

New Brunswick plan to prevent and respond to  
violence against Aboriginal women and girls

2017 - 2021



**New Brunswick's Plan to Prevent and Respond  
to Violence Against Aboriginal Women and Girls**

Published by:

The Government of New Brunswick  
P.O. Box 6000  
Fredericton, NB  
E3B 5H1

**ISBN 978-1-4605-1451-1**

Printed in New Brunswick, Canada

## Introduction

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All individuals have the right to live free from violence and oppression. Unfortunately, even in New Brunswick today, that is not the situation. Violence against Aboriginal women and girls is a pressing issue and is of great concern to the people and the Government of New Brunswick.

There are 15 First Nations Communities in New Brunswick, six Maliseet and nine Mi'kmaq, and a total Aboriginal population of 22,620<sup>1</sup>. There are more than 11,580 Aboriginal women living in New Brunswick, about one-half live on a First Nations Community<sup>2</sup>. For too many of them, violence will form part of their lives. In some cases, this violence may lead to separation from family and loved ones and even death.

In 2013, RCMP led a study on missing and murdered Aboriginal women across all jurisdictions in Canada. It revealed 1,017 incidents of Aboriginal female homicides in the study time frame across Canada, and 164 cases of missing Aboriginal women, totalling 1,181 cases of missing and murdered Aboriginal women<sup>3</sup>.

The RCMP's updated report *Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women: 2015 Update to the National Operational Overview* states that "Aboriginal women continued to be over-represented in terms of their percentage of the Canadian population"<sup>4</sup>. Aboriginal women are only four per cent of the total female population in Canada but accounted for 16 per cent of all female homicides and 11 per cent of all missing females. The report also found that some progress has been made in the rate of solving cases involving missing and murdered Aboriginal women.

In *Victimization of Aboriginal people in Canada, 2014*, "Aboriginal females (220 violent incidents per 1,000), had an overall rate of violent victimization that was double that of Aboriginal males (110 per 1,000), close to triple that of non-Aboriginal females (81 per 1,000) and more than triple that of non-Aboriginal men (66 per 1,000)<sup>5</sup>." Further, Aboriginal females between the ages of 15 and 24, had triple the rate of violent victimization (613 incidents per 1,000) compared to non-Aboriginal females between 15 and 24 (196 per 1,000)<sup>6</sup>. "Aboriginal people (9 per cent) were proportionately more likely than non-Aboriginal people (4 per cent) to have been a victim of spousal violence in the past five years. Specifically, Aboriginal women (10 per cent) were about three times as likely to report being a victim of spousal violence as non-Aboriginal women (3 per cent)<sup>7</sup>." About "(51 per cent) of Aboriginal victims of spousal violence reported experiencing what may be considered the most severe forms of spousal violence (i.e., having been sexually assaulted, beaten, choked or threatened with a gun or knife) compared with just under one-quarter (23 per cent) of non-Aboriginal victims of spousal violence"<sup>8</sup>. Aboriginal women 25 to 44 are five times more likely than other Canadian women of the same age to die of violence<sup>9</sup>.

Violence against Aboriginal women and girls, living both on and off First Nations communities, is a complex issue. Strong leadership and the involvement of various stakeholders are required to develop a coordinated and comprehensive strategy to address the issue.

1. Statistics Canada, 2011 National Household Survey, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 99-011-X2011026.
2. Registered Indian Population by Sex and Residence 2010, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.
3. Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women: A National Operational Overview, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2014.
4. Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women: 2015 Update to the National Operational Overview, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2015.
5. Victimization of Aboriginal people in Canada, p.9, 2014 (CCJS 2016). <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2016001/article/14631-eng.pdf>.
6. Victimization of Aboriginal people in Canada, p.9, 2014 (CCJS 2016). <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2016001/article/14631-eng.pdf>.
7. Victimization of Aboriginal people in Canada, p.3, 2014 (CCJS 2016). <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2016001/article/14631-eng.pdf>.
8. Victimization of Aboriginal people in Canada, p.14, 2014 (CCJS 2016) <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2016001/article/14631-eng.pdf>.
9. Violence Backgrounder, Native Women's Association of Canada, June 2007.



## Vision

The Government of New Brunswick shares the vision articulated by Wabanaki women that all Aboriginal women and their children in the province should live free of violence and abuse and those who have experienced it should have opportunities to heal from the harm<sup>10</sup>.

