

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

Year Two Update - March 2018



Artwork by Maxine Noel

Introduction

Ontario released *Walking Together: Ontario's Long-Term Strategy to End Violence Against Indigenous Women* on February 23, 2016.

The strategy seeks to confront and eliminate the root causes of this violence, and its initiatives are organized under six key pillars:

- Supporting Children, Youth, and Families
- Community Safety and Healing
- Prevention and Awareness
- Policing and Justice
- Leadership, Collaboration, Alignment and Accountability
- Improved Data and Research.

Through these initiatives, Ontario and Indigenous partners are taking action to keep women, girls, families and communities safe by preventing and responding to violence at an individual and systemic level.



Artwork by Maxine Noel

“Everyone has a role to play in making women and girls feel safe, secure and empowered. We remain committed to working together, in the spirit of co-development and collaboration, to end violence against Indigenous women. We are proud of the work we have accomplished over the past year. As we enter year three of this strategy, we will continue to walk together in partnership, towards a better future for Indigenous women.”

— *Co-chairs of the Executive Committee to End Violence Against Indigenous Women*

2

Addressing Violence Against Indigenous Women In Ontario – Timeline

2007: Summit to End Violence Against Aboriginal Women

OFIFC, ONWA and OWD brought together stakeholders, government agencies and Ministries, and Indigenous organizations to develop the framework for a strategy to end violence against Indigenous women.



2007: A Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Aboriginal Women

ONWA and OFIFC prepared a Strategic Framework document based off of the Summit to End Violence Against Aboriginal Women.



2009, February: Third Summit – Strengthening the Circle

Held by OFIFC, ONWA and MCSS. Focus was on how programs and services could be improved to support Indigenous women and their families.



2008: Second Summit – Achieving Justice

Held by OFIFC, ONWA and MAG. Focus on the justice system as a key mechanism to address Violence Against Indigenous Women.



2011: Fourth Summit – Protecting our Children from Violence – Our Sacred Responsibility

Held by OFIFC, ONWA and MCSS. Focus was on how programs and services could be improved to support Indigenous women and their families.



2010: Joint Working Group on Ending Violence Against Aboriginal Women is formed

Established to identify priorities and policies, programs and services that prevent and reduce violence against Indigenous women. Originally comprised of ONWA, OFIFC, IFN, COO and MNO.



2016: Sunset of the Joint Working Group on Ending Violence Against Aboriginal Women



2012: Fifth Summit – For Generations to Come

Hosted by ONWA and Ministry of Education. Discussions centred on the usage of educational tools and systems to address violence against women.



2016: JWG reconstituted as the Executive Committee to End Violence Against Indigenous Women

The EC continues to build upon the work of the JWG and 2007 Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Aboriginal Women. The Indigenous partners and Ontario government work together on initiatives to EVAIW. NAN and Six Nations join.



2016, February 23: Walking Together: Ontario's Long-Term Strategy to End Violence Against Indigenous Women

This strategy is one phase of the implementation of the 2007 Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Aboriginal Women and commits \$100 Million in funding over 3 years to Ending Violence Against Indigenous Women.



2017: Ontario's Strategy to End Human Trafficking launched

This was committed to under Walking Together.



Collaboration is Key

Since 2010, Ontario and Indigenous partners have been working hand in hand to address violence against Indigenous women. When we launched Walking Together in February 2016, it was the first strategy of its kind in Canada developed in collaboration with Indigenous partners. Two years later, the same principle of equal partnership remains key as we work together to implement Ontario's Long-Term Strategy to End Violence Against Indigenous Women.

To support the successful implementation of Walking Together, Indigenous partners and Ontario created a new governance structure to undertake the work of the strategy. This structure has an executive committee, which provides strategic guidance on the strategy's overall implementation, and six provincial committees that work to implement initiatives under the strategy's six pillars.

The Indigenous Caucus of the Executive Committee to End Violence Against Indigenous Women includes:

- Chiefs of Ontario (COO)
 - Independent First Nations (IFN)
 - Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO)
 - Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN)
 - Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC)
 - Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA)
 - Six Nations of the Grand River Territory
-

1. Supporting Children, Youth and Families

Family Well-Being Program

The Family Well-Being program is a three-year, \$80 million investment under Walking Together and the Ontario Indigenous Children and Youth Strategy. The program supports First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and urban Indigenous partners to deliver prevention- and community-based programming, for children, youth, and families, as well as safe spaces for those at risk of violence.

