

Giganawenimaanaanig • *We Take Care of Them*

What We Heard, **WHAT WE HOLD**

A SACRED CALL FOR SAFETY, HEALING, AND CHANGE



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Giganawenimaanaanig is a Manitoba-based body of impacted family members, non-profit agencies, non-profit service providing agencies, non-profit Indigenous Political organizations and various levels of government who are committed to ongoing policy development and implementation, informing the development of law, advocating for Justice, ongoing education and awareness of the 231 Calls to Justice from the "Reclaiming Power and Place – Final Report National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls".

The work of Giganawenimaanaanig is grounded in Indigenous cultural ceremony and practice. The efforts of Giganawenimaanaanig are based on a matriarchal way of knowledge, cultural practice and lived experiences. Knowing, being and doing from an Indigenous gender-based lens.

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SACRED RELATIONAL ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND COMMITMENT

We acknowledge the Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people whose voices continue to shape this work. Their truths and stories are the heart of this document. This is more than a report, it embodies survival, courage, and vision. We also hold space for those no longer with us, taken too soon by the impacts of gender-based violence. Your absence is deeply felt, and your spirits continue to guide us. We honour both the living and those we have lost. This research was carried out in profound connection with Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people who have experienced gender-based violence. It was led through heart-led conversations, including focus circles and one-on-one connections rooted in ceremony, trust, cultural safety, and care. To protect the safety, dignity, and spirit of all participants, names and identifying information have not been included in this report or in any related documents. This is a living commitment to confidentiality, grounded in matriarchal teachings of relational wellness, accountability, and harm reduction.



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INTRODUCTION

This work is a compilation of resources aimed at supporting individuals experiencing gender-based violence (GBV), with a focus on the unique needs of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. These resources are designed to be compiled into an app and work in conjunction with the Red Dress Alert System, a vital tool to bring attention to missing Indigenous persons and mobilize the public to assist in their safe return.

The creation of this work is deeply rooted in ceremony and community. We sat in ceremony with community members to listen to their stories, their grief, and their calls for action. The central message that emerged from these conversations was simple, yet profound: Safety.

Participants shared diverse understandings of what safety means. One participant expressed,

- *"Feeling safe to express my feelings, unmasking. Have people not take my words personally, I am just expressing myself."*

Others spoke of needing physical and emotional space:

- *"Not to be seen; being in the back of the room or in a corner so people could not see me."*
- *"Space where I am not judged by surviving the only way I know how"*

Predictability and routine were also cited as important to safety:

- *"Having friends you can trust,"*
- *"Being around your kids or having my kids with me."*

Many emphasized boundaries and sobriety:

- *"Being around sober people,"*
- *"Having a clear mind so you can make good choices and judgment."*

This work reflects these lived truths. It is a call to action, one that strives to provide safety, dignity, and support to those who need it most.

WHAT IS GENDER BASED VIOLENCE (GBV)?

Gender-based violence, as expressed by Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people, is not only physical but also spiritual, emotional, sexual, and systemic. It is rooted in the ongoing impacts of colonization, intentional harm aimed at dismantling matriarchal systems, silencing voices, and disconnecting us from our bodies, our lands, and our inherent roles as spiritual and governing leaders, life-givers, knowledge carriers, and protectors of family, community, and land.

The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (2019) defines the violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people as acts of genocide, rooted in systemic human rights and Indigenous rights violations committed and condoned by the Canadian state. These violations have led to the denial of safety, security, and dignity, creating a world in which Indigenous people must confront violence daily while perpetrators often act with impunity.

GBV is deeply rooted in gender inequality and further compounded by systemic inequities, such as racism, colonialism, ableism, classism, poverty, and a collective history of trauma. It has long-lasting impacts on health, social well-being, and economic stability, often resulting in intergenerational cycles of violence and harm.

Certain populations are disproportionately affected. For example, studies show that 43% of Indigenous women have been sexually assaulted, compared to 30% of non-Indigenous women (Statistics Canada, 2022). Additionally, marginalized communities, such as Black and racialized women, immigrant and refugee women, Two-Spirit and 2SLGBTQI+ people, and those living in rural or remote areas face unique challenges when addressing GBV (Government of Canada, 2023).

THE PURPOSE

In uplifting the voices of Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people, we move beyond token inclusion in systems never built for us. We call for a reframing one grounded in cultural safety, community leadership, and spirit-centered connection.

The sacred stories informing this project were gathered using Indigenous methodologies through sharing circles, one-on-one connections, and protocols that honour confidentiality, autonomy, and relational care. This work does not extract or analyze from a distance, nor does it end with this document. It walks alongside the community.

