

2023-24 Federal Pathway Annual Progress Report

Urban



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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 3rd, 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 MMIWG2S+ Urban Indigenous Action Group and the Congress of Aboriginal People contributed their own action plan tailored to the specific needs and priorities of Urban Indigenous 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 towards the priorities identified in the Urban Working Group's (now called the MMIWG2S+ Urban Indigenous Action Group) Path to Reclaiming Power and Place Regardless of Residency and the Congress of Aboriginal People's Action Plan [Illuminating the Way: Beholding Power and Place](#).

Building and Repairing Housing and Shelters for Urban Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQI+ People

Both the Congress of Aboriginal People and the MMIWG2S+ Urban Indigenous Action Group identify in their MMIWG Action Plans that safe spaces for urban Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQI+ people are essential to reduce the violence they experience. In recognition of this priority, the Government of Canada has made significant investments in housing for urban Indigenous Peoples.

The [National Housing Strategy](#), led by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, provides a range of complementary initiatives and includes specific investments for Indigenous and Northern housing, some of which have been committed to support the needs of urban Indigenous Peoples. In 2023-24, through federal supply initiatives of general application, the National Housing Strategy made commitments to support an additional 413 Indigenous units in urban areas, bringing the total number of supported Indigenous units in urban areas to 6,869, of which 2,410 have been completed.

In 2023-24, the Canada Community Housing Initiative committed \$1.53 million to support 809 urban Indigenous community housing units in 2023-24. This has brought the total number of committed funding to \$27.7 million, and the total number of committed units to 2,792, including repairs for 1,561 units.

In Budget 2023, the Government of Canada announced \$4 billion in funding over seven years to implement an [Urban, Rural and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy](#) and to also establish a National Indigenous Housing Centre, this in addition to Budget 2022's \$300 million commitment to address immediate unmet needs.

Of the \$300 million committed in Budget 2022, \$285.1 million was provided to the National Indigenous Housing Collaborative Inc. to address urgent and unmet needs for Indigenous peoples residing in the urban, rural and northern spaces.

With the funding provided by Budget 2023, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation supported a range of Indigenous-led engagements with Indigenous governments, organizations, and housing and service providers to inform the strategy.

Overall, more than

6,000

individuals participated in the engagement process, including survey results.





Addressing Anti-Indigenous Racism in Urban Healthcare Systems

The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples and the MMIWG2S+ Urban Indigenous Action Group have both identified anti-Indigenous racism in healthcare systems as a priority for addressing violence against urban Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQI+ people.

To this effect, Indigenous Services Canada and Health Canada are working to address [anti-Indigenous racism in Canada's health systems](#) by improving cultural safety in health systems, increasing access to Indigenous-led health services, improving supports for Indigenous patients, and supporting Indigenous partners to engage on their health priorities. Some examples of investments in urban healthcare include:

- The National Association of Friendship Centres hired health system navigators for 22 centres across the country to help urban Indigenous patients navigate health systems.
- The Ottawa Hospital received \$825,922 in funding for an Advancing Culturally Safe Care for Inuit in the Canadian Health System project to foster culturally safe, wrap-around care for Inuit in Ottawa.

Access to Justice for Urban Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQI+ People

The MMIWG2S+ Urban Indigenous Action Group and the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples each identified the need for change in Canada's justice systems. The federal government acknowledges that services in the justice system must be culturally safe and accessible, and that increased supports are needed for families and survivors.

The [Indigenous Justice Program \(IJP\)](#), lead by Justice Canada, supports community-based justice programs that offer alternatives to mainstream justice processes in appropriate circumstances. It also contributes to addressing the overrepresentation of Indigenous people in the criminal justice system, both as victims and offenders.

The program currently supports



community justice programs

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serving over
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urban, rural, Northern, on-reserve and off-reserve Indigenous communities across the country.

These programs are designed to address the root causes of offending and deliver programming that reflects the justice values, traditions and cultures of Indigenous communities. Some examples of IJP urban programs include:

- **The Vancouver Aboriginal Transformative Justice Services Society (VATJSS)** supports the urban Indigenous population in Vancouver, British Columbia, by helping Indigenous people referred for pre-charge diversions, alternative measures, Indigenous court support, provincial and federal post-charge referrals and Gladue aftercare services. VATJSS focuses on incorporating meeting clients' needs and developing individual healing plans based on rehabilitation and accountability.
- **STC Urban First Nation Services** supports the urban Indigenous population in Saskatoon through their diversion program, the Opikinawasowin Program. The diversion program is referral-based for Indigenous adults and youth. It provides effective, efficient ways of resolving disputes that involve communities developing culturally sensitive services to promote healing and reparation. The program addresses crime in association with the criminal justice system. The Opikinawasowin Program is referral-based for ages 12 to 24. Through this program, mentors support and link youth and young adults to resources and support networks in the community. The program is designed to support and assist youth accessing appropriate rehabilitative services to reduce the risk of gang involvement and re-offending.



Improving Access to Language and Culture for Urban Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQI+ People

In their MMIWG Action Plans, both the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples and the MMIWG2S+ Urban Indigenous Action Group have emphasized the need to restore, reclaim, and revitalize Indigenous cultures and languages in urban areas. These action plans each state the role that culture and language play in protecting Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQI+ people from violence, in addition to supporting their healing journeys. With so many Indigenous Peoples living in urban centres, there is a heightened risk of traditional cultures and languages being lost.

Canadian Heritage has provided funding towards urban Indigenous projects as part of its work

to reclaim, revitalize, maintain and strengthen Indigenous languages. The purpose of these projects is to support the efforts of Indigenous communities and organizations to reclaim, revitalize, maintain and strengthen Indigenous languages and create new Indigenous language speakers. Some examples of urban Indigenous language projects include:

- ✓ **The Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres** is actively supporting the development of local language revitalization plans for Friendship Centres in Ontario. The project is dedicated to ongoing programming and the implementation of language learning activities within urban Indigenous communities. This includes immersion programs; the creation of urban Indigenous language revitalization plans; and the deployment of locally tailored learning models and targeted initiatives aimed at offering mentorship and apprenticeship opportunities to language learners of all ages, all working towards the overarching goal of revitalizing Indigenous languages across the province.
- ✓ **The National Association of Friendship Centres** is assessing the needs of Indigenous urban populations; identifying existing urban Indigenous language programs and initiatives; completing a literature review on Indigenous languages and urban spaces; conducting analysis as well as case studies on promising practices; and developing pilot projects in 30 Friendship Centers and Provincial or Territorial Associations across Canada. The project will also see the organization of a national gathering on Indigenous languages with experts and community authorities in the hopes of sharing knowledge.

Indigenous Services Canada's [Pathways to Safe Indigenous Communities](#) Initiative has provided

\$3.9

million in 2023-24

to support urban Indigenous safety and wellbeing projects. **These include:**

- **The Aboriginal Friendship Centres of Saskatchewan** are creating Indigenous Women's Coalitions for women and 2SLGBTQI+ people among Saskatchewan's ten Friendship Centres.
- **The Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations Women's Commission** will provide a safe and secure space and cultural programming for pan-Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQI+ people throughout the province

Yellowquill University will improve the safety of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQI+ people migrating to Winnipeg to further their education.