Now in its second year of implementation, the Family Well-Being program is having a positive impact in

Indigenous communities and achieving the program's goals to:

- Reduce violence in Indigenous families and communities
- Reduce the need to bring Indigenous children into the child welfare and youth justice systems
- Improve the overall health and well-being of the Indigenous communities.



Artwork by Maxine Noel

Violence against Indigenous women does not happen in isolation. For the strategy to succeed, it must address the effects of violence – both past and present – on children and families as a whole.

Program Highlight

The Independent First Nations (IFN) operates an Ending Violence Against Indigenous Women Network that supports the Family Well-Being program and many other initiatives in the strategy. This allows better coordination of programming like Family Well-Being, as the IFN represents 12 remote and non-remote communities across the province – from Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug (Big Trout Lake) First Nation to Walpole Island First Nation.

Over
200
Family Well-Being
workers hired across
Ontario

The most northern
Family Well-Being
program site is in
Fort Severn First Nation

Over
250
service delivery sites
across the province

“The success of the Métis Family Well-being program is seeing the look in a parent’s (or mother’s) eyes that has just been reunited with their child.”

– *Métis Family Well-Being program employee (Métis Nation of Ontario)*

“I don’t know what my family would do without this support.”

– *Métis Family Well-Being program client*

“The Circle of Care program has been running for several months with a positive impact in our community ... Children have been sent home under supervision orders rather than staying in care ... families are being heard, and are creating their own safety plans with the agencies.”

– *Ontario Circle of Care program (Ontario Native Women’s Association)
Family Support Worker*

2. Community Safety and Healing

Breaking the cycle of violence means supporting the health of everyone impacted – from survivors and families, to the offender themselves. By ensuring all parties are healthy – culturally, emotionally, spiritually, mentally, and physically – the cycle of violence is disrupted, and the needs of Indigenous communities met.

Sustain And Enhance Indigenous Victims' Programs

Indigenous organizations across the province deliver services and programming to survivors of violence every day. Under Walking Together, Ontario provides annual funding to these organizations, supporting their work to enhance programs and stabilize their delivery.

Some of the programs and organizations include:

- Mushkegowuk Tribal Council
- Matawa First Nations Management
- Nishnawbe Aski Nation's Men's Healing Initiative, and the Nishnawbe Aski Nation Legal Services Corporation's Legal Victim and Witness Liaison Program
- The Ontario Native Women's Association's (ONWA) Aboriginal Victim and Family Liaison Program (AVFL)

"[The] Aboriginal Victim and Family Liaison Program has been working closely with a woman who was in an extremely abusive relationship. She reached out to ONWA looking for support in helping her learn more about her culture, to gain the strength to end her relationship and work on her self-esteem [and] self-worth ... She shared that she is feeling empowered and that she is feeling stronger every day ... A safety plan has been developed with this individual, consisting of a close friend, community resource contact numbers, and AVFL. She is extremely grateful for the support and keeps in regular contact. She has since left this abusive relationship and continues to focus on her healing journey."

— ONWA Aboriginal Victim and Family Liaison

Ontario's Strategy to End Human Trafficking

In 2016, Ontario launched the Ontario Strategy to End Human Trafficking, which includes a commitment to Indigenous-led approaches that will support culturally relevant services and responses.

Under this strategy, the Ontario Native Women's Association leads the Indigenous Anti-Human Trafficking Liaison Project. The project supports Indigenous

communities in providing survivor-focused and localized responses to human trafficking.

In addition, six liaison positions have been implemented in regions across the province. The positions are hosted by partner organizations, and liaisons support vulnerable Indigenous populations.

