



MINISTER'S ADVISORY COUNCIL ON ABORIGINAL WOMEN
DIRECTION TO GOVERNMENT ON

Taking Action

TO END VIOLENCE AND IMPROVE THE LIVES
OF ABORIGINAL WOMEN IN BC

July 2013

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ABOUT “TAKING ACTION”

In June 2011 when the Minister’s Advisory Council on Aboriginal Women (MACAW) was established, it was mandated to provide advice to government on how to improve the quality of life for Aboriginal women across British Columbia. A key task was to provide advice to government to ensure program supporting Aboriginal women would respond to their needs, build on effective practices and success, and be supported by key partners. “Taking Action” is MACAW’s advice to the Province of British Columbia on the actions it must take to fulfill the vision of *a life free of violence for Aboriginal women and girls*.

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TO END VIOLENCE AND IMPROVE THE LIVES OF ABORIGINAL WOMEN IN BC

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Canada, one in two women are victims of violence, however, Aboriginal women are three times more likely to be victims and eight times more likely for those violent situations to end in homicide. In 2012, the British Columbia Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation established the Ministers Advisory Council on Aboriginal Women (MACAW) and mandated it to provide recommendations to the Province on how to end violence against Aboriginal women.

MACAW calls on the Province of BC to immediately undertake the following:

- 1) Sign an Aboriginal-Government Leadership Memorandum of Understanding;
- 2) Establish a Joint Aboriginal-Governments Partners Table of Stopping Violence Against Aboriginal Women; and
- 3) Establish a Secretariat to support the activities of the MACAW and the Joint Partners Table.

There are other tasks that must be undertaken without delay, such as mandating ending violence as a priority in government, providing essential resources to support the tasks, conducting a cost-benefit analysis of violence against Aboriginal women, creating legislation, and hosting an annual forum. Additional recommendations that amplify these immediate actions begin on page 8.

The MACAW submits these recommendations as an initial set of actions recognizing that much more can be done. A more detailed and evolving action plan must be jointly developed, undertaken and measured over time.

Strategic Directions

1. **Leadership** - To support all leaders to utilize a principle-based approach as outlined in "Taking Action".
 - 1.1 Re-Affirm Commitment
 - 1.2 Memorandum of Understanding
 - 1.3 Political Mandate
 - 1.4 Legislation

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2. **Empower Aboriginal Communities** - To allow communities to design, implement, and evaluate the necessary programs and services required to stop violence against Aboriginal women.
 - 2.1 Provincial Skills Development
 - 2.2 Flexible Funding
3. **Education and Awareness** - To provide all citizens in British Columbia with the information and tools to stop violence against Aboriginal women.
 - 3.1 Provincial Public Awareness Campaign
 - 3.2 Aboriginal Awareness Campaign
 - 3.3 Provincial Youth Forum
4. **Prevention and Early Intervention** - To develop a coordinated and pro-active approach to preventing violence against Aboriginal women.
 - 4.1 Children and Youth Resources
 - 4.2 Poverty Reduction Strategy
 - 4.3 Health Services Access
5. **Healing and Wellness** - To ensure investment in healing and wellness is effective and culturally appropriate.
 - 5.1 Independent Program Review
 - 5.2 Service Provider Aboriginal Training
 - 5.3 Healing and Wellness Support for Men
 - 5.4 Mental Health Treatment Services
6. **Justice Reform** - To ensure the justice system is responsive to the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal people.
 - 6.1 Working Group
 - 6.2 Justice System Review
7. **Research and Data** - To support Aboriginal organizations and communities to undertake comprehensive research, data collection and analysis on issues related to stopping violence against Aboriginal women to inform policy, programs, and services.
 - 7.1 Cost / Benefit Analysis
 - 7.2 Research Funding
 - 7.3 Environmental Assessment / Gap Analysis
 - 7.4 Best Practices
 - 7.5 Options for Restorative Justice Resolution
8. **Accountability** - To demonstrate that the provincial government is committed to creating healthy and safe communities for Aboriginal women through a principle-based approach.
 - 8.1 Secretariat for Aboriginal Women
 - 8.2 Annual Forum
 - 8.3 Legislative Requirements
 - 8.4 ADM Committee

