles and responsibilities, understand how they fit into the community, and have this moment acknowledged by the broader community. Adult community members and Elders

view this youth engagement as a form of protection, as knowledge of one's roles and responsibilities and teaches individuals how to live in a way that balances physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health. Participants in the CRC program believe that this knowledge decreases the likelihood that the individual will engage in violent behaviour in the future, and helps individuals identify and critically assess situations which might negatively impact them.

33. Friendship Centres have emphasized the critical role of the CRC program in facilitating personal and collective healing. Friendship Centres have identified healing as a nonlinear, responsive, ongoing process through which individuals and communities move from a place of unhealthy coping mechanisms and behaviours, to a place where trauma is acknowledged and processed, and everyday life becomes grounded in positive ways of interacting and living together. At several sites, participants shared that the CRC program equipped them to better manage anger and depression. One participant noted that for many years they had struggled with drinking and high-risk behaviours. By learning about their culture and building a positive Indigenous identity as they accessed the CRC program, they were able to begin their healing journey and move away from harmful behaviours and activities. They felt that the program promotes healing by giving people the opportunity to participate in cultural activities, which builds understandings of one's roles and responsibilities within the community. Many CRC program participants reported an increase in self-confidence, sense of belonging and purpose, and a decrease in negative

behaviours that contribute to family violence as a result of their participation in the program.

34. We have seen that reclaiming cultural identity has led to empowerment in other facets of an individual's life, in that having the confidence in one's self can lead to a variety of opportunities that can mitigate the exacerbating factors which often lead to violence. Participants have self-reported that the concrete impacts of this ongoing healing process include increased self-sufficiency, improved mental health, and a better understanding of how to positively contribute to their community and society more broadly.

Training

35. It is critical that any Indigenous cultural competency training (ICCT) being undertaken by non-Indigenous community service providers (i.e. government services and others) be Indigenous controlled and delivered by Indigenous people. It was a common theme throughout the National Inquiry's Truth Gathering Process to hear of training initiatives that were either online modules or one-time only day-long workshops. It is insufficient and irresponsible for government services to provide online, one-time only trainings as well as trainings only to specific individuals, rather than institutional-wide trainings, on Indigenous cultural awareness or sensitivity. It is critical that training on Indigenous cultural awareness is ongoing and professional development requirements reflect the need to be trained on this in-person. Trainings should be delivered by Indigenous organizations with specific modules focused on Indigenous women, girls and 2SQ+ individuals. Training must come from a

strengths-based perspective and focus on impacts of colonialization as well as the resiliency of Indigenous people and communities.

36. The OFIFC's ICCT Framework was initially established in 2012 with the intention of providing additional capacity support to mainstream service providers who identified as serving a largely Indigenous participant base. Since its launch, over 10,000 participants across multiple service sectors have now completed the training provided through OFIFC. The ICCT Program provides an opportunity for government, municipalities, public and private organisations/agencies to acquire knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that are essential to developing and maintaining a positive and productive relationship with Indigenous people. This training program ensures a safe learning environment for all learners specifically focusing on specific service sectors. OFIFC's ICCT program targets front line workers, middle management, and senior management and governance levels.
37. It is important to note that the entire training program utilizes an "in-person" delivery approach. The importance of the building of relationships with Indigenous People requires the "in-person" method in comparison to the on-line curriculum that is offered elsewhere. The process of Indigenous Cultural and Impact knowledge transfer, Indigenous Reciprocity skill development, Indigenous Relationship building and implementation requires a multi-layered Indigenous pedagogy approach. Dedication of time and resources, commitment and a willingness to promote change will ensure any organisation in reaching a level of true Reconciliation.

38. ICCT Cycle 1-4 is a graduated format wherein each cycle builds upon the former and continues to emphasize the rebuilding and strengthening of relationships. While moving the organisations forward on the cultural competency continuum furthering the host organization in mapping and implementing a viable pathway towards cultural competency.

iii) Role of the Entire Community

39. As described by the foundational principles of the *Strategic Framework*, “Violence against [Indigenous] women is always done within the context of a community, and as such, the community as a whole has a central role to play in addressing the issue.”^{xxxvi} Since the early beginnings of the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy to address family violence to the unique program of Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin (I am a Kind Man), Friendship Centres across Ontario are working to involve all members of their community in the fight to end violence.

Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin

40. Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin comes from the Anishinaabemowin (Ojibway) for “I am a Kind Man”. In 2005 OFIFC convened the Indigenous Male Voices Advisory Committee, who played a vital role in shaping the vision of the program. This vision built upon the work of the OFIFC and the White Ribbon Campaign. Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin was the name of the Indigenous men’s anti-violence program in Thunder Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre, and was gifted by the late Elder Peter O’Chiese, and offered by the late Sandra Kakeeway for the

province-wide program. In 2011, Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin became a fully funded program with five pilot sites and since then has expanded to twenty-four Friendship Centres and two community delivery sites, via enhanced provincial investments.

41. The overall purpose of the Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin program is to engage men and boys to speak out and end all forms of violence towards Indigenous women. The program works to reclaim and revitalise male responsibility to end violence; ensure access to Indigenous cultural values and traditions; increase resiliency by empowering men to acknowledge and resolve trauma; and to improve men's wellbeing and foster overall community wellness.
42. Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin functions as both a self-referral and a court-referred community-based diversion program. For example, Indigenous men or male youth either at the pre-charge stage or as conditional sentence often are referred to Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin as an alternative to Partner Assault Response (PAR) programs or court-directed agreement/diversion programs.
43. The program has a variety of components including one-to-one services between the individual and the program coordinator:
 - Peer counselling/support;
 - Assistance with accessing culture based programming and services related to ending violence
 - Advocacy for men involved with Child and Family Service Agencies

- Assistance with probation and parole, and reintegration services post-incarceration, such as, understanding court orders, strong communication and case-management practices with involved Friendship Centre programs, supporting clients with letters of apology, and/or referrals)
 - Support opportunities for men to fulfill the requirements of court-signed agreements and facilitate diversion participation
 - Creating safe (mentally, emotionally, physically, spiritually) spaces and opportunities for men to build healthy relationships with their family;
 - Referrals to other programs and agencies for mental health and addictions services, housing and emergency shelter, legal support, primary health care, food security, etc;
 - Non-residential crisis intervention supports and
 - Safety planning
44. Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin seeks to support the needs of group-based learning through the delivery of goal oriented, twelve-week module program model. The approach is based on the Anishinaabe cultural and philosophical foundations, such as the Seven Grandfather Teachings, but can be adapted to local Indigenous knowledge and practices.
45. The program participants are also involved with a variety of other group-based activities such as workshops, public education and awareness building initiatives, community and cultural events, support groups and ceremonial activities (i.e. healing circles, land-based activities, ceremonies). Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin works to integrate programming when possible throughout the Friendship Centre,

but also has a goal to reach a population beyond those who access the Centre. Participants work together to develop ending violence resources relevant to the local community, organize awareness building initiatives such as marches, rallies, arts-based campaigns, forums, Take Back the Night events and social media campaigns.

46. Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin continues to show reduced stigma around conversations on violence against Indigenous women and provides wholistic rehabilitative supports to offenders. It continues to play a vital role in the wellbeing of Friendship Centre communities and works to build relationships between mainstream institutions.

Kanawayhitowin

47. Kanawayhitowin is a campaign mobilized by Friendship Centres to raise awareness about the signs of violence against Indigenous women. The word Kanawayhitowin is a Cree word that translates to “taking caring of each other’s spirit”, reflecting the responsibility of the entire community to address violence against Indigenous women. This initiative arose from the desire of community members to learn how to stand up against violence and support family members or friends that may require support.
48. The overall goal is to implement community and regional informational and educational initiatives to prevent, reduce and eliminate violence against women in Indigenous communities that reflect local traditional Indigenous approaches to community wellbeing. Kanawayhitowin is more than just a province-wide

campaign to end violence, it is also a training that prepares adult and youth community facilitators to develop safety plans, strategies to end violence and awareness initiatives for their local Friendship Centres communities. [See Appendix E for more information and resources on Kanawayhitowin].