Partner Organizations and Associated Regions:

- Métis Nation of Ontario: Ottawa area
- Nishnawbe Aski Nation: northern Ontario
- Native Women's Resource Centre of Toronto: Toronto and urban Golden Horseshoe
- Fort Frances Tribal Area Health Services: Treaty 3 area
- Chiefs of Ontario: Golden Horseshoe reserve communities
- Ontario Native Women's Association: Thunder Bay region

All project sites approach their work through a culturally sensitive, gender-based approach that prioritizes the lived experiences of Indigenous people in finding the best ways to combat human trafficking and sexual exploitation.

"Walking Together has provided the Ontario Native Women's Association and the communities we serve the opportunity to develop and implement strategies to eliminate violence against Indigenous women. This includes the creation of many new programs and supports meant to address the systemic barriers that continue to disproportionately impact the lives of Indigenous women, girls, and LGBTQ2S people in Ontario ... We know that much work remains to restore Indigenous women's roles, and we remain steadfast in our commitment to end violence."

— Dawn Lavell-Harvard, President, Ontario Native Women's Association



ioyan mani

Ontario continues to build relationships with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit partners, and the women they represent. To successfully combat and end violence against Indigenous women, these partners must have support and coordination from all levels of government.



10

Program Highlight: Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin

Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin—/ *Am a Kind Man*—is a program created by the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres. It grew out of a need to design and deliver services that recognizes the importance of engaging men as an integral part in ending all forms of violence against Indigenous women. The program creates space for men to strengthen Indigenous cultural values, and promote wellness and resiliency in their lives.

Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin connects with the pillars of

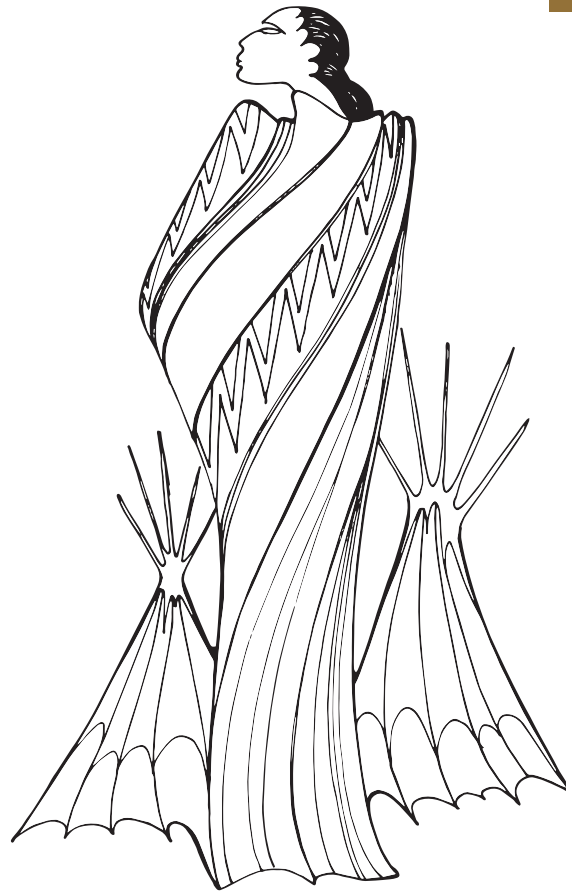
the Walking Together strategy by offering prevention-based programs, promoting and participating in public education initiatives, establishing wise practices in creating safety for Indigenous women and girls, and enhancing connections with Indigenous and non-Indigenous service providers and partners.

Thanks to Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin, Indigenous men and communities have enhanced awareness of the issue of violence against Indigenous women.

Operates in
24 Friendship Centres
and two delivery sites

350+
Indigenous men and youth
received services in 2017-18

400
community
events hosted in
Ontario



Artwork by Maxine Noel

“These sessions have helped me to be a better loving man and father and helped me to feel good about myself and treat others with love and respect. I have also learned how to control my anger by simply walking away ... by putting my mind in a place of happiness, like thinking about nice stuff such as watching my kids grow up happy, strong, healthy and being the best dad I can be. I want to live a happy life with my wife, kids and family.”

— *Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin participant, Thunderbird Friendship Centre, Geraldton*

3. Prevention and Awareness

By challenging racist stereotypes and inherently misogynistic attitudes towards Indigenous women, and by teaching Ontarians of every age and background about Indigenous history and culture, we can change the attitudes and behaviours that lead to violence against Indigenous women.