## Guiding principles

In achieving the vision, the implementation of this plan must be undertaken with respect of the following principles:

- be Aboriginal woman centered;
- be respectful of the values, culture and traditions of Aboriginal people in New Brunswick;
- partner with Aboriginal people and incorporate and use the knowledge of the Aboriginal women and elders;
- complement current and future work by Aboriginal communities, Aboriginal organizations, community partners and provincial and federal government departments; and
- partner with community-based organizations that work in areas of violence prevention, intervention and training to implement the actions outlined in this plan.

## Outcomes and key areas for actions

The Government of New Brunswick is committed to helping families and ensuring access to critical services for all New Brunswickers. The provincial government has committed to addressing the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, including working with partners to end violence against Aboriginal women and girls. To make progress, efforts must be focused in prevention and improving access to services for victims and perpetrators. The four key priority areas identified are the following:

- awareness, education and training;
- intervention and support;
- sexual violence; and
- research and data collection.

Each of the key areas and their objectives is outlined below.

## Key area 1: awareness, education and training

Values and relationships within the Aboriginal communities and between Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people have been distorted by colonization and its effects. The violence in Aboriginal communities and families is a symptom of the systemic issues facing many Aboriginal people in Canada, including intergenerational trauma, victimization, poverty, discrimination, racism and systemic oppression. In many cases, individuals no longer have a clear sense of what are healthy relationships and may lack a sense of self-worth and self-esteem. This can have a significant influence on relationships within families and communities.

A healthy sense of self and identity is important for all people. For Aboriginal youth, the development of a healthy self-image and self-esteem has been undermined by the systemic issues referenced above, the causes of which are often ignored in school curriculum. First Nations youth commit suicide about five to six times more often than non-Aboriginal youth<sup>11</sup>. Providing youth with the supports needed to develop an understanding of whom they are and an appreciation of their communities and nations can help them develop pride in themselves as individuals and as members of their community.

Agencies outside First Nations communities often lack training and understanding of cultural differences and culturally appropriate services and programs. Often, Aboriginal women and girls are required to access services and programs outside of their community. To ensure that Aboriginal women and girls both on and off First Nations communities who are dealing with violence receive the assistance and support they need, service providers both on and off First Nations communities must have knowledge of the complexity of the issue and competencies.

10. A Strategic Framework to End Violence against Wabanaki Women in New Brunswick, The New Brunswick Advisory Committee on Violence against Aboriginal Women, March 2008.

11. Health Canada. Retrieved from <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fniah-spnia/promotion/suicide/index-eng.php>



## Awareness

**Objective:** Increase public awareness and understanding of the severity and prevalence of violence against Aboriginal women and girls and change the misconception about the cause of violence against Aboriginal women and girls so that:

- New Brunswickers understand that they can play a role in recognizing and stopping it;
  - to create a social environment that supports and encourages behavioural change; and
  - to increase awareness of services and supports that are available.
1. Continue to work with partners on the New Brunswick Roundtable on Crime and Public Safety in developing and implementing a comprehensive, multi-year Domestic/Intimate Partner Violence education and awareness campaign focused on engaging communities in addressing this serious societal issue in all New Brunswick communities, including First Nation communities.

**Objective:** Direct awareness activities toward Aboriginal men and boys on the effects of violence against Aboriginal women and girls.

2. Develop and promote an inventory of appropriate intervention tools and training for Aboriginal men and boys that promote the development and nurturing of healthy relationships.
3. Engage Aboriginal men and boys to become facilitators, trainers and mentors in delivering awareness – healthy relationship programming.

## Education

**Objective:** Enhance education resources and curriculum in public schools on the effects of domestic and intimate partner violence on children and youth and ensure Aboriginal youth have access to culturally appropriate healthy relationship models and programming.

4. Review and update school curricula to include current and historical Aboriginal experiences and perspectives that have contributed to increasing violence against Aboriginal women and girls.
5. Include healthy relationships models in education curricula “age appropriate levels”.

**Objective:** Enhance, develop, transfer and promote knowledge on violence against women and girls and violence against Aboriginal women and girls within post-secondary institutions.