Youth Prevention-based Programming

49. As mentioned above, the OFIFC and Friendship Centres promote prevention and strengths-based culturally responsive programming to urban Indigenous communities. An important way to mitigate the factors that sometimes lead to violent behavior or exacerbate violence, is to develop prevention-based programs and services for children and youth. In Ontario, the OFIFC, along with the Métis Nation of Ontario and the Ontario Native Women's Association prepared *A Collaborative Submission Regarding A Provincial Aboriginal Children and Youth Strategy*, which was provided to the Ontario Minister of Children and Youth Services in 2014. The submission outlines key processes and approaches required by policy makers to consider in the development of provincial policy frameworks that would recognize and support culture-based prevention supports and programming for urban Indigenous children and youth, delivered by urban Indigenous service providers. This submission was based upon our collective experience and expertise working with local communities over the past five decades supporting urban Indigenous children and youth (See Appendix F). Aligned with this, the OFIFC offers a wide range of children and youth programs for delivery by Friendship Centres, which are tailored by each of the communities to meet the unique needs of their members. The following is a non-exhaustive list

some of these programs [See Appendix G for more information on OFIFC Programs]:

Children Who Witness Violence (CWWV) Program

50. The goal of this program is to address intergenerational experiences of violence and to mitigate the impact of witnessing violence for children and families. The program provides supports to Indigenous parents/caregivers, community partners and organizations, for the development of tools to develop and strengthen individual, familial, and community responses to ending violence against women and children.
51. The CCWV Program provides one-to-one support, counselling and group interventions for urban Indigenous children ages 7-14 who have been exposed to some form of violence. The program incorporates tools to support positive development and healthy choices for children as they grow. It is the intention of the program that children involved be able to recognise experienced violent behavior and develop an understanding that violence is not a normal aspect of life. Through this process, children and families will be able to assess consequences of violent behavior and learn healthy alternative approaches. The design of this program is based on one fundamental principle: to develop healthy familial relationships and an understanding of violence through a wholistic model of care that is underpinned by cultural knowledge.
52. Children suffer the impact of violence physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually accompanied by feelings of anger, despair, and sadness. The range of effects resulting from exposure to violence on children may include social and

academic challenges, fears and worries about themselves, their sibling(s) and parent safety. Somatic complaints, intrusive thoughts, compromised coping skills and attachment issues are also identified as common responses. In addition, children living and struggling with violence issues within their family homes are further traumatized when they are forced to flee their homes, compounded further by issues of poverty, housing insecurity, inadequate basic life skills, low education, drug abuse and suicidal ideation. Children are impacted and actively respond to these experiences with various coping mechanisms. These responses impact individuals at various stages of their life and require wholistic supports in order to manage the trauma and its correlated behaviour.

53. To address this, the CWWV program is grounded in Indigenous cultural and developmental perspectives and approaches to healing that cater to individualized and family needs. This program takes a wholistic approach to providing children and families with cultural resources, education, knowledge and personal supports. The program objective is to foster child development through the lens of the Indigenous life cycle wheel and healing continuum. Part of this program includes the integration of Indigenous communities, school groups, external service providers and internal Friendship Centre programming.

Youth Life Promotion (YLP) / Youth Culture Camps

54. The goal of the YLP program is to support wholistic development and provide a continuum of care serves for youth at-risk, including addressing physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health and well-being. This program is founded on principles of self-determination and cultural reclamation for urban Indigenous

youth. A core aspect of YLP are Youth Culture Camps. These camps provide youth with access to water- and land-based activities, one-to-one supports, and group based activities.

55. Another core component of the YLP program is the relationship-building that occurs between youth and Elders / Traditional Knowledge Keepers. These knowledges and ways of being are inherently active and connect with land-based learning to help ground the program in culture and foster positive identities.
56. The programs listed above are by no means exhaustive, nor limited to the range of approaches that can be taken in communities to end violence. Friendship Centres provide a wide variety of culturally-responsive, preventative and strengths-based programming to urban Indigenous community members, all of which serve to mitigate causal factors that lead to violence. For more information on Friendship Centre programs please see Appendix G.

iv) Cross-Sectoral Approach

57. To be effective, a national strategy to address and prevent violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQ+ individuals must be cross-sectoral in nature. The same approach is taken in the *Walking Together Strategy* where ten separate government ministries made the commitment to undertake initiatives that will prevent violence and promote the safety of Indigenous women. This is inherently reflected in the topics of the hearings during the National Inquiry's Truth Gathering process. There must be key institutional shifts in the areas of policing and the justice system, victim services program delivery (when it is police-run), child welfare system (both provincially and federally), health and

social services delivery, housing and the shelter system, education and training, labour market, and all other arenas that impact the safety of Indigenous women. There must be a commitment made by all relevant federal departments and corresponding provinces and territorial ministries to effect change.