Safe and Accepting Schools

The Safe and Accepting Schools Initiative (SASI) promotes a safe and inclusive learning environment for Indigenous students across the province, and seeks to disrupt norms, attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate violence against Indigenous women and girls. SASI has many different, culturally relevant projects underway to help students grow and live in a good way.

Examples of SASI project goals:

- Addressing bullying
- Building healthy relationships
- Providing support related to mental health and trauma
- Developing leadership skills
- Creating tools and resources for students, teachers, and school boards.

Indigenous Partner Organizations Involved in SASI:

- Chiefs of Ontario
- Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres
- The Ontario Native Women's Association
- Independent First Nations
- Métis Nation of Ontario.

Kanawayhitowin

Kanawayhitowin – Taking Care of Each Other's Spirit – is an Indigenous prevention and education campaign initiative created by the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres to raise awareness of the signs of violence against women in communities.

The campaign reflects a holistic approach to community healing and wellness and incorporates culturally relevant activities, training, and materials to raise awareness. Kanawayhitowin recognizes the uniqueness of each Indigenous community and focuses on the development of local safety planning and violence prevention. The campaign acknowledges that everyone in the community has a role in ending violence against Indigenous women and girls.

“The reason why I have decided to be part of the Kanawayhitowin committee was because I kept hearing about the project and the training and how much awareness it brings to communities through training and workshops ... I was able to attend a workshop at a youth forum in July, and after that I knew for sure that I needed to get involved and receive the training which has supported me so much.”

— *Kanawayhitowin Youth Participant, N’Amerind Friendship Centre, London*

Through the hard work and dedication of the Friendship Centres and the campaign’s Youth Advisory Committee, Kanawayhitowin has reached over 52,000 people since March 2016.

Indigenous Cultural Competency Training for Ontario Public servants

As part of Ontario’s commitments in Walking Together, and in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Call to Action #57, the province is delivering mandatory cultural competency training across the Ontario Public Service (OPS) by 2021.

The current pilot program is based on the Provincial Health Services Authority of British Columbia’s San’yas Indigenous Cultural Safety Training Program (San’yas Program). It addresses the pervasive effects of colonization, how racist attitudes and biases contribute to low socio-economic and health indicators across Indigenous populations, and how the same prejudices perpetuate high rates of violence against Indigenous women and girls.

The training aims to provide public servants with increased capacity to work with Indigenous communities and leaders to

develop and deliver culturally responsive policies, programs and services that meet the needs of Indigenous peoples and women.

OPS participants:

- Demonstrated greater understanding of the links between colonization and the well-being of Indigenous peoples
- Better understood how systemic inequalities intersect with their work and concrete steps they can take to change their practice
- Better understood how their cultural background influenced the way they think or act.

“By participating in this programming I have become more aware of inequities and ... how [they] affect my work and my relationships with others.”

— *OPS Training Participant*



Artwork by Maxine Noel

4. Policing and Justice

Ontario is committed to working with Indigenous partners to transform the justice system, so that it better supports Indigenous women, understands their needs, and provides more effective programs and supports.

The Safer Ontario Act

On November 2, 2017, Ontario introduced Bill 175: the *Safer Ontario Act*. The act represents the largest policing and public safety transformation in a generation.

The *Safer Ontario Act* aims to build stronger, safer communities, and includes a new *Missing Persons Act* in Ontario and repealing and replacing Ontario's *Police Services Act*.

The Missing Persons Act

The Missing Persons Act will allow police to respond more quickly and effectively to missing persons cases in Ontario. The act will also provide police, in certain circumstances, with authorization to access information or search premises to help locate a missing person.

In addition as a commitment under Walking Together, the new legislation responds to recommendation 93 from the Thunder Bay Seven Youth Inquest.

The Police Services Act

The repeal and replacement of the *Police Services Act* will create a new framework for policing in Ontario to:

- **Support the sustainability of First Nation policing** by expanding options for First Nations to choose their policing service delivery model, and ensuring First Nations receive culturally responsive, sustainable, accountable, and equitable policing that has the flexibility to address specific community needs.
- **Shift to a collaborative approach to community safety and well-being planning** where municipalities are mandated to work with police services and local service providers to develop community safety and well-being plans that proactively address community safety concerns. First Nations can also choose to develop a community safety and well-being plan.