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TO END VIOLENCE AND IMPROVE THE LIVES OF ABORIGINAL WOMEN IN BC

INTRODUCTION

In November 2011, the Minister's Advisory Council on Aboriginal Women (MACAW, "Council") was created to provide advice to the Government of British Columbia on how to end violence and improve the quality of life for Aboriginal women. This plan provides *Direction to Government on Taking Action to End Violence and Improve the Lives of Aboriginal Women in BC* based on the outcome from a two-day dialogue undertaken by the Council in May 2013. It is also founded on work completed by others, such as Aboriginal organizations, and from the outcomes of regional, provincial and national planning sessions that focused on identifying ways to end violence against Aboriginal women and missing women. The key actions recommended by the Council in "Taking Action" will, if implemented by the Province, create healthy and safe communities for First Nations, Aboriginal people and all British Columbians.

It is noted in numerous sources that in British Columbia and across Canada, Aboriginal women are victims of violence at a rate that is three times higher than non-Aboriginal women, and are eight times more likely to die

of violence (Source: Selected Statistics Aboriginal Women in British Columbia and Canada). Violence against our Aboriginal women takes many forms: it exists in domestic relationships, is carried out by strangers, and it is further perpetuated through lateral violence in communities, families, and systemic structures. As society changes, violence is expanding rapidly by taking root in new technology.

Today, too many of us know firsthand the impacts of violence; however, we are strengthened by knowing that violence against our women has not always been pervasive. We also know that we can draw on our courage and resiliency to overcome the tragedies of our past, and to use this strength to make a difference for our communities.

Our commitment to creating healthy and safe communities will require a collective response. In addition to outlining key actions for the Government of British Columbia, the Council calls on the Province to work with the Government of Canada to contribute to work that improves the health and well-being of

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Aboriginal people. Areas identified for collaboration include housing, health care services, education, economic opportunities, and standard of living/income.

The Council also commits to engaging our political leaders. We know that their leadership is integral for creating communities that support and nurture our women and children.

As a measure to determine the effectiveness of plans, we recommend using the Social Determinants of Health (see Glossary, page 26). They can reveal progress and be a source to shape actions that lead to the improvement of quality of life of Aboriginal women. Social determinants reveal many aspects of a person's and society's quality of life, especially health. When access

to the resources that support improved quality of life and health are absent, then problems are permitted to flourish. The Council encourages all governments - Aboriginal, provincial and federal - to adopt a more holistic approach to its programs, services and policies which include the broad social determinants of health when working with Aboriginal people.

While the activities in "Taking Action" are specific to the provincial government, the successful implementation of the plan requires we all work together and commit to ending violence against our women. The Council looks forward to supporting the Province to implement the plan outlined, and requests that we meet annually to jointly review progress in our province.

"Continued violence against Aboriginal women leads to the destruction of Aboriginal communities and cultures. When a government doesn't protect the most fundamental rights of its women, it damages its reputation and that of its leaders."

– Wendy John, MACAW Chair

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ABOUT THE MINISTER'S ADVISORY COUNCIL ON ABORIGINAL WOMEN

In June 2011, the Province of British Columbia co-hosted the *Collaboration to End Violence: National Aboriginal Women's Forum* with the Native Women's Association of Canada. Following the event, the Province created the Minister's Advisory Council on Aboriginal Women (MACAW). The Council includes ten Aboriginal women from across BC, who are leaders in fields related to Aboriginal women's health, social, economic development, justice, culture, family and spiritual needs (see **MACAW Member Profiles**, page 31). The Council was mandated to provide advice to government on how to improve the quality of life for Aboriginal women across British Columbia. The full *Terms of Reference* is available on page 34.