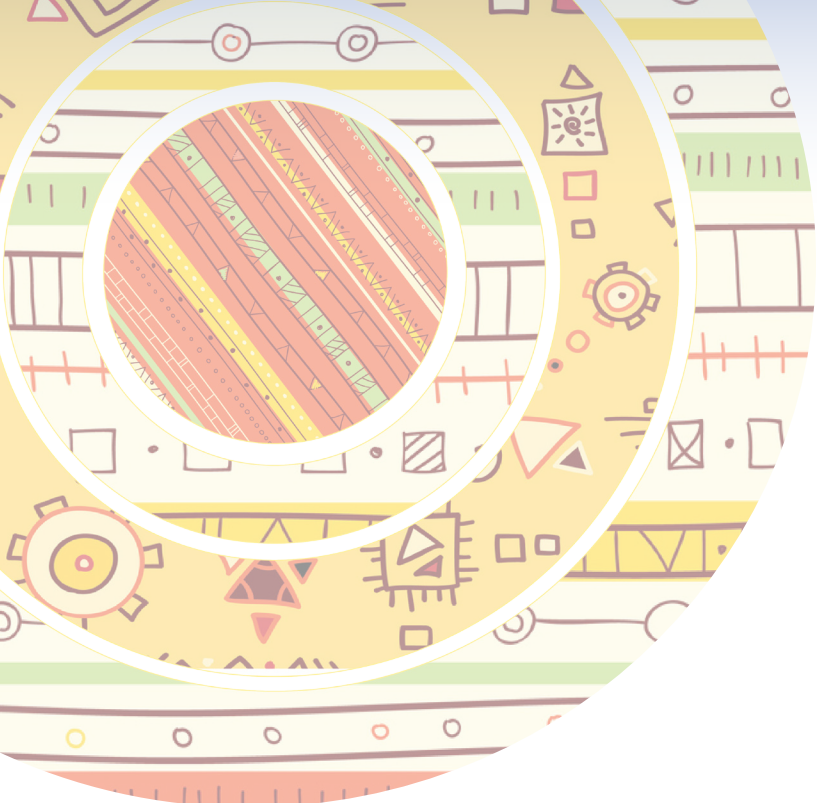
6. Partner with post-secondary institutions and students on initiatives to increase awareness about violence against Aboriginal women and girls.
7. Partner with post-secondary institutions to incorporate information on violence against women and girls and violence against Aboriginal women and girls into course materials and professional training programs.

## Training

**Objective:** Increase knowledge among service providers on addressing issues of violence against Aboriginal women and girls.

8. Coordinate a training strategy on violence against Aboriginal women and girls for service providers:
  - Create and share an inventory on training initiatives in New Brunswick;
  - Facilitate and support training of service providers;
  - Commit the provincial government to train frontline staff and make government training available and accessible to Aboriginal community/organization service providers and the training may include but is not limited to:





- The Woman Victims of Abuse Protocols <http://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/eco-bce/Violence/PDF/en/WVAP2014-E-jan2016.pdf> [http://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/eco-bce/Violence/PDF/fr/WVAP\\_%202014-F-jan2016.pdf](http://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/eco-bce/Violence/PDF/fr/WVAP_%202014-F-jan2016.pdf);
  - risk assessment tools;
  - screening; and
  - safety planning.
9. Encourage professional associations to incorporate education on violence against Aboriginal women and girls into their continuing education, training and professional development materials.
  10. Provide cultural competency training, including components focused on Aboriginal history, impacts of policies, legislation and historical trauma, for public servants and public sector employees, including educators, medical and health service workers, child welfare and social service support, police and criminal justice system workers.

## Key area 2: Intervention and support

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Many Aboriginal women and girls are not aware of the options that are available to them when they have experienced violence or are living in violent situations. This may stem from a lack of awareness about available services and how to access them. Lack of understanding of the laws and regulations that determine what happens in cases of violence, or when a relationship comes to an end, can lead to uncertainty for Aboriginal women and girls about their rights in the criminal and family justice systems.

There is a need for services and supports that help perpetrators in addressing and changing their attitudes and behaviours that have led to violence against Aboriginal women and girls. Addressing this issue with a community and holistic strategy includes Aboriginal men and boys.

### *Intervention and support for victims and survivors*

**Objective:** Establish culturally appropriate Domestic/Intimate Partner Violence supports and services for Aboriginal women and girls.

11. Partner with First Nations, federal government and other stakeholders, to establish Domestic/Intimate Partner Violence outreach and crisis intervention services for Aboriginal women and girls. Include an evaluation component to the Domestic/Intimate Partner Violence outreach program that includes statistics and assesses the effectiveness of program.
12. Develop or improve the delivery of holistic, culturally appropriate and trauma-informed interventions and supports to victims of Domestic/Intimate Partner Violence.