Specific initiatives are also included to help ensure effective and representative civilian governance:

- Requiring boards to consult and consider the needs of members of First Nation, Inuit and Métis communities when preparing strategic plans for the provision of policing
- Requiring members of the police service board to complete mandatory training on human rights and systemic racism.

5. Leadership, Collaboration, Alignment And Accountability

Fifth National Indigenous Women's Summit

The fifth National Indigenous Women's Summit (NIWS V) was held in March, 2017. Ontario hosted NIWS V with the support of the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres and a national steering committee.

The summit brought together approximately 300 delegates from across Canada including First Nation, Métis, Inuit women, youth, Elders and grassroots community representatives. Over two days, delegates participated in workshops, discussions, and lectures. A final report from the Summit is being drafted, and will summarize the workshop recommendations.

"The summit delegates recognized the need for systemic change that will ultimately combat ongoing violence against Indigenous women and girls. The stigmatization and continued colonialist attitudes are the most pervasive threats against Indigenous people, as they permeate directly and indirectly in daily life. Delegates acknowledged that to prevent this continued form of systemic violence, the diversity of Indigenous perspectives; the revitalization of traditional knowledge, legal frameworks, and languages; and the active participating of Indigenous women and girls in decision-making should all be implemented."

– Sylvia Maracle, Executive Director, Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres

Members of the NIWS V National Steering Committee:

- Chiefs of Ontario
 - First Nations Women's Caucus (Assembly of First Nations)
 - Independent First Nations
 - Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami
 - Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak (Métis National Council)
 - Métis Nation of Ontario
 - Native Women's Association of Canada
 - Nishnawbe Aski Nation
 - Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres
 - Ontario Native Women's Association
 - Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada
 - The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples
 - Nishnawbe Aski Nation
-

6. Improved Data And Research

Understanding the scope of violence against Indigenous women and its impact on survivors, their families and communities requires consistent and reliable data and research. Statistics and qualitative research combine to provide a narrative that government and partners can rely on to decide next steps for programs and services under the Strategy.

Performance Measurements Framework

Government and Indigenous partners continue to work together to develop a culturally relevant and community-minded framework for measuring the success of the Strategy. It is important that measurement be conducted in a culturally appropriate way and reflect the needs on the ground for Indigenous women experiencing violence as well as their families. The framework, which includes Indigenous-defined principles, key performance indicators, measures and desired outcomes, recognizes that violence against

Indigenous women is fraught with legacies of colonialism that not only impact the lives of women, but their roles and responsibilities in community.

Personal experiences of violence, however, are difficult to capture in data and measurement. Violent victimization is under-reported among all populations, both to police and to researchers, because there are often feelings of shame and a misconception that victimization is the fault of the person who experiences it. For Indigenous women, intergenerational trauma and legacies of colonialism may play an additional role in under-reporting of violent experiences. This is why research design, data collection, and analysis must be done in a way that respects Indigenous cultures and ways of knowing, and recognizes Indigenous women as integral to Indigenous communities, with traditional roles and responsibilities that build relationships and help bring communities together.

Improving the conduct and quality of research will create more relevant data and help build a better understanding of violence experienced by Indigenous women and girls. In turn, this will provide a stronger basis for program planning and delivery, helping Ontario assess how Walking Together is contributing to reducing violence against Indigenous women.



Artwork by Maxine Noel



Research

Research is a key priority under Walking Together, as it will lead to an increased understanding of the root causes of violence against Indigenous women and help identify better ways to address this violence.