This is a sacred responsibility. A vision has emerged: to co-create a Gender-Based Violence App in relationship with the Red Dress Alert, rooted in ceremony, healing, and accessible support for those impacted by GBV across Manitoba.

May this work not only inform but transform. We are not called to action by data alone, we act through surviving, through listening, through learning, and through lived experience.

BEYOND NUMVBERS
GENDER BASED VIOLENCE
HONOURING WHAT IS MISSING

From an Indigenous lens, statistics are not just tools to measure what has happened; they are resources to help illuminate what is missing. Statistics offer part of the stories and not the whole journey. Too often, the numbers are shaped by colonial systems that do not speak our languages, reflect our realities, or honour the full spiritual, emotional, and relational impacts of gender-based violence. These are not cold facts, they are lived experiences. Each number represents the life of someone's mother, daughter, cousin, kokum, and/or Two-Spirit relative. They speak to silenced traumas, disrupted safety, and dreams of lives free of all forms of violence.

While statistics may capture some aspects of gender-based violence, they cannot hold the full weight of what is missing, or the ones who were, or are, never counted. The numbers fail to reflect the depth of cultural disconnection, fear of institutions, systematic racism, sexism, patriarchy or the erasure of Indigenous, women, girls, babies and Two-Spirit, trans, and gender-diverse peoples within colonial data systems shaped of binary, non-relational frameworks. Spiritual disconnection, body sovereignty, grief and loss, and lateral violence are rarely counted but deeply felt. What is missing from the numbers is just as important as what is recorded.

May this work not only inform but transform. We are not called to action by data alone, we act through surviving, through listening, through learning, and through lived experience.

Below are numbers that are not the full story, they offer reflection to patterns that stand beside the stories of Indigenous, women, girls and gender-diverse people.

HOMICIDE

Manitoba's total homicides have risen sharply in recent years—from 62 in 2021 to 89 in 2022, then 74 in 2023 (Statistics Canada, 2024). Indigenous people made up a significant proportion: in 2022, 20% of Manitoba's homicide victims were Indigenous. That year, 52 Indigenous people were killed, including 10 Indigenous women. Indigenous Manitobans had a much higher homicide rate: 22.9 per 100,000 in 2022—nearly ten times the non-Indigenous rate of 2.27 per 100,000 (Statistics Canada, 2024).

Manitoba also had one of the highest gender-related homicide rates for women and girls in Canada at 0.72 per 100,000 in 2021. Notably, the risk for women was far higher in rural areas, with a rural gender-related homicide rate of 2.0 per 100,000 compared to just 0.20 in urban areas (Statistics Canada, 2022a). These figures indicate that Indigenous women in Manitoba face a disproportionately high risk of murder compared to non-Indigenous women.

AT A GLANCE

- **Manitoba homicides 2015–2023:** 62 (2021); 89 (2022); 74 (Statistics Canada, 2023).
- In 2022, 20% of homicide victims were Indigenous men (52 people, incl. 10 Indigenous women/girls) (Statistics Canada, 2022b).
- In 2021, Manitoba recorded a gender-related homicide rate of 0.72 per 100,000 for women and girls—rising to 2.0 per 100,000 in rural areas and just 0.20 in urban areas (Statistics Canada, 2022a).
- In 2022, the Indigenous homicide rate in Manitoba was 22.91 per 100,000, nearly ten times higher than the non-Indigenous rate of 2.27 per 100,000 (Statistics Canada, 2024).

Manitoba **Homicide Rates** have **increased** since 2015.

20% of **Manitoba's 2022** Homicide Victims were **Indigenous.**

Indigenous Peoples are **10x** more **likely** to be **Victims of Homicide.**

These figures indicate that Indigenous women in Manitoba face a disproportionately high risk of murder compared to non-Indigenous women.

SEXUAL ASSAULT

National surveys show extremely high lifetime rates among Indigenous women. Over 6 in 10 (63%) report having experienced physical or sexual assault since age 15, with 56% reporting physical assault and 46% reporting lifetime sexual assault (Statistics Canada, 2022b).

Police-reported sexual assaults remain high. From 2018–2023, Manitoba consistently ranked among provinces with the highest rates of family/partner violence (Statistics Canada, 2023). Nearly half of First Nations women report being sexually assaulted by strangers, a rate far higher than among non-Indigenous women (Statistics Canada, 2022b). This demonstrates how sexual violence against Indigenous women in Manitoba is not only widespread, but uniquely severe.

