

Collaborating for Better Outcomes: Working with Indigenous Women's Organizations

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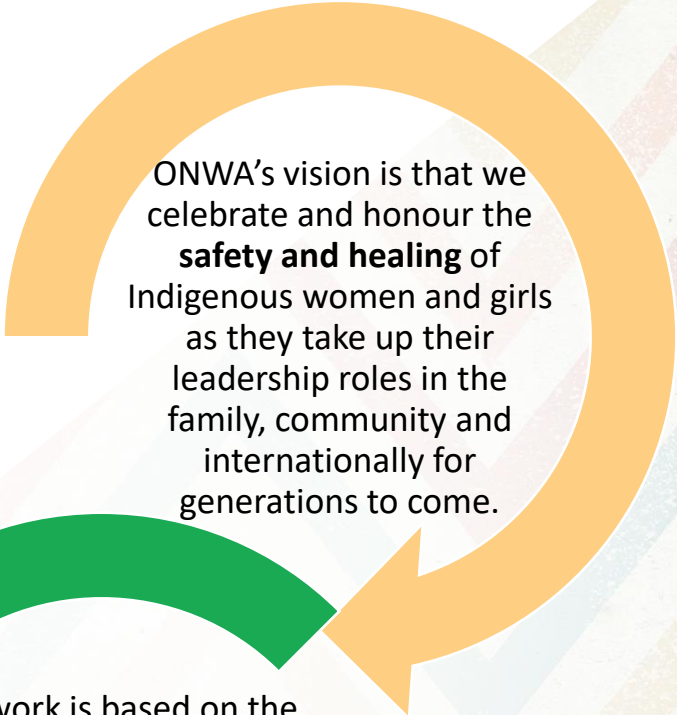


Ontario Native Women's Association


Background on the Ontario Native Women's Association

- ONWA is both an Association of 13 Chapters (incorporated organizations providing frontline services) and 21 Councils (grassroots groups supporting community development models) as well as a front-line service delivery organization with 10 service delivery sites across the province.
- ONWA is the largest and oldest Indigenous women's organization in Canada, with over 50 years of experience and expertise in amplifying Indigenous women's voices and advocating for solutions created and led by Indigenous women for Indigenous women.
- ONWA is a leader in Indigenous women's rights, Indigenous women's access to culturally relevant programming and policy, and Indigenous women's leadership.
- ONWA fills a unique gap in supporting Indigenous women from Ontario but also those from across the country who relocate to Ontario.
- [ONWA's Strategic Picture 2021-2031](#), outlines overarching goals for ONWA as a Centre of Excellence, leading policy and systemic changes that end violence against Indigenous women.

In working towards our shared vision of reconciliation and relationship building, ONWA looks forward to collaborating with municipal partners to reduce barriers to services and improve outcomes for Indigenous women and their families



ONWA's vision is that we celebrate and honour the **safety and healing** of Indigenous women and girls as they take up their leadership roles in the family, community and internationally for generations to come.



Our work is based on the principle that when Indigenous women and girls are healthy and **safe**, our communities then become healthy and safe. We know that in lifting Indigenous women, **we ensure the safety of all.**

Centering Safety of Indigenous Women

- ONWA advocates for increasing Indigenous women's healing and safety on a physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental level.
- Indigenous women's safety is inextricably linked to each of these 9 strategic issues; Indigenous women cannot live in safety while facing fear, disproportionate involvement in child welfare, justice systems, experience of violence, injustice, or stigma.
- ONWA recognizes that all issues that Indigenous women strive to overcome are interconnected and must be responded to in relation to one another – this requires collaboration across governments and with service providers.



Current State: Key Statistics



Ontario has the highest population of Indigenous women in Canada with **211,495** in 2021. The flow of Indigenous people into urban spaces, particularly women, has been steadily increasing over the past few decades in Canada.



In Ontario, 88% of Indigenous women live off reserve.



The Indigenous population in Ontario grew by 8.6% from 2016 to 2021, almost double (5.9%) the rate of non-Indigenous population during same period



Indigenous women and girls are **3 times** more likely than non-Indigenous women to report having been a victim of violent crime; this higher rate of victimization was seen in stranger, acquaintance, and intimate partner violence.



Almost **two-thirds (64%)** of Indigenous women have experienced physical or sexual assault in their lifetimes.

ONWA's Provincial Reach

ONWA offers culturally based programs to enrich a community member's journey or path in life and to empower women to heal the family and move forward in a good way.

ONWA currently delivers services and programs in 23 sites across Ontario.

- 10 of these sites are direct service delivery sites, and the remaining 13 are through our membership organizations (Chapters).



ONWA's Programs and Services

Health

- Community Health Outreach
- Ska-Be "Helper"
- Indigenous Women's Health
- Mindimooyenh Health Clinic
- Youth Life Promotion

Family Wellness

- Centralized Intake/Brief Intervention Services
- Indigenous Healthy Babies Healthy Children
- Community Wellness
- Youth in Transition
- Breaking Free from Family Violence

Crisis Intervention

- Nihdawin (Housing)
- Courage for Change
- Youth in Transition Workers (Human Trafficking)
- Indigenous Sexual Assault Workers

Justice

- Gladue Writers and Gladue Aftercare
- Youth Cultural Intervention
- Indigenous Victim and Family Liaisons

Mental Health and Stabilization

- Trauma Informed Care
- Mental Health and Wellness, including Day Treatment program
- Land Based Healing Camps

Community Development and Capacity Building

- Indigenous Anti-Human Trafficking Liaisons
- Community Safety Liaison
- Indigenous Diabetes Education
- Parenting Across the Lifecycle
- Responsible Gambling Awareness
- Indigenous Sexual Violence Awareness Training
- Indigenous Women's Leadership
- MMIWG Family Support

Policy, Research and Evaluation

- Indigenous women's research
- Policy papers, reports and submissions
- Engagement with community
- Data analysis and performance measurement
- Policy analysis to support advocacy and systemic change
- Indigenous gender based analysis (IGBA)

This journey map demonstrates how ONWA's specialized, culturally-grounded programs and services support Indigenous women's safety and journey to healing and wellness.

Bailey's Journey

Bailey (*pseudonym used*) is a 17-year-old Indigenous youth and mother living in Thunder Bay. She first connected with ONWA when she was getting her COVID-19 vaccine at the **Mindimooyenh Clinic**.

Through **Centralized Intake**, Bailey was referred to the **Courage for Change** program as she was struggling with addiction, entrenched in human trafficking (HT) experiencing homelessness and asked for support in being safe and making lifestyle changes. Bailey's goal was reunification with her child, Benji, who was in care.

During the first year of connecting with the Courage program, contact was sporadic as Bailey continued to struggle with addiction and being entrenched within HT. However, she continued to reach out and felt comfortable in doing so despite periods of no contact because of the non-judgmental, trauma-informed methods that ONWA used to build a relationship with Bailey.

Courage for Change Anti-Human Trafficking Program:

Supports the unique needs of Indigenous women, youth, and girls that are affected by sexual exploitation. All services provide a trauma-informed, anti-oppressive framework with culture-based practices and models to ensure a seamless integration of cultural and mainstream supports.

ONWA's Courage for Change Program achieved provincial cost savings of approx. **\$202.8M** in 2022-23 (e.g. health system impacts)

While working on her plan of care with the Courage program, Bailey found out she was pregnant with her 2nd child. This was the push for Bailey to address more areas of her plan of care, as she did not want this child to go into care.

She began working with the **Nihdawin Housing** program to work towards securing safe and secure independent housing.

ONWA made further internal referrals to **Addictions Navigator, Traditional Healing and to IHBHC** programs. Additional supports were also engaged for prenatal care, physicians, and opioid replacement therapy.

This wrap around circle of care supported Bailey's success in bringing her newborn daughter to their new home and further success of being reunified with her son.

Nihdawin Program: Assists Indigenous women in 7 communities throughout Ontario who are at risk of homelessness, and those experiencing homelessness through culturally grounded services, geared to individual needs, to empower community members to reach attainable goals.

Indigenous Healthy Babies, Healthy Children Program: assists Indigenous families in providing the best opportunities for the healthy development of children 0 – 6 years of age through family home visiting, service coordination, and referrals.

Mental Health & Addictions Day Program: provides access to Culture and Ceremony through Land-based therapy, Traditional Practices and Teachings, and Elders and Traditional Healers.

Breaking Free from Family Violence: supports Indigenous in a culturally rooted, holistic way, so that they are better able to navigate through the complex systems encountered when experiencing involvement with child welfare

ONWA's Nihdawin Program achieved provincial cost savings of approx. **\$24.6M-\$49.9M** in 2022-23. Our Breaking Free from Family Violence Program achieved provincial cost savings of approx. **\$16.3M-\$72.6M** in 2022-23.

After 2 years of working toward reunification, the **Nihdawin** program again supported Bailey in obtaining a larger housing unit to support the reunification process for her older son, Benji, who was in care.

Bailey receives ongoing support from the **Breaking Free from Family Violence** program in navigating the child welfare system that remains involved for the time being.

This truly is a heart-warming success story and speaks to the strength and resiliency of Bailey as a mother and a survivor. She has since secured employment and continues to work toward her long-term goals

ONWA Program Accessed

Systemic Impact Savings

ONWA's 2022-23 Impact

480 Indigenous women and their families housed through ONWA's Nihdawin Program

102 children reunified with their families and & 218 CAS apprehensions prevented through ONWA's Breaking Free from Family Violence Program

489 women supported to exit Human Trafficking through ONWA's Courage for Change Program

**Total Provincial Savings (through these three programs alone):
\$244,000,000 - \$325,000,000**

Working with Indigenous Women's Organizations

Why refer to ONWA or other Indigenous women's organizations in your area?

Indigenous women are the experts in their lives, and their organizations are uniquely positioned to respond their needs. ONWA and its membership have decades of experience delivering culturally grounded services to improve the safety and social determinants of health affecting the wellbeing of Indigenous women, their families and communities.

When should you reach out to ONWA or other local Indigenous women's organizations?

Reach out to ONWA or Indigenous women's organizations in your area when:

- Working with Indigenous women who may need services and supports (referrals);
- Designing and evaluating programs and policies that will impact Indigenous women, their families and communities;
- Opportunities for collaboration arise to advance mutual priorities;
- Considering training, education and capacity building for your staff around trauma informed care and Indigenous women's issues.

What should you consider when developing/evaluating policies, programs and services?

- Make sure to understand what the Indigenous women's organizations in your area are doing about the issue and whether are there opportunities for collaboration. It is likely that Indigenous women's organizations have identified solutions that could be supported/funded.
- Consider how are Indigenous women's organizations involved in the decision-making process.
- Consider how does/will this impact Indigenous women's wellbeing, their right to safety and to self-determination.

Additional Resources



Learn more about the
Ontario Native Women's
Association (ONWA)

onwa.ca/welcome



www.onwa.ca



[@ONWA7](https://www.facebook.com/ONWA7)



[@onwa_official](https://www.instagram.com/onwa_official)



[@_ONWA_](https://twitter.com/_ONWA_)



Video: ONWA's Impact



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TbAc1_W5fdA

MIIGWETCH
(OJIBWE)

KINAHNASKOMIHTIN
(CREE)

NAKURMĪK
(INUKTITUT)

MARSEE
(MICHIF)

NIÁ:WEN
(MOHAWK)

MERCI
(FRENCH)

THANK YOU
(ENGLISH)



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