“The establishment of the advisory council will support the successful implementation of the commitment of the Province to end violence against Aboriginal women and work to empower those women.”
– *MACAW Terms of Reference*

OUR VISION

A world where all Aboriginal people live free of violence and are empowered to achieve their full human potential.

OUR MISSION

We will work with Aboriginal leaders, all levels of government and other partners to encourage development and implementation of ongoing and culturally appropriate approaches to:

- ▶ Prevent all forms of violence;
- ▶ Increase access for victims and perpetrators of violence to a full range of services; and
- ▶ Strengthen the implementation of laws, policies and programs to end violence.

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UNDERSTANDING VIOLENCE AGAINST ABORIGINAL WOMEN

In 2006, BC's total Aboriginal population was 196,075 or 5% of the total population. The Aboriginal population is young, where roughly 44% of its female population is under 25 years of age. Violence against Aboriginal women is higher than the general population; however, there are many Aboriginal initiatives and organizations that are confronting it and taking action to stop violence. The current situation though can seem to be an insurmountable challenge.

- ▶ Between 1999 and 2004, Aboriginal women reported being a victim of spousal violence at a rate three times higher than that of non-Aboriginal women. From 1997 to 2000, the rate of spousal homicide for Aboriginal women was identified as eight times higher than the rate for non-Aboriginal women.
- ▶ The biggest risk factor for being a victim of violence is poverty. Aboriginal women aged 15 and over have higher rates of unemployment than non-Aboriginal women; there is a ten percentage point spread between the unemployment rates of Aboriginal women (16.2%) than non-Aboriginal women (6.2%) in BC (Statistics Canada, 2009).
- ▶ Poverty, addiction to drugs and alcohol, can lead to homelessness, and has been a root cause of women working in the sex trade. Aboriginal women from small and remote communities may need to travel to other towns and cities for work, socializing, and health and social services that are not available in their home area; without their own transportation or other options, many resolve to hitchhike. In northern British Columbia from 1969 to 2005, 18 women, most of whom were Aboriginal, were last seen along what has been dubbed the "Highway of Tears" (Hwy 16, Hwy 97 and Hwy 5). 13 were murdered and five remain missing.
- ▶ Low education levels and economic dependence are also common characteristics of women who experience violence, and are identified as major barriers to safety and well-being. Educated women were more likely to leave a violent situation than women who were uneducated. In British Columbia, the graduation rates amongst Aboriginal women are low, thus exposing them to greater risk of violence.

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- ▶ While there is much awareness of spousal violence, we must also recognize that violence is increasing in other areas too. The risk of violence from dating partners is rising, and violent behavior is appearing more frequently in new technology, such as bullying and sexual harassment in cyber space.

SOURCES: Measuring Violence Against Women: Statistical Trends. Stats Canada; An Analysis of Gaps and Areas for Improvement in Programs and Services in British Columbia. March 2011; A Discussion Paper to Support Community Focus Groups; Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, March 2011; Collaboration to End Violence: National Aboriginal Women's Forum. AMR Planning & Consulting, July 2011.

“Between 2001 and 2011, at least 8% of all murdered women aged 15 years and older were Aboriginal, double their representation in the Canadian population (4%). With half of all homicides (50%), the Aboriginal identify of the homicide victim was unknown.”

– *Measuring Violence Against Women: Statistical Trends*

PRINCIPLE-BASED APPROACH TO MAKING CHANGE

The Province has a responsibility to take action towards stopping violence. In order to be effective, the Province must commit to operating with a new relationship, principle-based approach. MACAW proposes that the provincial government adopt the following principles when working with Aboriginal people.

- ▶ **Culturally-Based** - Aboriginal women, children and families live by cultural values and principles that can differ significantly from those of other societies. Programs and services must be designed and delivered in a culturally sensitive and appropriate manner that recognizes the importance of traditional and cultural

knowledge and identity, and builds on the resiliency and capacity of First Nations, Inuit and Métis women, youth and men.