Child Welfare – Transformative Approach Required

58. As stated elsewhere, the disproportionate rate of Indigenous child apprehensions into child welfare systems across Canada is at “crisis” levels. Evidence heard and documented throughout the National Inquiry establish connections and seek to address harms and violence experienced by Indigenous women and girls involved in child welfare systems and institutions.^{xxxvii} However, current federal approaches, including the *Federal Government’s Commitment to Action for Indigenous Child and Family Services Reform*^{xxxviii}, that are underway to “fix” the crisis are flawed in that providing more resources to provincially governed child welfare institutions will not result in better outcomes and will not lead to substantive reductions of Indigenous children in care. Rather, to be transformative, federal and provincial policy and decision makers need to recognize and support preventative approaches for Indigenous children and families that are governed and delivered by community-based Indigenous service providers, beyond child welfare systems and their associated institutions. The federal government should re-conceptualize its First Nations Child and Family Services (FNCFS) program to respect the contextual realities of diverse Indigenous communities, such as urban communities, and begin to recognize and support community-based approaches including wellbeing promotion,

prevention, early intervention and family reunification that are led by Indigenous designed and developed urban organizations (e.g. recognize self-determination in urban Indigenous service delivery). In this way, the FNCFS program would need to be transformed beyond its current child welfare designation and delegation model and begin to fund community based and governed Indigenous service providers.

59. The proposed national strategy to end violence against Indigenous women and girls should seek to address these gaps in child welfare and recommend action that will ensure legitimate, community-based and controlled urban Indigenous service provision is recognized and supported in both provincial and federal child welfare legislation, alongside corresponding robust funding mechanisms. The OFIFC has continuously advocated for the above mentioned Friendship Centre prevention programs to be recognized and supported within the context of policy reform in both federal and provincial child welfare service systems. [See Appendix H].^{xxxix}

v) Sexual Violence and Human Trafficking

60. Sexual violence has often been a silent issue in Indigenous communities. Topics of incest and child sexual abuse are often taboo and have become a normalized part of the family or the community.^{xl} Like other forms of violence, sexual violence is rooted in colonialism and results from the multigenerational trauma caused by the residential school system, the Sixties Scoop and other harms done through collusion of the Canadian state.^{xli} This was reiterated by Dr. Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond during the National Inquiry's Truth Gathering Process, where she testified

that Indigenous women and girls face highly disproportionate rates of sexualized violence.^{xliii} Developed by the OFIFC and the Ontario Native Women's Association, the *Aboriginal Sexual Violence Action Plan*, is based on the strategic directions of the *Strategic Framework*, and is recommended as a key resource in developing this part of the National Strategy.^{xliiii} According to the *Action Plan* before any work can take place in addressing sexual violence in communities there must be specific supports put in place to ensure the safety of those having the conversation.^{xliiv} The National Inquiry must consider the critical importance of preparing communities with the appropriate safety tools before initiating any engagement strategy to plan for this part of a National Strategy.

61. The current *National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking* is currently under engagement for renewal. It is imperative, as witnessed during the National Inquiry Hearing on Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking, that specific attention is given to the experiences of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQ+ individuals as it relates to trafficking and sexual exploitation. As it currently stands, there is no reference under the *National Action Plan* to specific Indigenous-led supports and funding allocations to community service providers.
62. The Ontario Strategy to End Human Trafficking^{xliiv} as discussed in the testimony of Assistant Deputy Attorney General Juanita Dobson, has a specific pillar dedicated to Indigenous-supports. Under this pillar the strategy focuses on the creation of an awareness campaign, human trafficking community liaisons as well as Indigenous-led project funding for community organizations. As per the evidence tendered at the National Inquiry hearing on Sexual Exploitation^{xlivi},

despite the fact that data is scarce, it is widely understood that Indigenous women and girls are drastically overrepresented in cases of human trafficking. Given this reality, the Indigenous-specific allocation under the provincial strategy in Ontario does not adequately reflect the disproportionate rate that Indigenous women experience human trafficking and sexual exploitation. There is a clear need for a dedicated strategy to end human trafficking with a specific Indigenous gender-based lens that is appropriately resourced. This would undoubtedly be best suited to be coordinated through the proposed National Secretariat as described above.