AT A GLANCE

- **Lifetime violence (Canada-wide):** Approximately 63% of Indigenous women in Canada have reported experiencing physical or sexual assault in their lifetime (Statistics Canada, 2022b).
- **By type of violence:** 56% of Indigenous women reported experiencing physical assault. 46% reported experiencing sexual assault (Statistics Canada, 2022b).
- **Police-reported violence (2018–2023):** Manitoba consistently ranked among the provinces with the highest rates of family and intimate partner violence (Statistics Canada, 2023).
- **Stranger (non-partner) sexual violence:** About 46% of First Nations women reported being sexually assaulted by a stranger, highlighting a unique and heightened vulnerability to non-partner violence (Statistics Canada, 2022b).

63% of **Indigenous women** in Canada reported **experiencing assault.**

56% of **Indigenous women** reported **experiencing physical assault.**

46% of **Indigenous women** reported **experiencing sexual assault.**

INTIMATE PARTNER (DOMESTIC) VIOLENCE

Indigenous women continue to experience some of the highest rates of domestic abuse in the country. They are at greater risk of spousal violence than non-Indigenous women (Statistics Canada, 2023). Manitoba reported the highest provincial rates for police-reported family violence (588 victims per 100,000) and intimate partner violence (628 per 100,000) in 2023. These rates have climbed steadily, with Manitoba's family violence rate increasing from 502 in 2018 to 591 in 2022 (Statistics Canada, 2023).

By comparison, provinces like Ontario reported rates less than half those levels. In rural and remote Indigenous communities, IPV rates are ten times higher than in non-Indigenous communities. Factors such as isolation, lack of services, and access to weapons increase the danger and limit women's ability to safely leave abusive partners (Statistics Canada, 2023).

AT A GLANCE

- **Manitoba pattern (2018–2023):** Manitoba's rate of police-reported family violence increased from 502 per 100,000 in 2018 to 591 per 100,000 in 2022. In 2023, Manitoba had the highest provincial rates of both family violence (588 per 100,000) and intimate partner violence (628 per 100,000) (Statistics Canada, 2023).
- **Indigenous risk:** Indigenous women are at an even greater risk of severe forms of intimate partner violence, including strangulation and homicide (Statistics Canada, 2023).
- **Regional factor:** In remote Indigenous communities, rates of intimate partner violence can be up to 10 times higher than in non-Indigenous communities, due to systemic barriers such as geographic isolation, limited services, and greater availability of weapons (Statistics Canada, 2023).

GEOGRAPHIC PATTERNS: URBAN VS. RURAL/REMOTE

Violence against Indigenous women is deeply affected by geography. Rural and northern Manitoba show significantly higher rates of GBV. In 2023, the "North" (which includes northern Manitoba) recorded 1,062 victims of family violence per 100,000 people—more than double the rate in rural southern Canada (441) and nearly four times the urban rate (287) (Statistics Canada, 2023).

By province, Manitoba ranked highest in both family and intimate partner violence. Rotenberg (2019) also identified northern Manitoba as having the second-highest rate of violence against young women and girls in northern Canada. Remote areas lack access to shelters, supports, and safe transit, making it harder for women to seek help or escape violence.

AT A GLANCE

- **Homicide (rural vs. urban):** In 2021, the gender-related homicide rate for women in rural Manitoba was 2.0 per 100,000, which is 10 times higher than the urban rate of 0.20 per 100,000 (Statistics Canada, 2022a).
- **Family violence in rural/northern Canada:** In 2023, northern and rural regions of Canada reported significantly higher rates of family and intimate partner violence compared to urban areas. Manitoba—a largely rural province—had the highest provincial rates (Statistics Canada, 2023).
- **Barriers in remote Indigenous communities:** Remote Indigenous communities often face a lack of services, isolation, and higher weapon availability, which can trap women with their abuser and increase the severity and frequency of violence (Statistics Canada, 2023).

Manitoba consistently ranked among the provinces with the **highest rates** of **family** and **intimate partner violence.**

Manitoba's rate of police-reported **family violence** has **increased** since 2018.

Northern and rural regions of Canada report **higher rates** of family and intimate partner violence.

Intimate partner violence is **10x** higher in **Remote Indigenous Communities** vs. non-Indigenous communities.

SAME-SEX PARTNER VIOLENCE

2SLGBTQQIA+ Indigenous people face extremely high rates of intimate partner violence. National surveys show that nearly half (49%) of sexual minority women—including Indigenous lesbians and bisexuals—have been physically or sexually assaulted by a partner. This is nearly twice the rate for heterosexual women (25%) (Government of Canada, 2021).

Indigenous identity compounds this risk. A staggering 73% of Indigenous LGBTQ+ people report having experienced physical assault, and 65% report sexual assault—rates that far exceed those reported by non-Indigenous LGBTQ+ people (Government of Canada, 2021). These numbers reflect intersecting systems of oppression that affect safety for Two-Spirit, trans, and gender-diverse Indigenous people.

