

# 2023-24 Federal Pathway Annual Progress Report

## First Nations



R118-17/2-2024E-PDF  
978-0-660-72202-3

### Introduction

In response to the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls' [Final Report](#) and Call for Justice 1.1, the [Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ People National Action Plan](#) (National Action Plan) was released on June 3, 2021. The [Federal Pathway to Address Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ People](#) (Federal Pathway) is the federal government's contribution to the National Action Plan. As National Action Plan partners, the Assembly of First Nations contributed its own action plan tailored to the specific needs and priorities of First Nations women, girls, and 2SLGBTQI+ people. The following report, which is a part of the 2023-24 Federal Pathway Annual Progress Report, highlights Federal Pathway initiatives that have made progress in 2023-24 toward the priorities identified by the Assembly of First Nations in their MMIWG Action Plan, [Breathing Life into the Calls for Justice](#).

### Addressing the Immediate Safety and Wellbeing of First Nations Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQI+ People


The safety and wellbeing of First Nations women, girls, and 2SLGBTQI+ people is a significant priority for the Government of Canada and First Nations partners alike. Breathing Life into the Calls for Justice emphasizes the urgent need for shelters, health services, and direct support for First Nations families and survivors. To this effect, several Federal Pathway initiatives have made progress in 2023-24 toward the immediate safety and wellbeing of First Nations women, girls, and 2SLGBTQI+ people.

The [Pathways to Safe Indigenous Communities Initiative](#), funded by Indigenous Services Canada, supports Indigenous led safety programs, interventions and services. In 2023-24, the initiative continued to fund 36 First Nation-led projects. For example:

- **The Elsipogtog First Nation** are supporting an "Indigi-Watch" patrol to ensure a culturally safe environment and provide mental health interventions, secure emergency transportation, and assistance accessing on-reserve health, education, and social services.
- **First Nations in Treaty 2 Territory** is supporting Peacemaking Circles and engagements to implement a Peacemaking Workplan to improve safety, healing and wellness for everyone, and specifically address violence and the higher number of MMIWG2S in their communities.
- **The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs** is expanding its First Nations Family Advocate Office to include a missing and murdered First Nations women, girls and 2SLGBTQI+ people Advocacy Unit, enhancing access to emergency housing and providing support for families to avoid apprehension or those fleeing from violence.

### To support families and survivors on their healing journeys,

Crown-Indigenous Relations and **Northern Affairs Canada** has invested over **\$10 million** to provide funding to **27 First Nations projects** through its [Support for the Wellbeing of Families and Survivors of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ People](#) program. Specifically in 2023-24 a new First Nation project was selected for funding:

-  **The Cree Women of Eeyou Istchee** are constructing a commemorative monument representing missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQI+ people at the entrance of the Eeyou Istchee territory to remind community members that their women have not been forgotten and the survivors are not alone.





## Improving Housing and Infrastructure for First Nations Communities

Breathing Life into the Calls for Justice notes that significant improvements are needed to housing and infrastructure to address violence against First Nations women, girls, and 2SLGBTQI+ people. Through the [Indigenous Community Infrastructure Fund](#), Indigenous Services Canada supports infrastructure projects in First Nations communities across Canada. In 2023-24:

In addition to the Indigenous Community Infrastructure Fund, in 2023-24 the First Nations component of [Budget 2022 commitment to Indigenous housing](#) funded by Indigenous Services Canada has resulted in:



First Nation housing projects were completed; and



First Nation health infrastructure projects were completed.



new homes;



renovations and upgrades; and



lots acquired and serviced.

**Beyond housing, several advancements have been made to drinking water infrastructure in 2023-24. With the support of Indigenous Services Canada,**



long-term drinking water advisories

and



short-term drinking water advisories

**were lifted this year.** Initiatives are underway in **26 communities** to resolve the remaining **28 long-term drinking water advisories**.

## Increasing Access to Justice for First Nations Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQI+ People

The Assembly of First Nations Breathing Life into the Calls for Justice outlines the barriers that First Nations women, girls, and 2SLGBTQI+ people experience in the justice system. In response to these barriers, the federal government has made several investments to support First Nations women, girls, and 2SLGBTQI+ people to increase their access to justice.

In response to these priorities, through the Indigenous Justice Program, Justice Canada has invested \$15.5 million in 52 First Nations-led projects from 2020 to 2025 to support the implementation of Gladue Principles. Broadly, these principles recognize the unique systemic or background factors which may have played a part in bringing an Indigenous person in contact with the law and should be considered in criminal justice decision-making and advocate for alternate measures and other community-based options for Indigenous people in conflict with the law, including culturally appropriate restorative and traditional Indigenous justice processes. Funded initiatives are currently working to address the root causes of offending and deliver programming that reflects the justice values, traditions and cultures of Indigenous communities.