vi) Capacity Development for Communities

63. Capacity funding for communities to participate in priority setting arenas is integral to any National Strategy. It was highlighted throughout the National Inquiry's Truth Gathering Process that the majority of Indigenous community-based organizations are over-burdened with the high level of reporting requirements attached to government funding.^{xlvii} In order for front-line service delivery experts to partake in policy and strategic planning, there must be specific funding allocations to allow for participation and capacity-building.
64. During the engagement process of the *Urban Indigenous Action Plan*, urban Indigenous service providers identified some of the following issues: competition for, or lack of resources; need to support service provider capacity; and funding administration burden.^{xlviii} The unsustainable and lack of predictable funding has caused an increase in stress on both Indigenous front-line service delivery organizations and the entire local community. When individuals and families are

unable to depend on programs and services in their own community it may exacerbate trust issues they may already have. OFIFC recommends that Indigenous community organisations must have predictable, core funding for their agency as well as programs that support the safety of Indigenous women, girls, 2SLGBTQ+ individuals and their families.

vii) Improved Data Collection and Research

65. The first direction under the *Strategic Framework* states the need to undertake “comprehensive research and improve data collection related to violence against Indigenous women that will inform and guide policy development.”^{xlix} The severe lack of data has been a consistent issue that has contributed to the dismissiveness of violence being perpetrated against Indigenous women.
66. Implementing appropriate data collection standards that stray from the three-stream approach model will ensure that the voices of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQ+ individuals are not lost in arbitrary designations they may not in fact identify with.
67. Indigenous self-identification data collection standards must be aligned with the spirit and intent of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* to support the fundamental importance of Indigenous cultural expression and self-determination. It is therefore imperative that data collection processes reflect Indigenous culture and nationhood, capturing the diversity of Indigenous people who access public services. Indigenous self-identity categories limited to the political categories of “First Nations, Métis and Inuit” fail to reflect a true picture of

the Indigenous population and landscape. Specific cultural designations will result in information relevant to policy implementation and service and program supports that meet the needs of Indigenous individuals and communities across the province. In front-line service settings this information is necessary to ensure culturally-appropriate service, including language of service, spiritual accommodations, and other required supports.

68. Examples include, identifying needs within specific sectors for increased access to services in Anishnaabemowin or Cayuga. A ‘First Nation’ data set will not identify this need given “First Nation” is not a distinct culture or language. Another example is offering smudging as a basic spiritual support, appropriate in the Anishnaabe culture but not practiced by the Haudenosaune. Having a better understanding of the specific cultural make-up of a population, either geographically or by client group, will allow services for Indigenous people to be delivered in a culturally appropriate manner and will allow policy to be developed in a similarly culturally-informed manner.
69. For decades the OFIFC has been practicing community-driven research with Friendship Centres and in 2012 created the *USAI Research Framework* to guide all research projects [See Appendix I]. It is recommended that any research methodology utilised by a National Strategy be community-driven as opposed to community-based or placed models, this ensures that communities have full control over research priorities, processes, resources and actions coming out of the research undertaken. OFIFC emphasizes four principles relating to research, utility; self-voicing; access; and inter-relationality, all of which are implemented in

each research project facilitated by OFIFC [See Appendix J for OFIFC Research Publications].¹

Ceremony and Transitions Research Project

70. Currently an initiative under the *Walking Together Strategy*, the Ceremony and Transitions Research Project explores the role of ceremony with youth as a mechanism of violence prevention that can contribute to the elimination of violence against Indigenous women, as well as a healing tool that can support youth who have experienced gendered violence. The Ceremony and Transitions Project works with Indigenous communities to:

- 1) Explore the contemporary landscape of ceremonies and culturally-grounded transitions with Indigenous youth in Ontario, and
- 2) Explore how these ceremonies constitute promising practices for eliminating violence against Indigenous women.

71. As this project progresses we have seen that many communities are already utilising ceremonies and traditional practices as a methodology of violence prevention. It is just now through the funding of a specific project that communities have the capacity to collect and record the outcomes and impact ceremony has in their communities.

Recognizing Colonialism: Past, Present and Prevention for our Future Generations

72. It is widely understood that the invasive process of colonialism has disrupted the natural balance and traditional ways of being in Indigenous communities across

Turtle Island. It is important to recognize that colonial and patriarchal consciousness exists in the present day by way of institutional and structural racism, stereotypes perpetrated by mainstream society and state-wide collusion through systems that are inherently meant to protect the safety, well-being and human rights of all living in Canada. In order for the proposed National Secretariat to be successful in bringing together the voices of, and creating safety for, Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQ+ individuals, there must be systematic shifts with regards to how all levels of government operate.