In Indigenous LGBTQ+ communities, they are likely to contend with the same barriers and trauma as others (e.g. isolation, discrimination), intensifying the impact of IPV.

AT A GLANCE

- **LGB+ women and IPV:** Among sexual minority women in Canada, 49% have reported experiencing intimate partner violence (IPV) at some point in their lives—nearly double the rate reported by heterosexual women (25%) (Government of Canada, 2021).
- **Among Indigenous LGBTQ+ individuals:** 73% have experienced physical assault; 65% have experienced sexual assault

49% of **LGB+ Women** in Canada reported experiencing **intimate partner violence** - **nearly double the rate** reported by heterosexual women.

73% of **Indigenous LGBTQ+** people reported experiencing **physical assault.**

65% of **Indigenous LGBTQ+** people reported experiencing **sexual assault.**

These rates are substantially higher than those reported by non-Indigenous LGBTQ+ individuals (Government of Canada, 2021). This data highlights that lesbian, bisexual, and two-spirit Indigenous women face alarmingly high levels of partner violence.

GANG-RELATED VIOLENCE

Organized crime and gang activity further contribute to violence against Indigenous women and families in Manitoba. According to a national public safety report, 122 active street gangs operated in 2023—engaging in shootings, homicides, kidnappings, and assaults across Canada (Public Safety Canada, 2023). Many of these incidents occur in urban centers and remote Indigenous communities.

In 2022, at least 52 Indigenous people were killed in Manitoba, many in incidents linked to gang violence, contributing to a record year of provincial homicides (Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, 2023). In isolated areas, the combination of gang activity and access to firearms creates heightened risk for families already facing systemic neglect.

Gang and organized crime-related violence, including shootings, homicides, and targeted intimidation further heightens the risk faced by Indigenous women and their families in Manitoba, especially in communities already impacted by systemic neglect and limited safety infrastructure.

In 2022, at least **52 Indigenous people** were **killed in Manitoba**, **many in incidents linked to gang violence**, contributing to a record year of provincial homicides.

AT A GLANCE

- Street gangs in Canada are often involved in public and high-intensity violent crimes, including shootings, homicides, and assaults—frequently involving high-powered firearms (Public Safety Canada, 2023).
- Gang violence plays a significant role in Manitoba's crime landscape. In 2022, at least 52 Indigenous people were killed, contributing to a record-breaking year of provincial homicides, many of which were linked to gang activity (Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, 2023).
- In remote and isolated communities, gang presence combined with easy access to firearms creates heightened danger for Indigenous families, especially in areas with limited safety infrastructure and law enforcement (Statistics Canada, 2023).



The consequences of gender-based violence extend far beyond the individuals directly harmed. Violence against Indigenous women ripples across her family, community, and future generations ... all carry the burden, socially, physically, economically, and emotionally.

IMPACT ON VICTIMS' FAMILIES

The consequences of gender-based violence (GBV) extend far beyond the individuals directly harmed. Families, communities, and future generations all carry the burden, socially, physically, economically, and emotionally.

SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

Violence against Indigenous women ripples across her entire family and community. Both police and researchers have noted that intimate partner violence (IPV) and the murder of Indigenous women have "significant and long-lasting" impacts on families and communities (Statistics Canada, 2023a). Survivors and their families oftwen face compounded grief, trauma, and stigma. Children who witness violence are at risk of developing behavioral and emotional challenges such as anxiety, depression, or aggression, while family bonds can become strained or permanently fractured. Indigenous communities also experience collective trauma through the repeated loss of women and girls, which deepens mistrust toward authorities and institutions (Statistics Canada, 2023a).

ECONOMIC IMPACT

Family violence carries a substantial financial toll. A Canadian study estimated that family violence costs approximately $7.4 billion per year (as of 2012), with victims bearing most of these costs, including medical care, lost income and education, legal fees, and emotional suffering (Department of Justice Canada, 2012). Victims' personal costs alone accounted for about $6.0 billion annually, or 81% of the total. Social services and community agencies bore an additional $811 million in third-party costs. For a woman leaving an abusive partner, the average personal cost was estimated at $13,000. These financial burdens disproportionately affect Indigenous families, many of whom already face economic marginalization, leading to greater reliance on under-resourced support systems and continued cycles of hardship (Department of Justice Canada, 2012).