Justice Canada has also provided \$6.5 million to 69 First Nations projects from 2021 to 2024 through the Indigenous Justice Program. This funding is delivered by Indigenous-led community-based justice programs for trauma-informed victims training or civil and family mediation programming. Some examples of projects funded by this program include:

✓ **The Inuvik Justice Committee** serves both First Nation and Inuit (Inuvialuit) clients in Inuvik, NWT. This program has developed strategic brochures for victim aftercare and a court aftercare manual to distribute to victim service providers and justice coordinators across the Territory. This 80 page guide covers aftercare of victims; impacts, effects and processing of trauma; post-traumatic growth; conversational guidelines for facilitating restoration and justice; and links to resources.

✓ **The Tl'azt'en Nation** is creating a position for a "Family Healing Liaison" to provide culturally relevant mediation and conflict resolution for families and community members in the Tl'azt'en Nation.



In addition to increasing access to justice, the Assembly of First Nations MMIWG Action Plan also identifies families and survivors wrap-around services as a priority action item.

### **Budget 2023 announced \$95.8 million over five years and \$20.4 million ongoing to renew and expand the [Family Information Liaison Units \(FILUs\)](#)**

to support Indigenous families in accessing information about their missing or murdered loved ones; the Community Support and Healing for Families initiative (CSHF) to increase access to Indigenous-led, community-based supports to assist them with their grief and their healing journey; and a new Supports for Indigenous Victims of Crime (SIVC) initiative to support Indigenous-led and co-developed activities to support and assist Indigenous victims of crime and survivors of violence across Canada. This funding will ensure that FILUs continue to be available in all 13 provinces and territories to support First Nations women, girls, and 2SLGBTQI+ people as they seek information about their missing and murdered loved ones, and support the expansion of services to address gaps and remain responsive to the needs of Indigenous communities. This funding will also support the continuation and expansion of the CSHF initiative and create new supports and services for First Nations victims of crime.

Further, in response to calls from Indigenous partners, including the Assembly of First Nations, the Government of Canada continued to advance work on the establishment of a National Indigenous and Human Rights Ombudsperson. In 2023-24 the Ministerial Special Representative met with over 600 people representing 125 organizations, including nine First Nations organizations. The Ministerial Special Representative's final report was provided to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations in March 2024 and presented at the second annual National Indigenous-Federal-Provincial-Territorial Roundtable on February 7-8, 2024.

## **Improving Healthcare Services for First Nations Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQI+ People**

In their MMIWG Action Plan, the Assembly of First Nations emphasized the need for improved health services for First Nations women, girls, and 2SLGBTQI+ people. In response, the Government of Canada has made significant investments toward improving the cultural safety of healthcare services, addressing anti-Indigenous racism in healthcare, and ensuring that the unique needs of First Nations women, girls, and 2SLGBTQI+ people are met.

Through the [Addressing Anti-Indigenous Racism in Canada's Health Systems](#) initiative, Indigenous Services Canada has invested approximately \$59.5 million since 2021 to fund 120 projects that primarily benefit First Nations. These projects have advanced work in the areas of health navigation, cultural safety, maternal and child health, Indigenous midwifery, sexual and reproductive health, and wraparound services. Specifically this year:

- **Sturgeon Lake First Nation** is constructing a stand-alone birthing center which is the first of its kind on reserve. Construction started in October 2023 and is expected to be completed by October 2024.

Similarly, this year Health Canada continued to fund several projects under the Anti-Racism and Discrimination program that work to reduce systemic racism and increase cultural safety for First Nations women, girls, and 2SLGBTQI+ people in the health care system. For example:

- **The University of Winnipeg** is developing and piloting the Indigenous Community-Based Perinatal Support Worker Training project. This initiative targets systemic racism and discrimination against Indigenous women and gender-diverse birthing individuals, involving the creation, implementation, and evaluation of a curriculum for Indigenous community-based perinatal support workers (ICPSWs).
- **The Yukon Hospital Corporation** received funding to establish First Nations Health Programs that enhance culturally safe care. The funding is being used to hire an Indigenous Nursing mentor, advance Indigenous Youth advocacy, and engage Indigenous youth in developing and distributing life promotion kits and cultural interventions. The goal is to ensure that Indigenous patients in Yukon's Acute Care have access to culturally rooted mental health and self-care materials.

Indigenous Services Canada is also working to support the co-development of distinctions-based Indigenous health legislation. In 2023-24, Indigenous Services Canada launched distinctions-based+ co-development processes, which focused on translating what was heard through engagement into proposed legislative options. In total, 5 co-development tables were launched with First Nations partners. A National First Nations Co-development Working Group was established to bring together 1-2 First Nations representatives from each of the established First Nations co-development tables to share work, see what others are developing across the country, identify common elements and areas of consensus, and discuss potential legislative and policy options.