- ▶ **Community-Driven, Engaged and Led Responses** - It must be understood that as Aboriginal people, we define ourselves. Aboriginal communities are best positioned to understand the needs of our people today and of the future, and how to respond to their needs. The Province has to hear the voices of our Aboriginal women, men and children to ensure that strategies and initiatives draw on Aboriginal cultures and traditions and are delivered in culturally appropriate ways, to ensure they are truly responsive and successful. We

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must be engaged in defining the challenges, identifying the needs, and be involved in developing and implementing solutions, such as programs and services. It is essential that communities and organizations have the capacity to engage meaningfully in the development and implementation of responses to ending violence. Where challenges exist, all partners are to work together to identify appropriate solutions so that meaningful and inclusive participation may be achieved. When Aboriginal communities are empowered, we are better equipped to meet the needs of our people.

- ▶ **Engaged and Accountable Leadership** - The Province and its leadership at all levels must prioritize ending violence against Aboriginal women and girls, including allocating resources, and demonstrating leadership in addressing issues. The Province's actions and responses must be transparent, based on integrity, honesty, trust and respect, and be accountable, while concurrently being risk takers to create tailored, unique and innovative responses. Leaders must show the way by providing support, direction, and as necessary, enforcement of the will of the Province to end violence against Aboriginal women. The Premier, Ministers and other leaders must demonstrate guidance and willingness to improve the lives of Aboriginal women, families and communities, and at times be the first to

implement innovative and creative solutions that reflect the unique and cultural-based lives of Aboriginal people in British Columbia.

- ▶ **Awareness, Acknowledgement, Learning and Recognition** - There needs to be a deeper understanding of the history and experiences of Aboriginal women and peoples in British Columbia by the Province, as well as by its agencies, programs and representatives. This includes recognition of the impact of the Indian residential school system, as well as other policies of assimilation and the effects on Aboriginal communities today through shared knowledge.
- ▶ **Collaborative, Equitable Relationship** - The Province must work collaboratively with all involved parties - like communities, regions, provinces, federal departments - to build respectful relationships that define solutions that are effective and equitable. Formulas must not drive the solutions. Respectful relationships include a willingness to learn about and value what each has to offer. There must be ongoing, clear and consistent communication; inclusion in processes; and mutual accountabilities. Relationships are critical to effective partnerships and meaningful action. The Province has to strive to integrate programs and services to create holistic networks accessible to Aboriginal women, youth, children, seniors/Elders and men.

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Programs and services must be equitably available throughout BC, delivered based on need, rather than formula, and provide high quality services.

- ▶ **Safety** - Special attention must be taken to ensure that all services and supports for Aboriginal women and girls are provided in ways that support their physical and emotional safety.

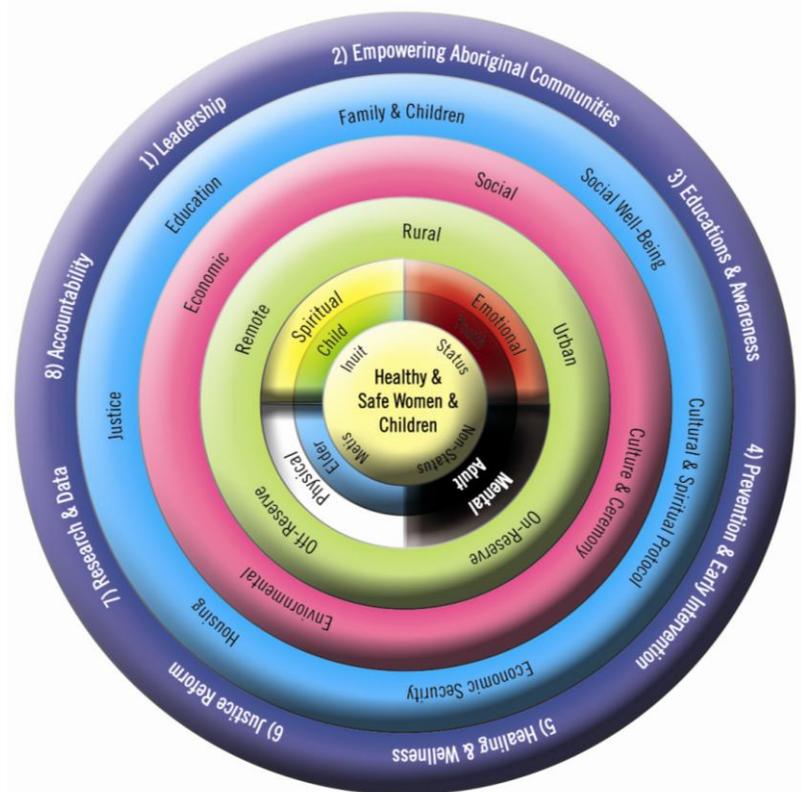
“The harm caused by such violence can last a lifetime and span generations, with serious adverse affects on health, education, employment, crime and on the economic well-being of individuals, families, communities and societies.”