INTERGENERATIONAL IMPACT

The trauma of GBV does not end with one generation, it reverberates through families. Children who grow up in violent households are significantly more likely to become either victims or perpetrators of violence later in life (Statistics Canada, 2022a). For Indigenous families, this cycle is intensified by the legacy of intergenerational trauma—rooted in colonial violence, residential schools, and family separation. Many Indigenous women who experienced abuse as children go on to experience IPV in adulthood (Statistics Canada, 2023a). The impacts of GBV are not only deeply personal, but systemic and historical, making healing and prevention efforts especially urgent and complex.

WE ACKNOWLEDGE THE GAPS AND CHALLENGES:

- Many survivors have not come forward and are not reflected in the statistics.
- The methods used often center systems, not people, and exclude culturally rooted and cultural safety understandings of harm and healing.
- Much of what is most sacred, spirit, ceremony, intergenerational wounds, and resurgence, is unquantifiable, but essential to the truth.
- Manitoba-specific data isn't readily available, but these national figures underscore the disproportionate victimization of Indigenous women, girls and gender diverse people.
- Lived experiences of Indigenous women, girls, babies and gender-diverse people are underrepresented or misrepresented.
- Those who falsely claim Indigeneity create gaps in the spirit of data integrity and misrepresent the impact of harm.

In addition to the limitations of colonial data systems, several systemic gaps remain. The lack of disaggregated data for Two-Spirit, trans, and non-binary Indigenous people continues to render their experiences invisible. Survivors frequently face re-traumatization or criminalization when accessing help, and many fear institutions due to past and present harm or systemic racism. Youth aging out of care systems are left vulnerable, and jurisdictional disputes between federal and provincial governments create further barriers to essential services. Language barriers, lack of access to Indigenous language supports, and the underfunding of Indigenous-led organizations all contribute to a system that is ill-equipped to provide meaningful safety and healing. Addressing these challenges requires deep systemic change rooted in Indigenous knowledge, autonomy, and care.

FINDINGS AND THEMES

Participants shared their suggestions, recommendations and requests when it comes to their dream list. Four themes were painted with their words including the following:

MULTIGENERATIONAL KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

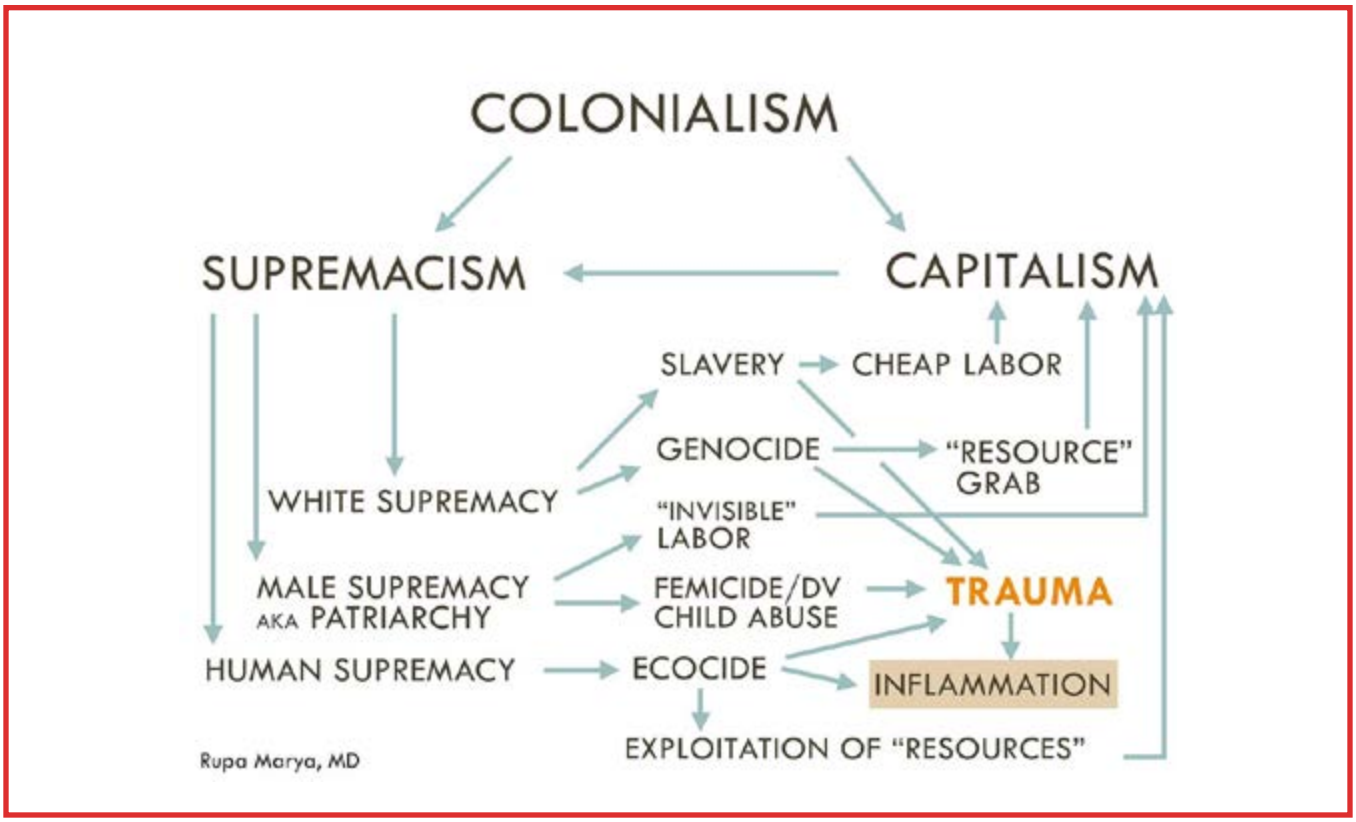
"More women's groups, more nurturing groups so we can start building women up and invite young people into these groups" and "*More land base teaching/courses*" to remember, reclaim and strengthen multi-generational knowledge transfer with humans and more than human kinship relations. Folks said, "*we need more traditional teachings*" and "*I love being around Elders*" as a way of voicing their dreams for future generations.