On behalf of the Provincial Committee on Improved Data and Research, the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres will coordinate a research project in 2018 in collaboration with youth in four communities. This project will explore the role of ceremony as a mechanism of violence prevention that can contribute to the elimination of violence against Indigenous women, and a healing tool supporting youth who have experienced gendered violence. Recognizing a link between participation in cultural activities and ceremonies among youth, and the long-term decrease in violence against Indigenous women, this project will also support spaces for youth in which they can disengage from negative behaviours leading to violence that may have been

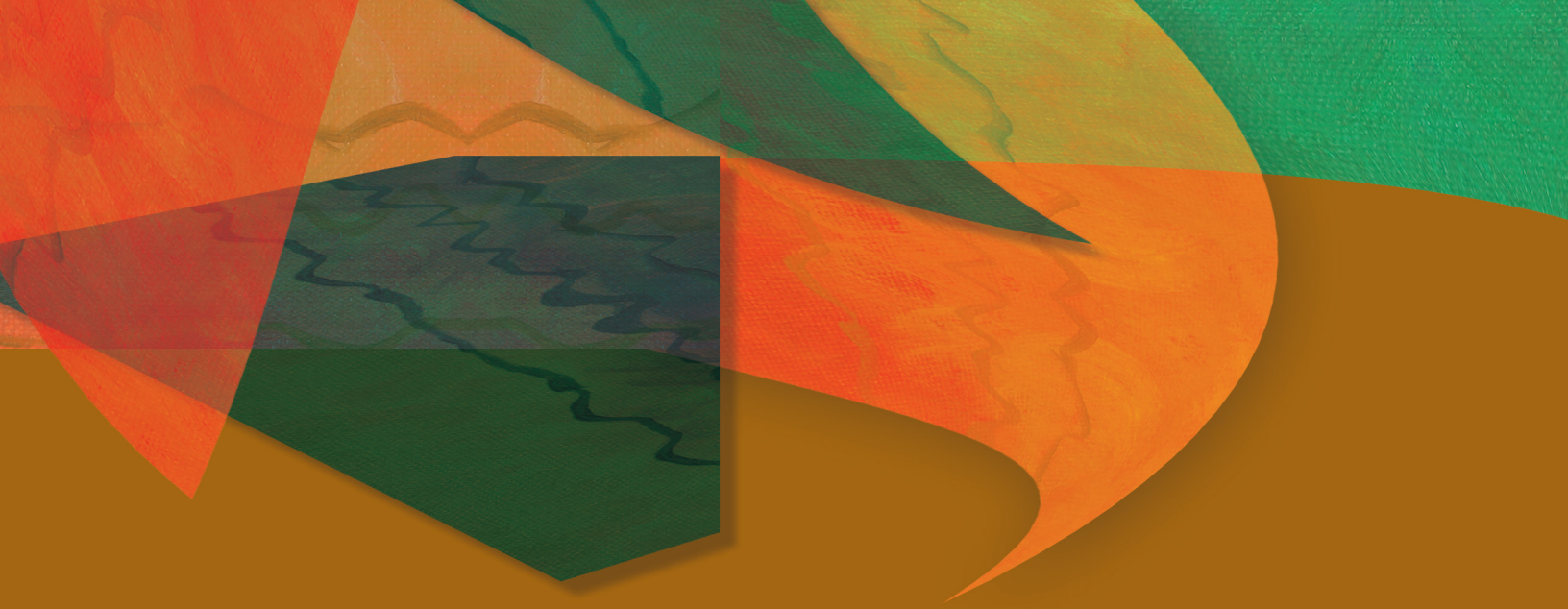
passed on inter-generationally. Giving youth opportunities to learn about ceremony and traditions support them in finding meaning in Indigenous cultural environments where negative and violent behaviors are unacceptable.

Data Collection on Services For Indigenous Women and Children

Through the Ontario Indigenous Children and Youth Strategy, Ontario continues to collaborate with Indigenous partners to co-develop a data, performance measurement and evaluation framework. The Transformed Relationships through Improved Outcomes (TRIO) framework continues to support the development of performance measures for a range of programs, including the design and implementation of the Family Well-Being program.

Conclusion

With each new and growing initiative, and every story of progress on the ground, Walking Together moves Ontario closer to reconciliation with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis partners and communities. The success of this strategy requires sustained effort, and Ontario is committed to building stronger relationships with Indigenous partners, and walking with them in all the years to come.



[ONTARIO.CA/WALKINGTOGETHER](https://ontario.ca/walkingtogether)