– World Health Organization
(www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs239/en/)

A HOLISTIC APPROACH

MACAW believes a holistic approach, is required to end violence against Aboriginal women as illustrated in Figure 1. The diagram is modeled after common Aboriginal philosophies. Many Aboriginal people believe that everything is interconnected, and understand the importance of balance and harmony.

MACAW feels the Holistic Action circle is an effective guide to government and service providers to ensure women and children are at the center living in safe and healthy communities. Surrounding women and children are the supports and systems required to create this safe environment. The outer ring elements are the MACAW strategic directions which are the key action areas foundational to this plan.



LEGEND

- Focus
- Circle Balance
- Residence
- Activity / Lifestyle
- Support Services (micro)
- Strategic Directions (macro)

Figure 1 - MACAW Holistic Action Circle

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TAKING ACTION - DIRECTIONS TO CHANGE

By adopting a new principle-based approach, the Province will demonstrate its commitment to improve the lives of Aboriginal women by working respectfully in relationship and partnership with Aboriginal women, communities and allies. A long-term commitment to action is needed; yet, immediate actions are essential. The submission of this Action Plan to the Province is one of the mandates of MACAW as directed by the Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation.

Strategic Direction 1: Leadership

In British Columbia, several ministries have mandates with regard to stopping violence including Justice (e.g. through investigations, victim services), Health (e.g. through women's policy), Children and Family Development (e.g. through child protection, violence prevention), and Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation (e.g. through Minister's Advisory Council on Aboriginal Women, Aboriginal Affairs Working Group - Violence Against Aboriginal Women and Girls). Yet, these efforts frequently lack the connections that strengthen their effectiveness, making it challenging to create safe and healthy communities.

Systemic change goes beyond the immediate processes; it involves new ways of applying resources to underlying causes and results in tangible and enduring benefits. It employs innovative, creative and at times,

risk-taking solutions. It will be deemed effective when violence against Aboriginal women and the underlying causes have been eliminated. For the Province, it requires the Premier employ an inclusive approach, directing all layers of leadership straight through to the front-line staff, to make ending violence against Aboriginal women a priority. The way the Province operates requires alteration to its programs, policies, systems, funding streams and services, which is driven by employing equity as the driver rather than equality.

We believe it is important to emphasize that systemic change includes critical reflection on values, structures, policies, programs, and legislation, not just resources.

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GOAL: To support all leaders to utilize a principle-based approach as outlined in “Taking Action”.

Specific Actions

- 1.1 **Re-Affirm Commitment** - As time passes and climates change, the Province needs to confirm its ongoing support to improve the lives of Aboriginal women and communities.
RECOMMEND: The Premier and Minister must reaffirm Government’s commitment to working with the Minister’s Advisory Council on Aboriginal Women (MACAW) to ensure that actions are Aboriginal-led.
- 1.2 **Memorandum of Understanding** - Reaffirming the Province’s commitment is often best demonstrated by signing a declaration that outlines that pledge.
RECOMMEND: Sign the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Province and Aboriginal leadership to signal shared political leadership to end violence against Aboriginal women.
- 1.3 **Political Mandate** - Also essential to the Provinces pledge to end violence

and to creating safe and healthy communities for Aboriginal women, is the need for the Premier to mandate all its ministries, as well as programs, services and initiatives to include this mandate within its strategic plans and to take action.