With multigenerational knowledge transfer connections and opportunities, confidence programs can open that door, such as programs like Eagles Nest. By prioritizing "*putting family first before friends, workers and God*" is a dream that was shared.

A COMING HOME AMONG HUMANITY

Both "*We are all equal, regarding people/race*" and "*Not focused on gender/sex*" were shared within the circle.

Patriarchy is defined as "the institutionalization of male privilege and power in society, at the expense of women and gender non-conforming individuals" (Yellowhead Institute, 2020). As Alisha from *Traumatized & Thriving* (2025) shared, "Patriarchy isn't just about gender; it's about power and control." Western and colonial systems, along with their accompanying conditioning, play a critical role in disembodying humanity. It is important to name this within this work, as naming systems of harm is the first step toward dismantling them



When more people feel safe, on their own terms, and connected through belonging, community, and care, there are greater opportunities to unlearn and release the death grip of colonial ways of living.

PREVENTION THROUGH EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN

Participants emphasized that prevention must start early, with more culturally grounded education in schools, community organizations and youth-led programs to reach youth before harm occurs. Education was seen not just as academic, but as a protective force that teaches respect, consent, body sovereignty, and relational responsibility.

Suggestions included:

- Age, development and readiness appropriate teachings on boundaries and emotional safety
- Trauma-informed curriculum and staff training
- Presence of Elders and Knowledge Keepers/Sharers in classrooms
- Safe spaces and culturally rooted programming like beading, drumming, and land-based learning

These teachings reflect ancestral values of balance, respect, and non-violence. As one participant shared:

- "It's about restoring what our grandmothers taught us—how to treat each other and ourselves."
- Prevention is not a single lesson, but a community commitment to support the emotional, spiritual, and cultural wellbeing of our young people from the start.

SYSTEMS, POLICIES, AND APPROACHES

Participants repeatedly expressed frustrations when dealing with colonial systems. Within the structures of colonial systems exists silos and barriers with white supremacist characteristics.

Tema Okun (2021) states, "White supremacy culture is inextricably linked to all the other oppressions - capitalism, sexism, class and gender oppression, ableism, ageism, Christian hegemony - these and more are all interconnected and intersected and stirred together in a toxic brew that is reflected in our devastation of the air and water and land and living beings we have and are destroying and disregarding in the name of profit and power."

To be able to meet people where they're at, rigid policies need to consider what's best for the person accessing services with a requirement of asking *who benefits from rigid policies?* Colonial systems benefit.

Authors Cripps and McGlade (2018) speak to the importance of the value of knowledge within Indigenous communities. "Before discussing solutions, one must understand the context in which violence occurs and how it is understood by Indigenous communities across Canada" (p. 242). When creating solutions intended to support Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people, systems must engage in processes that are trauma- and gender-informed, rooted in Indigenous ways of doing, being, and connection. Any analysis, policies, approaches, or evaluation must uphold the voices of Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people. This means moving beyond consultation toward co-creation, where Indigenous knowledge is not just included but leads. Approaches must honour lived experiences and cultural wisdom and resist the tendency to universalize or neutralize solutions in the name of "objectivity" or "efficiency." Without this grounding, interventions risk replicating the same colonial harms they claim to address. Transformation must be led by those most impacted, not merely included as stakeholders but recognized as knowledge holders and leaders in their own right. led by culturally safe and appropriate interventions without further perpetuating harm.

