



# WALKING TOGETHER: ONTARIO'S LONG-TERM STRATEGY TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST INDIGENOUS WOMEN

## Year One Update – March 2017

On February 23, 2016, Ontario released *Walking Together: Ontario's Long-Term Strategy to End Violence Against Indigenous Women*. The strategy focuses on raising awareness of and preventing violence; providing more effective programs and community services that reflect the priorities of Indigenous leaders and communities; and improving socio-economic conditions that support healing within Indigenous communities.

Over the past year, Ontario and Indigenous partners have come together to plan, design and implement the government's strategy to end the cycle of violence and help ensure Indigenous women and girls can live their lives the way they deserve — with safety and respect. Ontario is making progress across the strategy's six areas of action: 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.

This important work is one of the many steps on Ontario's journey of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. Together, we are making progress, and we will continue to work in partnership to end the threat of violence against Indigenous women and families and ensure future generations of Indigenous women can be safe.

# Family Well-Being Program



*Being implemented in more than 200 communities across Ontario*

Ontario is working with First Nations, Métis, Inuit and urban Indigenous partners to implement the new Family Well-Being program. The program supports Indigenous families and helps communities start to heal from the impacts of intergenerational violence and trauma by providing workers to address frontline needs, supporting community-based programming and offering communities opportunities to design safe spaces where programs and services can be sought and received without stigma.

Building strong relationships with Indigenous partners is a key principle of the Ontario Indigenous Children and Youth Strategy, which puts Indigenous peoples at the centre of decision-making on children and youth services. These relationships are evident in the Family Well-Being programs co-developed by Indigenous partners and the Ontario government. The Family Well-Being program is both part of the Ontario Indigenous Children and Youth Strategy and the Walking Together Strategy — by implementing children, youth, and family services in the communities, for the communities, by the communities. Through the Family Well-Being program, First Nations, Métis, Inuit and urban Indigenous partners have successfully designed locally-responsive programs that are flexible enough to meet their community priorities and responsive enough to support a range of client needs.

These supports include hiring and training more frontline service workers to help serve more families, developing community-based programming and creating safe spaces. This transformative approach to program co-development is leading the way for future programs in Ontario, and for Indigenous communities to design effective programs for their children and families. The Family Well-Being program is already being implemented in more than 200 communities across Ontario, with more communities planning to participate when the program is fully rolled out in spring 2017.

*“At a three-day gathering for training and orientation of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation’s Family Well-Being workers, there was a reflection on how this is a perfect opportunity for a program to be developed from the First Nation up, not a top-down approach. This program will work with some social issues, whether it be with family violence, losses of traditional values in our communities, parenting or sexual abuse.”*

— Deputy Grand Chief  
Anna Betty Achneepineskum,  
Nishnawbe Aski Nation

*“Too often, we find ourselves becoming involved with families at crisis points. With the work we’ve been doing through the Family Well-Being program, I have already experienced being able to work in prevention. We’ve been able to provide a safe cultural space for families as they are supported with programming that promotes wellbeing and togetherness. We’ve also expanded the concept of “family” through involvement with the community at large, which provides families the opportunity to spend time together through inclusive programming that is accessible and engaging.”*

— Métis Family Well-Being Coordinator

*“A mother, overwhelmed with trauma, received support from the Ottawa Inuit Children’s Centre’s Family Well-Being program through one-on-one care during a time of crisis. She received encouragement and guidance to attend a long-term culturally-specific trauma and addictions program. She worked extremely hard during her treatment and as she continues her healing journey, is accessing resources and beginning to advocate for herself so she can be the best person and parent she can be for her kids. She has become connected to a compassionate team that she has confidence will support her and other clients.”*

— Ottawa Inuit Children’s Centre

# Walking Together Implementation Actions

## Supporting Children, Youth and Families

- Introduced funding to support a dedicated Indigenous Education Board Lead in each school board across Ontario.