RECOMMEND: That the Premier take the lead by identifying “Ending Violence against Aboriginal Women” as a priority and direct the Ministers to make this a mandate for their staff.

- 1.4 **Legislation** - The strongest manner that a government can demonstrate its commitment is through legislation. Legislation guarantees there will be accountability and resources available to fulfill the mandate and address the topic.
RECOMMEND: That the Province conduct a Legislative review, and that this review lead to the creation of legislation (see Action 8i.3) that protects and empowers women, and for those that do become victims of violence that there is support in communities where they live, and that the judicial system protects them from further victimization.

“To achieve lasting change, it is important to enact legislation and develop policies that protect women; address discrimination against women and promote gender equality; and help to move towards more peaceful cultural norms.” – World Health Organization (www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs239/en/)

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Strategic Direction 2:

Empower Aboriginal Communities

In British Columbia there are over 200 First Nations and Métis and urban Aboriginal community groups. Within our Aboriginal communities are values, principles and practices that have stood the test of time. We are sustained by the values, teachings and laws passed to us by our ancestors who cared for and protected all of our peoples; we recognize the damage and disruption colonization brought to our communities and families through residential schools, foster care and other assimilation policies that replaced our ancestral ways; yet the obstacles that have impaired our people from rebuilding healthy, vibrant communities that respect our women, our children, our Elders, our men, are not all within the control or influence of First Nations and Aboriginal peoples within British Columbia. Many of these require the Province's support and involvement to remove the barriers that impede community empowerment.

GOAL: To allow communities to design, implement, and evaluate the necessary programs and services required to stop violence against Aboriginal women.

Specific Actions

2.1 Provincial Skills Development - There are thousands of service providers who work with victims of violence. The Province must ensure these people have the knowledge, understanding and compassion to provide services to Aboriginal people.

RECOMMEND: Mandate the provincial government to develop the knowledge and skills of its representatives to effectively work with Aboriginal people.

2.2 Flexible Funding - Establish a funding program that enables Aboriginal communities to develop initiatives that prevent violence against women, to intervene and as necessary to provide postvention support services. The type of initiatives must be community-driven.

RECOMMEND: Create a flexible funding program that enables Aboriginal communities to resource Aboriginal-led programs and services.

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Strategic Direction 3: Education and Awareness

Education and awareness informs all communities of the implications of continued violence against Aboriginal women, and how all aspects of society are affected. It promotes understanding of the underlying vulnerabilities of Aboriginal women, men and children to root causes and existing conditions that promote continued violence. Education and awareness also provide guidelines for identifying signs and how to deal with situations that may arise, and the role of community in addressing these situations.

We believe that greater awareness about violence in all of its forms must be part of an awareness campaign. It cannot concentrate solely on domestic violence and rape.

Effective awareness campaigns will contribute to identifying what violence is, preventing it, and lead to the elimination of those situations.

GOAL: To provide all citizens in British Columbia with the information and tools to stop violence against Aboriginal women.

Specific Actions

3.1 Provincial Public Awareness

Campaign - The Province must ensure its public awareness campaign includes information on all forms of violence against Aboriginal women. This campaign must be comprehensive, utilizing social media and other communication methods (e.g. events), that the public utilizes to acquire its information. It must also emphasize that a root cause of violence is racism against Aboriginal women and Aboriginal people generally. The public campaign requires a minimum 3-year commitment.

RECOMMEND: Develop a comprehensive provincial public awareness campaign that addresses the root causes of violence against Aboriginal women with a minimum three year commitment.

3.2 Aboriginal Awareness Campaign -

Within Aboriginal communities, the impact of colonization and the destruction of cultural values and principles have given way to lateral violence. Funding for Aboriginal communities to develop and implement

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their own awareness plans that respond to the circumstances within that community is required to target concentrated areas of violence and stop further victimization.