**Objective:** Promote and enhance knowledge of intervention and support resources, programs and services among Aboriginal women and girls.

13. Create a resource inventory of government funding, programs and services available to Aboriginal women's groups.
14. Create and distribute resource kits and directories to inform Aboriginal women and girls about the services and supports available to them.
15. Provide education sessions and workshops to inform Aboriginal women and girls about the options and services available to them relating to abuse and violence.

**Objective:** In partnership with First Nations and Aboriginal leaders, service providers, the federal government and provincial departments, develop a collective and coordinated community response model to address violence against Aboriginal women and girls.

16. Assess and explore the feasibility of a collective and coordinated community response model on First Nations communities through the partnership and work of the New Brunswick Roundtable on Crime and Public Safety.

### *Intervention services for abusers and perpetrators*

**Objective:** Provide culturally appropriate intervention services for abusers and perpetrators of Domestic/Intimate Partner Violence.

17. Compile an inventory of evidence-based intervention programs for perpetrators of intimate partner violence available in New Brunswick.
18. Promote the use of the intervention programs determined to be culturally appropriate for First Nations.

## Key area 3: sexual violence

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Sexual violence affects people of all genders, orientations, ages, economic status, culture and ability. At the same time, it is a difficult problem to quantify because fewer than one in 10 incidents of sexual assault is reported to the police in Canada. Women make up more than 80 per cent of the victims of reported sexual assault in Canada. In *Domestic Sex Trafficking of Aboriginal girls in Canada: Issues and Implications*, Anupriya Sethi (2007) states: “75% of Aboriginal girls under the age of 18 have experienced sexual abuse, 50% are under 14, and almost 25% are younger than 7 years of age<sup>12</sup>.”

**Objective:** Raise awareness about sexual violence against Aboriginal women and girls.

19. Work with First Nations communities and Aboriginal organizations and the Fredericton Sexual Assault Centre to coordinate public information and awareness sessions on the impacts, risks and prevalence of sexual violence against Aboriginal women and girls.

**Objective:** Enhance supports and services for victims of sexual assault living on First Nations communities.

20. Identify and address gaps in services available to sexual assault victims on First Nations communities.
21. Partner with the Fredericton Sexual Assault Crisis Centre to provide training to service providers on First Nations communities and with Aboriginal organizations.

**Objective:** Support sexual violence prevention and response strategies at post-secondary institutions.

22. Partner with post-secondary institutions to establish culturally appropriate sexual assault services for Aboriginal women attending their institutions.

## Key area 4: research and data collection

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While there is research and data available on Aboriginal people in Canada, there is limited research and data available on Aboriginal people in New Brunswick. There is a need for reliable data specific to Aboriginal people in New Brunswick to ensure the needs of this Aboriginal population are met and that the programs and services offered have the desired outcomes. To ensure that outcomes are being met, this strategy will focus on measuring results. In a number of areas, work is required to ensure the availability of appropriate data to measure results and inform strategies for improving outcomes.

**Objective:** To improve the availability of New Brunswick specific research and data in the area of violence against Aboriginal women and girls in New Brunswick.

12. Sethi, Anupriya. “Domestic Sex Trafficking of Aboriginal Girls in Canada: Issues and Implications.” *Firsty Peoples Child & Family Review*, Volume 3, Number 3 (2007): 57-71. <http://www.fnfcfs.com/pubs/vol3num3toc.html>





23. Work with the research community, including Aboriginal researchers and academics, to encourage and collaborate on research into the prevalence and root causes of violence against Aboriginal women and girls and identify community-led solutions.
24. Encourage projects and programs within First Nations communities, families, and organizations that ensure the research and evaluation provide data that are useful for Aboriginal women and their communities.