### Community Safety and Healing

- Launched Ontario's Strategy to End Human Trafficking in June 2016 and established a dedicated Provincial Anti-Human Trafficking Coordination Office.
- Funded Ontario's Indigenous Anti-Human Trafficking Liaisons Program, including hiring liaisons, which will support the development of culturally relevant services for survivors in Indigenous communities throughout the province.
- Introduced the Anti-Human Trafficking Act which, if passed, would enable individuals to apply for restraining orders to protect themselves from human traffickers and make it easier for survivors to obtain compensation and rebuild their lives.
- Supported expansion of victim services at Aboriginal Legal Services.
- Provided \$250,000 per year received from the Government of Canada as stable funding to Nishnawbe-Aski Legal Services Corporation to support victim services.
- Hired an independent consultant to develop an Indigenous specific healing program for domestic violence offenders.
- Enhanced cultural competency training for frontline community and health providers and for teachers and staff in 15 school boards to date.
- Engaging with Indigenous partners to identify culturally appropriate mental health and addictions services for Indigenous women and their families.

### Leadership, Collaboration, Alignment and Accountability

- Hosting the fifth National Indigenous Women's Summit in Toronto from March 6-8, 2017, to collaborate on recommendations for future Indigenous women's empowerment initiatives.
- Working with Indigenous partners to establish a new governance structure that will oversee implementation of the long-term strategy.

### Improved Data and Research

- Monitoring progress made under the strategy to ensure commitments are fulfilled.

## Policing and Justice

- Incorporated Indigenous sexual assault victims' experiences in Crown Attorney training and as part of six regional sexual violence conferences held across the province for Crown Attorneys, police, Victim/Witness Assistance Program staff and other community workers.
- Developing provincewide human trafficking protocols between children's aid and Indigenous child well-being societies and local police services that deal with human trafficking and sexual exploitation.
- Funded three Indigenous-specific research projects that examined key issues specific to reporting of sexual violence and harassment to the police.
- Hosting the second annual Sexual Violence and Harassment Action Plan Conference facilitated by the Ontario Police College in winter 2017.
- Enhancing training in the justice sector to help prevent and respond to violence against Indigenous women:
  - Improving police training curriculum and delivering Indigenous cultural awareness training to all new correctional officers and probation and parole officers
  - Providing advanced tools and training opportunities to First Nations police services
  - Increasing healing programs for Indigenous women involved in correctional services such as programs for women in provincial care that are rooted in Indigenous approaches to healing and education and delivered by Indigenous facilitators.

### Prevention and Awareness

- Launched Indigenous cultural competency training for all Ontario public service employees and political staff, which will be fully implemented by 2021.
- Working with provincial and national Indigenous partners, as well as federal, provincial and territorial governments, on the Pan-Canadian Public Education and Awareness Campaign to end violence against Indigenous women and girls.
- Encouraging Indigenous women to take on leadership roles through the Building Aboriginal Women's Leadership Program.
- Funded Indigenous partners to continue to lead public awareness and education campaigns, including Kanawayhitowin, Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin, and First Nation Draw the Line.





# Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin – I Am a Kind Man

*Increasing from 5 to 26 locations and reaching 600 Indigenous men and youth*

Designed and delivered by the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres, the Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin (I Am a Kind Man) program is engaging Indigenous men and youth to end violence against Indigenous women in their communities. With an investment of \$5.4 million over three years, the province is expanding the program from five to 26 total friendship centres across Ontario, offering violence prevention workshops, peer counselling and healing programming to foster community wellness. Once fully implemented, the Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin expansion will reach 600 Indigenous men and boys with public education and culturally relevant counselling each year.

*“Our numbers for the Kizhaay Circle are small but the Kizhaay Circle is the only program for men anywhere in our area. In the circles, we have had men [bring] up issues of sexual abuse, deep seated grief, suicide in the family, rage and how men have dealt with it, violence in the home and its impact on family members and jealousy leading to spousal abuse. We have made a commitment to keeping the circle going no matter the attendance. Discussions in our group have been deep and painful but for those attending, the circles are beneficial. I am glad to be a part of the circle. The circle is helping me and doing the circle with another agency [has] been very beneficial for group members. We cover a wide range of things we can do to help heal ourselves.”*

**— Boddy Loyie, United Friendship Centre**