When creating solutions intended to support Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people, systems must engage in processes that are trauma- and gender-informed, rooted in Indigenous ways of doing, being, and connection.

Human Resources policies should include thorough screening processes prior to hiring, recognizing this as a foundational step in ensuring safety within the organization. To truly meet people where they are and honour their definitions of safety, organizations must regularly review and adapt their screening practices. For example, a conflict of interest may arise when a staff member is identified as unsafe by someone accessing services. In such cases, it is critical to ask: how can folks safely and confidently express that they do not feel safe when someone within the organization poses a potential harm?

By providing a choice of options and meeting people where they're at includes "*check-ins on a personal level*", having "*virtual meetings for counselors, visits and medical appointments*", and having "*individual rooms with a lock to sleep*." When it comes to transportation, within policies around providing taxi slips, there needs to be openness and consideration of why folks decline taxi slips when it comes to safety. What options are available when a person declines a taxi slip? The rigidity and lack of choices are a barrier and needs to be addressed. In a colonial system built on quantity over quality as an extension of a machine, a participant requested "*shorter wait lists*" and to have access to "*support dogs.*"

When more people feel safe, on their own terms, and connected through belonging, community, and care, there are greater opportunities to unlearn and release the death grip of colonial ways of living.

RECOMMENDATIONS

ACCESSING SUPPORT: WHAT WE HEARD ABOUT RESOURCES AND METHODS

In the circles, participants named a wide range of places and people they have turned to for support in times of need. These reflections give insight into not only what resources are accessed, but also how and why.

- Resources Mentioned by Participants
- Community members named over 15 types of resources they have accessed in relation to gender-based violence, wellness, and survival. These include both formal services and informal support systems:
- Child and Family Services (CFS)
- Winnipeg Police Service (WPS) Exploited Persons Unit
- Victim Services
- Emergency shelters and housing programs
- School-based supports (including student support liaisons at Aboriginal Education Centres)
- EIA (Employment and Income Assistance)
- Therapists, psychologists, and psychiatrists
- Family doctors and health care providers
- Health provider referrals
- 211 city services
- Word of mouth, friends, and family
- Social media (Facebook specifically mentioned)
- The streets – when no other options were available

These responses reflect the wide and sometimes fragmented network that individuals must navigate when trying to access safety and care.

WAYS PEOPLE ACCESSED THESE RESOURCES

Participants described using a mix of methods to access help. Their responses show that no single method works for everyone, flexibility, accessibility, and cultural safety deeply matter.

- **Phone** – one of the most common methods, but not always reliable or safe
- **Email** – helpful for those who are able to access internet and devices
- **Health care provider referrals** – trusted providers made critical connections
- **Drop-in/In-person (Vibe Check)** – in-person interaction was often preferred when emotional safety could be felt
- **Word of mouth** – trusted community and family members are often the most reliable navigators
- **211 City Service** – used as a directory but not always sufficient
- **Social media** – especially Facebook, was named as a platform for learning about or reaching out to services

HOW AND WHAT MATTERS MOST IN ACCESSING HELP

When asked about their preferred method, participants highlighted that it depends on the place and the urgency of the situation. One person noted: *It all depends on the place and the urgency of the situation."*

This speaks to the need for multiple, trauma-informed access points, not a one-size-fits-all solution. Safety, timing, and trust all shape how and whether someone will reach out. As one person shared:

> *"The homeless shelter was helpful but, when I was beaten up by my boyfriend and was coming down from using, the staff thought I was angry. They could not calm me down. I was scared. So they put me and not him on a banned list because I swore at them after being assaulted"*

Offering choice, and ensuring that these choices are culturally safe specific to Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people, trauma-informed, and community-driven is a foundational step in building better systems of care.

As one participant noted, what works in one moment may not be safe or accessible in another. Offering choice, and ensuring that these choices are culturally safe specific to Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people, trauma-informed, and community-driven is a foundational step in building better systems of care.

In visioning what a Gender-Based Violence (GBV) app could look like, participants offered innovative, grounded, and safety-focused suggestions that reflect their lived realities and needs.

How it is deeply connected to what matters most in accessing help. As stated in the Calls for Justice in the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, principles of change include a focus on substantive equality and human and Indigenous rights, a decolonizing approach, inclusion of family and survivors, Indigenous led solutions and services, recognizing distinctions, cultural safety and trauma informed approach. Individuals, institutions, systems and structures that compromise security must be addressed. In addition, according to the *Recommendations from the Symposium on Planning for Change: Towards a National Inquiry and an Effective National Action Plan* (2016) there were recommendations delivered to the Government on how to work in collaboration with Indigenous peoples. This strategy was diligently communicated by a collective of Indigenous women, gendered-diverse peoples and experts. A human rights approach was highlighted and delivered emphasis to human rights violations on Indigenous women, girls and gendered-diverse people.