**Objective:** To determine the effectiveness of the activities set out in this strategy.

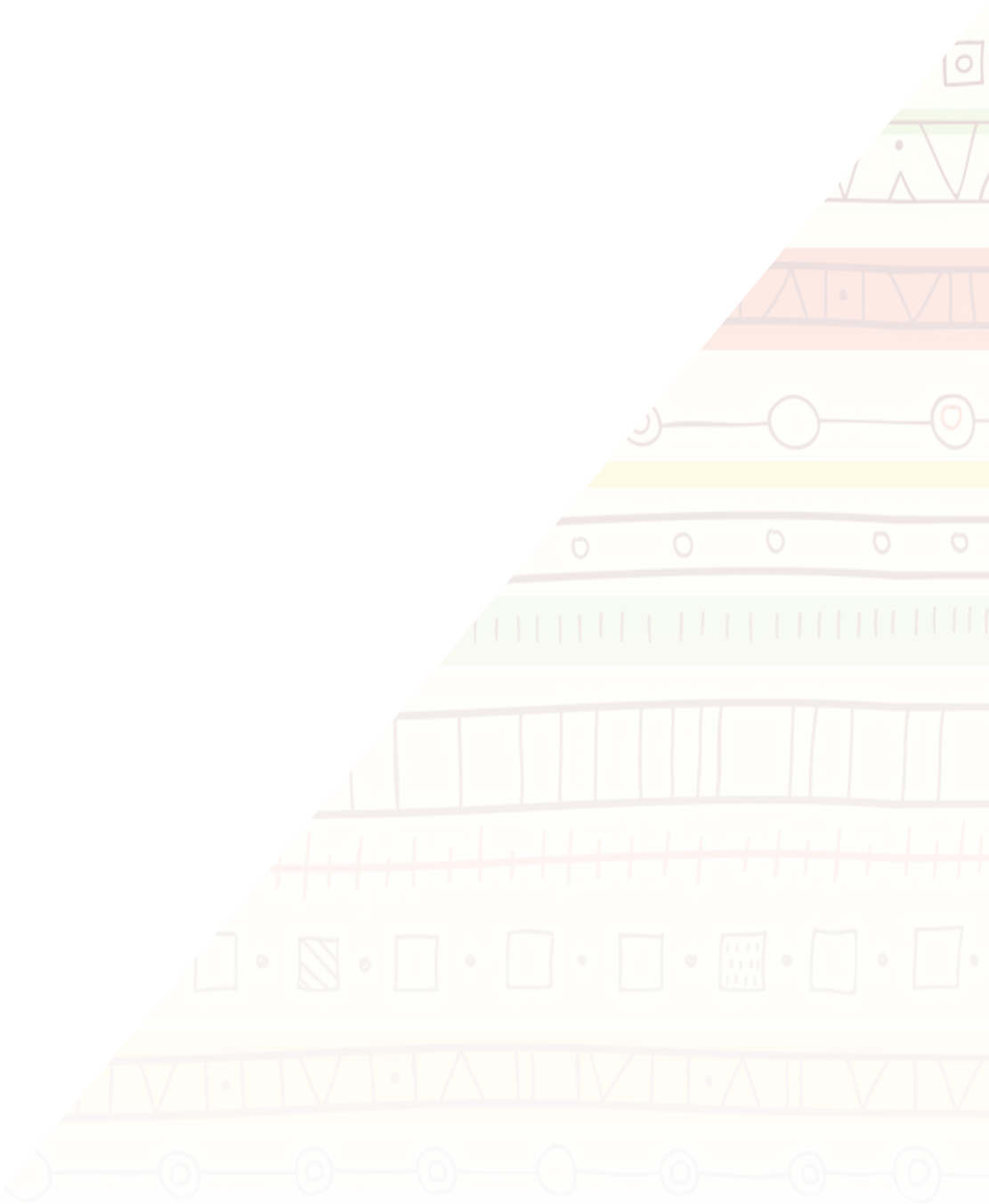
25. Undertake an attitudinal survey of a sample of the New Brunswick population to establish a baseline from which to measure the effectiveness of the education and prevention strategy. The survey will ensure that Aboriginal people will be included in the sample population. Responses will be analyzed and will provide a baseline on the attitudes of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal New Brunswickers regarding domestic intimate partner violence.
26. Explore ways to provide better services to Aboriginal women and girls in New Brunswick in preventing and responding to violence against Aboriginal women and girls, including within the justice system to protect and assist Aboriginal women and girls who are victims of violence.

## Implementation

This plan will encourage partnership with stakeholders who may have an interest or mandate to work with Aboriginal people in New Brunswick. This will include exploring potential partnerships with the federal government to find ways they can be involved in the implementation of the many actions required to improve the lives of Aboriginal people in New Brunswick.

Implementation of the actions related to this plan will be coordinated through the Interdepartmental Committee on ending Violence against Aboriginal Women and Girls co-chaired by the Women's Equality Branch and the Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat. The work of the Interdepartmental Committee will be informed by the New Brunswick Advisory committee on Violence Against Aboriginal Women.







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