RECOMMEND: Support the development and implementation of an Aboriginal awareness campaign that emphasizes cultural teachings in stopping violence against Aboriginal women.

- 3.3 **Provincial Youth Forum** - Youth are subjected to a wide range of messages in their everyday life, the influences of these outside forces can promote improper behavior and attitudes. Exposure to violence against women and the attitudes that endorse it are proven factors that perpetuate violence. As youth are the largest

segment of the Aboriginal population, it is critical that a strategy be developed that responds to their needs, and takes into consideration their lifestyle including the ways they receive their messages. This strategy would reach and engage youth (female and male), using tools, like social media and virtual mentoring, to create awareness of risk factors, like behavior and attitudes, and the support services that prevent and provide support, and most of all, demonstrate behavior that eliminates violence against women.

RECOMMEND: Host a provincial youth forum with the Minister's Advisory Council on Aboriginal Women that emphasizes the role that self-esteem and cultural awareness play in violence prevention and healing.

Strategic Direction 4:

Prevention and Early Intervention

Prevention and Early Intervention are actions that stop violence from first occurring, in addition to preventing violence from reoccurring. Violence prevention has focused on ways and services to help women leave violent situations; however, prevention must occur sooner, it must stop violence from starting.

Prevention can be achieved through multiple actions, such as promotion of constructive lifestyles and norms that discourage all forms of violence. Prevention is also an ongoing process that must be relevant to different groups, generations, and cultures. The initiatives target in three ways: 1) the public universally, 2) individuals or subgroups who are at risk of being victims or perpetrators or enablers of violence, and 3)

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indicated preventive actions that focus on high-risk individuals. These groups are both inside and outside Aboriginal communities.

GOAL: To develop a coordinated and proactive approach to preventing violence against Aboriginal women.

Specific Actions

4.1 Children and Youth Resources - The damage to a child or youth exposed to violence can last a lifetime; every child has the right to be nurtured and safe. In British Columbia, Aboriginal children are witness to violence at higher rates than children of non-Aboriginal parents; this can lead to health and wellness issues, and promote intergenerational violence. Studies show that exposure to violence and negative attitudes of women, increases the risk of a man being violent against women, and for women, increases the likelihood that she will be abused.

RECOMMEND: The Province must allocate resources for Aboriginal-led children and youth community based services.

4.2 Poverty Reduction Strategy - Poverty is a leading cause that exposes Aboriginal women to violence. A poverty reduction strategy specific to Aboriginal women is required immediately to identify solutions, and the partners and resources essential to improving the quality of life for women.

RECOMMEND: The Province must develop and implement a poverty reduction strategy.

4.3 Health Services Access - Aboriginal women and men require a range of health services that address the underlying vulnerabilities to violence, and services that enable them to overcome violence. These services must be readily and easily available to them in their communities, being void of financial and logistical barriers and delivered in culturally-respectful ways.

RECOMMEND: Improve access to health services for Aboriginal women and men.

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Strategic Direction 5: Healing and Wellness

The Province has an opportunity to invest in healing and wellness in a way that improves the quality of life of all citizens. For Aboriginal peoples, health and wellness are an integral element of overall well-being, encompassing physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual. The issue though, for many Aboriginal communities outside of key urban settings, is that access to health services is inadequate.

Health and wellness services must provide prevention and support. For Aboriginal women experiencing violence, these services must be readily available and accessible, and be without economic, geographic and systemic barriers while being culturally sensitive and respectful.

GOAL: To ensure investment in healing and wellness is effective and culturally appropriate.

Specific Actions

- 5.1 **Independent Program Review** - BC has developed a wide range of initiatives and programs to end violence against women; however, it is uncertain whether these programs are able to respond to the needs of Aboriginal people and communities.

RECOMMEND: Undertake an independent review and analysis of current programs and funding intended to stop violence against Aboriginal women to evaluate the effectiveness of the investment, including whether the programs meet the needs of Aboriginal people.