73. On February 14, 2018 the Prime Minister of Canada announced the “Principles Respecting the Government of Canada’s Relationship with Indigenous Peoples”^{li} alongside the announcement of the creation of a “Recognition and Implementation of Indigenous Rights Framework.”^{lii} The preamble of the *Principles* document specifically refers to the Government of Canada’s “[commitment] to achieving reconciliation with Indigenous peoples through a renewed, nation-to-nation, government-to-government, and Inuit-Crown relationship....”^{liii}, and as discussed on pg. 10 of this submission, the OFIFC believes that it is necessary that the federal government take an approach to reconciliation that holds legitimacy for the high number of Indigenous people and communities who remain unrepresented through the aforementioned categories.
74. In addition to this complete lack of focus on and attention to the growing urban Indigenous population, neither the *Principles* nor proposed *Rights Framework* address the issue of violence against Indigenous women or propose the use of a gendered-lens in implementing either of these initiatives. This raises several

concerns as to how the Government of Canada expects that a review of all laws and policies in accordance with the *Principles* will resolve safety concerns for Indigenous women and their right to live free from violence as well as doubts that the *Rights Framework* will be able to adequately the needs of urban Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQ individuals.

75. If we return to the *Strategic Framework* Recommendation #3 says the following:

“That through the intensive process of examination, amendment and/or replacement, all legislation, policy, funding and programming processes ensure [Indigenous] women are protected from all forms of violence and abuse”^{iv}

This recommendation is supported by another that proposes an Indigenous women-specific “gender-based analysis be developed by [Indigenous] women in Ontario and be applied broadly by all levels of government.”^{iv} Building on the work envisioned over a decade ago, the OFIFC recommends that through the proposed forum of the National Secretariat on the Safety of Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQ+ individuals, a fulsome review of Government (on all levels) laws, policies, and institutions be undertaken with the key objective of ending violence in all its forms.

76. The range of hearing topics hosted by the National Inquiry has demonstrated the far-reach that government has when it comes to safety of Indigenous women. There must be substantial changes in the child welfare system; the criminal justice system, including special attention to all police services and corrections; the health care system; social services; housing and the shelter system; education; the private sector (including resource extraction corporations) and numerous other specific forums in which governments and their agencies interact

with Indigenous women and their communities. The effectiveness of having a national approach to ending violence will only be useful if there are zero institutional impediments that could potentially halt its progress.

Our Culture is Our Resiliency: Concluding Remarks

“The reason women [are] attacked is because women carry our clans and...by carrying our clans, are the ones that hold that land for the next generation. That’s where we get our identity as nations. So if you destroy the women, you destroy the nations, and then you get access to the land.” - Iako’tsira:reh Amanda Lickers (Turtle Clan, Seneca)^{vi}

77. Since contact, the colonial mentality has worked, by targeting Indigenous women and girls, to disrupt entire ways of being for Indigenous nations and communities. Friendship Centres represent a collective response to this colonial disruption, allowing space that builds up Indigenous women and affirms their important roles in communities. For decades, urban Indigenous communities have formed dynamic hubs where individuals and families are free to live and breathe their culture, traditions and ceremonies. Friendship Centres form a complex support system that is shaped in a culture-based approach which is key to the success of the well-being and health of the entire community. In these spaces Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQ+ individuals are celebrated for their gifts and unique roles in their communities. Since its inception the OFIFC has advocated for the continued support and safety of women and their families and will continue this fight so that future generations live free from violence.

Appendix

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Endnotes

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- ^{xiii} With now the new addition of Ganohkwasra Family and Sexual Assault Support Services representing Six Nations of the Grand River Territory and Nishnawbe Aski Nation.

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- xiv National Inquiry into MMIWG Hearing on Sexual Exploitation, Transcript Volume 15 at pg. 371 line 1-9.
- xv Six Key Pillars: Supporting Children, Youth, and Families; Community Safety and Healing; Policing and Justice; Prevention and Awareness; Leadership, Collaboration, Alignment and Accountability; and Improved Data and Research found at pg. 20 of “Walking Together: Ontario’s Long-Term Strategy to End Violence Against Indigenous Women”. Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, 2016.
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- xvi National Inquiry into MMIWG Hearing on Sexual Exploitation Exhibit #23
- xvii National Inquiry into MMIWG Hearing on Sexual Exploitation Exhibit #22
- xviii National Inquiry into MMIWG Hearing on Sexual Exploitation, Transcript Volume 15 pg. 146.
- xix National Inquiry into MMIWG Hearing on Sexual Exploitation, Transcript Volume 15 pg.. 145 lines 4-25 and pg. 146 lines 1-2.
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