CORE FEATURES PARTICIPANTS ENVISIONED

Safety Check-In: A secure login feature to notify a trusted group of people that they are safe.

Location Sharing: A discreet way to signal your location in real-time.

Broken Device Signal: A backup feature that activates an alert if the phone is broken, disabled, or offline.

Document and Story Storage: A secure space to store documents and personal stories, so that individuals do not have to repeat their experiences each time they seek help. This helps mitigate traumatization and offers continuity across support systems.

Consent to Release: A centralized and safe place they can add or remove consent to release in their own time.

Indigenous-led Resource Map and Emergency Shelters Locator: A geolocated map showing Indigenous-led GBV supports, advocates, food accessibility, safe resting spaces, housing, shower and drop ins.

Safe Ride Support: Connections to safe rides through trusted supports and community-led organizations.

Traditional Medicine and Wellness Support: Access to Indigenous-led supports, elders, knowledge sharers and two-spirit peer helpers, including virtual options.

Trauma-Informed Legal Support: Connection to legal resources for protection and prevention orders, child and family services and court orders

Virtual Affirmations and messaging: Connection to virtual reminders of hope and encouragement that are rooted in empowerment and Indigenous led teachings.

These ideas reflect a desire for layered safety tools that recognize the unpredictability and danger of GBV contexts and adapt to them.

SUPPLEMENTARY SUPPORTS

Participants emphasized that not everyone has access to a phone or data. In response, they suggested additional, accessible tools to accompany the app:

- **Toll-Free 1-800 Number:** A simple, memorable number for those without smartphones or internet access.
- **Stickers with Info:** Discreetly placed in public areas suggested "behind the BFI bins and in locations that are often out of public views" to allow people to access information without drawing attention and where they often rest or hide. This would also include a QR code for quick access.

ENGAGING THE SENSES AND ENHANCING ACCESS

Participants shared a range of creative ideas to make GBV information and resources more accessible, especially for those without regular access to technology. Suggestions included:

- **Cards with Information:** For distribution in shelters, clinics, schools, and other gathering places.
- **Creative Placement:** Incognito packaging, such as inside tampon wrappers or chapstick containers.
- **Posters and Visuals:** Easily understood wall art or tags in public spaces.
- **Tactile Art:** Raised textures or symbols that could be interpreted by touch.

These suggestions speak to a collective vision: creating non-linear, sensory-based, culturally safe ways of sharing life-saving information. At their heart, these recommendations call for a system rooted in dignity, autonomy, and community-designed care.

CONCLUSION

As outlined in the *Calls for Justice* from the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (2019), Call 2.3 states:

> *"We call upon all governments to ensure that all Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people are provided with safe, no-barrier, permanent, and meaningful access to their cultures and languages in order to restore, reclaim and revitalize their cultures and identities. These are rights held by all segments of Indigenous communities, from young children to Elders. The programs and services that provide such access should not be tied exclusively to government-run cultural or educational institutions. All governments must further ensure that the rights of Indigenous children to retain and be educated in their Indigenous language are upheld and protected. All governments must ensure access to immersion programs for children from preschool into post-secondary education."*

This work brings together the lived truths, voices, and visions of Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people who have survived and continue to navigate gender-based violence in Manitoba. Rooted in ceremony, trust, and community, these findings go beyond statistics to honour the sacred and relational dimensions of safety, care, and healing.

What we heard reaffirms a painful reality: the systems and structures currently in place too often fail to meet the urgent and evolving needs of Indigenous communities. Yet, interwoven through every story was a thread of profound resilience, leadership, and vision. Participants not only named what is broken—they also shared their dreams for healing and safety: grounded in land, kinship, tradition, and multigenerational care.

We offer this work as a tool for transformation—not only to inform policy and program development, but to support deeper cultural and relational shifts. It is our shared responsibility to listen deeply, learn humbly, and act with intention. This work can help answer the *Calls for Justice* by centering the lived experiences and direct recommendations of those most impacted by gender-based violence. As we continue to walk alongside community, may these truths guide meaningful efforts to restore safety, dignity, and justice in ways that honour spirit, sovereignty, and truth.



As we continue to walk alongside community, may these truths guide meaningful efforts to restore safety, dignity, and justice in ways that honour spirit, sovereignty, and truth.

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GIGANAWENIMAANAANIG
(WE ALL TAKE CARE OF THEM)
MMIWG2S+ IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE