

Reconciliation with Indigenous Women: The role of municipalities in improving Indigenous women's safety

Concurrent Session: Partnering with Urban Indigenous Organizations
2024 AMO Conference

August 2024



Ontario Native Women's Association

The Ontario Native Women's Association

- 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.
- Established in 1971 to empower and support all Indigenous women and their families through **research, advocacy, policy development, community development and culturally grounded service delivery.**
- Both a membership association, representing **35+** Indigenous women's groups in Ontario, and a front-line service delivery organization, delivering **66+** projects/programs in **23** sites across province.

Vision

ONWA's celebrates and honours 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 elevate the safety of all.**

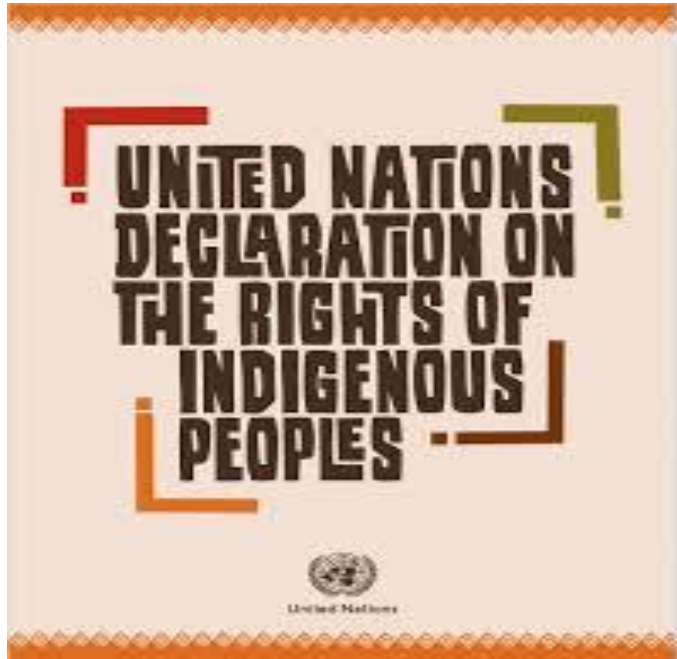
Indigenous Women



- **First Nations** (status and non-status), **Metis** and **Inuit**
- **Strong and resilient** – we are the medicine needed to heal ourselves, families, and communities
- **Experts** in our lives and our organizations are uniquely positioned to respond our needs
- Hold **inherent rights**, which are affirmed by the **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**
- Have the right to be involved in **decisions making** on the issues that impact us and our families
- **Rapidly growing** population in Ontario and Canada – much more than the rest of the female population in Ontario and Canada
- Increasing moving into urban spaces. **88%** of Indigenous peoples in Ontario live outside of First Nation communities in municipalities across the province – we are residents and constituents in municipalities

Do you know about the United Nations Declaration?

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples



- The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is the most comprehensive international instrument on the rights of Indigenous Peoples – it's a roadmap to advance lasting reconciliation.
- It establishes a universal framework of *minimum standards* for the survival, dignity and well-being of the Indigenous Peoples of the world.
- Adopted by the United Nations in 2007 - took over 25 years!
- Canada officially endorsed the UN Declaration in 2016; and implemented legislation (the UNDRIP Act) in 2021.

FOUR KEY PILLARS:

- The right to self-determination
- The right to be recognized as distinct Peoples
- The right to free, prior, and informed consent
- The right to be free from discrimination.

Did you know that all levels of government – including municipalities - have a role and responsibility to implement UNDRIP in your work?

Violence against Indigenous Women

- Indigenous women experience significantly higher rates of gender-based violence and have unique and distinct experiences because of colonization
 - **12 times** more likely to go missing or be murdered than any other women in Canada
 - **3 times** more likely to be murdered than non-Indigenous women in Ontario
- Indigenous women are at higher risk of experiencing *intimate partner violence*, and acts of violence are often more frequent and more severe
 - **61%** of Indigenous women in Canada experienced intimate partner violence in their lifetime (vs 44% non-Indigenous women)
 - **8 times** more likely than non-Indigenous women to be victims of intimate partner homicide than non-Indigenous women in Canada
- National Inquiry into MMIWG2S+ → violence against Indigenous women and girls amounts to “race-based genocide” rooted in colonization, historical/ongoing trauma, racism, and sexism

Intersectionality

- Due to intersecting forms of discrimination and inequality, some groups of Indigenous women are at even greater risk of experiencing gender-based violence.
 - **Child welfare involvement** – Indigenous women are almost **6 times** more likely than non-Indigenous women (11% vs 2.3%) to have been under the **legal responsibility of the government (e.g. child welfare)**, and **81%** who were ever under the legal responsibility of the government have experienced violent victimization in their lifetime¹⁰
 - **Homelessness** – Indigenous women are almost **5 times** more likely than non-Indigenous women (9.4% vs 1.9%) to have ever experienced homelessness, and **91%** of Indigenous women who experienced homelessness also experienced violent victimization¹¹
 - **Disability** – **74%** of Indigenous women with a disability experienced violent victimization¹²
 - **Gender diversity** – **86%** of Indigenous women who identify as 2SLGBTQ+ reported experiencing intimate partner violence¹³

Systems Responses

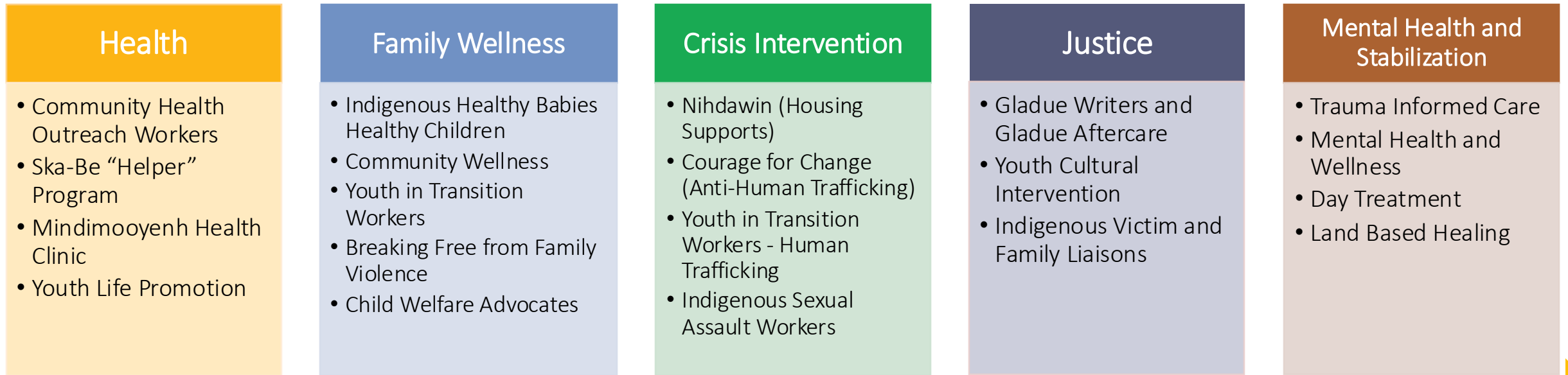
- **Indigenous women are often revictimized by the systems that are intended to support them**
 - Face stigma, judgement, racism, discrimination and mistreatment by service providers, police, justice system that prevents them from getting supports and responses they need
 - Afraid to report sexual assaults and other violence because of poor treatment and not being taken seriously
 - Lack of trust and confidence in mainstream services and systems to meet their needs, culturally inappropriate services
- **Lack of, or differential systems responses: e.g. Renfrew Inquest and National Inquiry into MMIWG**
 - For decades, Indigenous women have been raising the alarm about the thousands of Indigenous women and girls who have gone missing or been murdered
 - Numerous reports and inquiries: Helen Betty Osborn in 1971, ONWA's reports in 1990's/2000's, Amnesty International 2004, multiple UN human rights bodies
 - MMIWG2S+ National Inquiry (2016-2019) resulted in a Final Report with [231 Calls for Justice](#), **56 recommendations apply to municipalities**
 - So far, we have seen little progress on implementation of Calls for Justice, and a lack of investment in Indigenous women's organizations

How many of your communities have declared IPV an epidemic?

Have you read the Calls for Justice, or the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls for Action?

ONWA's Programs and Services

Centralized Intake & Brief Intervention Services



Wholistic wrap around supports: ONWA provides services across the continuum, recognizing the multifaceted nature of the issues that Indigenous women face and the multiple systems that perpetuate violence against them.

ONWA's Provincial Reach

Membership:

- 16 Chapters (incorporated Indigenous women's organizations providing frontline services)
- 21 Councils (grassroots Indigenous women's groups supporting community development models)

Services/projects/programs in 26 sites:

- 10 of these sites are direct service delivery sites, and the remaining 16 are through our membership organizations (Chapters).



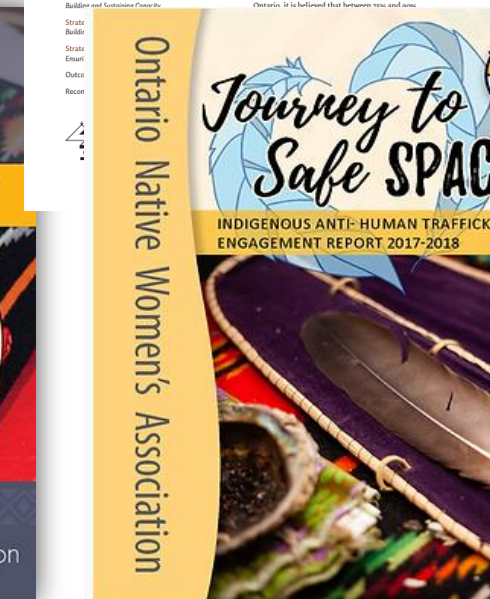
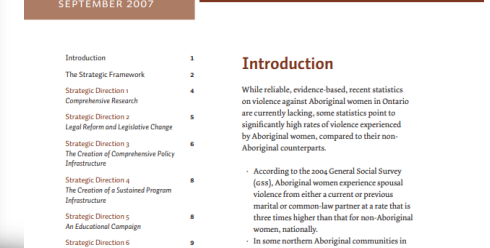
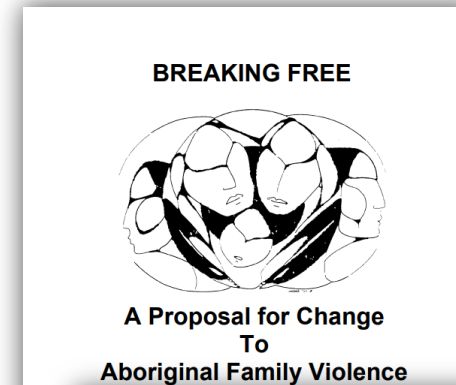
ONWA's Policy and Research

What we do:

- Indigenous women's research
- Community and membership engagement
- Policy analysis, position papers, reports and submissions
- Advocate for systemic change – locally, nationally, internationally
- Indigenous gender-based analysis (IGBA)

Decades of reports and recommendations:

- [Breaking Free From Family Violence Report \(1989\)](#)
- [Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Indigenous Women \(2007\)](#)
- [Breaking Free Breaking Through \(2015\)](#)
- [Journey to Safe Spaces \(2019\)](#)
- [Reconciliation With Indigenous Women Report \(2020\)](#)



ONWA's Community Development and Capacity Building

Education, awareness and capacity development programs across the province to empower communities to address issues that affect Indigenous women and their families, including violence.

Examples:

- Indigenous Anti-Human Trafficking Liaisons
- Mental Health and Addictions Anti-Human Trafficking Liaison
- Community Safety Liaison
- Indigenous Sexual Violence Awareness Training
- MMIWG Family Support



Working with Indigenous Women's Organizations to Address Gender-Based Violence

We encourage municipalities to:

- Understand your role and responsibilities in addressing gender-based violence against Indigenous women
- Proactively build relationships and collaborate with Indigenous women's organizations
- Provide resources (including funding) to support Indigenous women's organizations
- Include Indigenous women's safety as a priority in your responses to IPV epidemic declarations and community plans

What should you consider when taking action to address gender-based violence?

- Understand what Indigenous women's organizations know and are doing about the issue. It is likely that Indigenous women's organizations have identified solutions that could be supported/funded
- Consider the Calls for Justice from the National Inquiry into MMIWG2S+, and ONWA reports
- Involve Indigenous women's organizations in the decision-making process
- Consider how does/will this impact Indigenous women's wellbeing, their right to safety and to self-determination

Does your municipality specifically include improving the safety of Indigenous women in your Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan?

Working with Indigenous Women's Organizations

Why refer to, fund and/or work with to ONWA or other Indigenous women's organizations?

- Indigenous women are the experts in their lives and their organizations are uniquely positioned to respond their needs.
- Indigenous women's organizations 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.
- Municipalities and municipal partners have responsibilities to uphold Indigenous Peoples inherent rights and to implement United Nations Declaration, the TRC's Calls to Action and the MMWIG Calls to Justice



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

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

- Working with Indigenous women who may need services and supports (referrals)
- Identifying community trends and emerging issues and developing action plans and strategies to address these – including gender-based violence, community safety and wellbeing, housing/homelessness, employment and social assistance
- Designing and evaluating services and programs
- Considering training, education and capacity building for your staff around trauma informed care and understanding the experiences of Indigenous women.

We want to hear from you



Using the paper provided and/or the microphone, please share with us:

1. **What do you need** to move forward the MMIWG Calls for Justice, TRC Calls for Action and/or the recommendations to collaborate with Indigenous women's organizations in your municipality?
2. **What current initiatives are underway** in your municipality with respect to safety for Indigenous women and addressing their specific needs?

Additional Resources



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

onwa.ca/welcome



www.onwa.ca



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MIIGWETCH
(OJIBWE)

KINAHNASKOMIHTIN
(CREE)

NAKURMĪK
(INUKTITUT)

MARSEE
(MICHIF)

NIÁ:WEN
(MOHAWK)

MERCI
(FRENCH)

THANK YOU
(ENGLISH)



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