



Assembly of First Nations

In 2021, the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations released *The Healing Path Forward, 2021 Federal Priorities for Strengthening and Rebuilding First Nations*. The Healing Path calls for Canada to fully implement all 231 Calls for Justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and to ensure implementation is undertaken in the spirit of reconciliation.

Background of the Assembly of First Nations

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) is a national advocacy organization that works to advance the collective aspirations of First Nations individuals and communities across Canada on matters of national or international nature and concern. The AFN hosts two Assemblies a year where mandates and directives for the organization are established through resolutions directed and supported by the First Nations in Assembly (elected Chiefs or proxies from member First Nations).

In addition to the direction provided by Chiefs of each member First Nation, the AFN is guided by an Executive Committee consisting of an elected National Chief and Regional Chiefs from each province and territory. Representatives from five national councils (Knowledge Keepers, Youth, Veterans, 2SLGBTQQIA+, and Women) support and guide the decisions of the Executive Committee.

Background on Regional Engagement and the First Nations Action Plan

In 2021-2020 the AFN carried out a Regional Engagement Strategy to incorporate perspectives from survivors and families into the report *Breathing Life into the Calls for Justice: An action plan to end violence against First Nations women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people*. The AFN Women's Council worked with the regions to host 85 virtual sessions across Canada, with 1,144 participants through either virtual meetings, surveys, written submissions, and video submissions. In addition to the First Nations Action Plan report, the Regional Engagement Strategy produced regional reports that capture the uniqueness of each region while the First Nations Action Plan reflects the themes that can be addressed at a national level.

The First Nations Action Plan report includes three (3) frameworks to guide the implementation work.

Framework for Supporting Survivors and Families

The framework for supporting survivors and families guides the development and implementation of strategies that should be developed by all levels of government to support First Nations survivors and families when they need it the most. The three primary pillars to support survivors and families includes a national strategy to provide “wrap-around” services for survivors and families so there is consistency between jurisdictions, the creation and funding of a national investigative taskforce to review or reopen cold case investigations involving First Nations women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, and establishing a National Indigenous Human Rights Ombudsperson and National Indigenous Human Rights Tribunal.



Framework for Prevention Services

The framework for prevention recognizes that First Nations women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people have the right to live free of violence and all forms of discrimination. A national First Nations MMIWG2S+ Prevention Strategy is needed to address the underlying factors that contribute to the disproportionate rate of violence experienced by First Nations women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. While there are a number of existing programs and services being offered, there is no comprehensive and coordinated national response for a First Nations led violence and prevention strategy.

Framework for Healing Ourselves and Our Nations

The framework for healing ourselves and our nations recognizes that overcoming violence against First Nations women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people is an ongoing process that requires continual support and resources both at the individual and First Nation level. Four areas must be considered in this healing process, including immediate funding for First Nations healing centres, shelters, and safe spaces. There also needs to be additional resources provided for cultural practices and land-based activities to be incorporated into programs and services. An area that has been highlighted as a gap in the work around addressing violence against First Nations women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people is the role of First Nations men and boys who also need to have access to mental and emotional health supports to address intergenerational trauma and abuse. At a First Nations level, there needs to be an increase in efforts to support self-determination and revitalizing First Nations laws to exercise their jurisdiction to ensure the safety and security of their own people.

Little Progress on Implementation of the NAP and First Nations Action Plan

Urgent action is needed to fully implement the National Action Plan to End Violence Against Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people (NAP) and *Breathing Life into the Calls for Justice* (First Nations Action Plan). Budget 2021 provided for \$2.2 billion over 5 years and \$160.9 million per year on-going to respond to the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls *Calls for Justice*. However, despite this historic investment, little progress has been made with respect to implementation of the NAP and the First Nations Action Plan.

The AFN is calling on the federal government to provide greater transparency with respect investments targeted for implementation of the NAP and for the immediate implementation of the frameworks outlined in the First Nations Action Plan. Gender based violence continues to disproportionately effect First Nations women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people at increasing rates. The AFN believes that immediate action is needed for real changes to occur and be felt “on the ground” and within our nations.