- 5.2 **Service Provider Aboriginal Training** - Health practitioners along with a wide range of provincial ministry programs and agencies, such as justice, employment, housing, and other providers that offer services for women and programs that relate to ending violence require Aboriginal awareness / relationship training. Aboriginal women often only have access to mainstream programs and services, yet the service providers may not have the foundation to understand how to provide support to them.

RECOMMEND: Require all service providers (health, justice, family services, housing, and employment) have training in the history of Aboriginal people and in the Province's new relationship commitment to ensure that services are culturally respectful.

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5.3 Healing and Wellness Support for

Men - Men who abuse women typically have their own histories of trauma; they too need compassion, empathy and opportunities to heal. A continuum of programs and services must be available to empower men to overcome traumas, change attitudes, and learn alternate behaviors that promote a more positive identity and sense of belonging. Men must be engaged in the effort to end violence against Aboriginal women.

***RECOMMEND:** Programs and services must be developed to support male abusers, and especially for those who have witnessed or been victims of abuse.*

5.4 Mental Health Treatment Services -

The Province immediately develops more mental health and treatment services for women, men and families. Mental health is a *social determinant of health* and without good mental health, violence can cultivate. Support for women, men and families are required at all stages of violence - prevention, intervention, and postvention.

***RECOMMEND:** Ensure there are accessible mental health services available province-wide for Aboriginal people.*

Strategic Direction 6: Justice Reform

Justice plays a critical role in preventing and intervening in violence. All parts of our justice system, whether policing, legislation, or courts, contribute to ending or facilitating further violence against women. Other regions in Canada and worldwide are taking legislative action that increases the protection to women at all stages and in all forms of violence. In British Columbia, however, there is no legislation specific to protecting Aboriginal women from violence.

GOAL: To ensure the justice system is responsive to the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal people.

Specific Actions

6.1 Working Group - The present justice system is operated often without the involvement of Aboriginal people. The high rates of violence against Aboriginal women, of missing and murdered Aboriginal women, and of Aboriginal

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people incarcerated indicate that Aboriginal people must be involved in advising on its operation, development and improvements. An Aboriginal-driven process, such as an Aboriginal Working Group, would identify and advise the Province on improvements required in the justice system. Where the municipal and federal governments have jurisdiction over policing and are responsible for legislation, their involvement and actions must too reflect the will of the Province of British Columbia and of Aboriginal people.

RECOMMEND: *Establish a working group comprised of Aboriginal representatives to review relevant*

legislation from an Aboriginal-specific and gender-based analysis, and develop recommendations for reform.

- 6.2 **Justice System Review** - A review of the Justice system is required to uncover areas where system barriers exist that deter Aboriginal women and people from participating and receiving fair services. A review of the Justice System must result in the development of an action plan for achieving an improved justice system.

RECOMMEND: *Conduct a justice system review for systemic barriers for Aboriginal women and people, and to ensure the justice system is equitable.*

“Nine in ten non-spousal sexual assaults were never reported to police.”

– *Measuring Violence Against Women, Stats Canada, February 25, 2013,*

www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2013001/article/11766/hl-fs-eng.htm

Strategic Direction 7: Research and Data

More information is needed on whether the initiatives, programs and services available in British Columbia that relate to violence are effectively addressing and fulfilling the needs of Aboriginal women and their communities to end violence.

Research along with the actions that are recommended in the other Strategic Directions is required in order to determine whether progress is being made, and where improvements are essential to respond and anticipate an ever changing society. This broad view must include an assessment of structure,

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process and outcome, and be based on Aboriginal community-driven standards.

GOAL: To support Aboriginal organizations and communities to undertake comprehensive research, data collection and analysis on issues related to stopping violence against Aboriginal women to inform policy, programs, and services.

Specific Actions

7.1 Cost / Benefit Analysis - Violence against Aboriginal women affects more than the victim, it affects her children, family and community, and the organizations and governments that provide services to the victims. There are costs to a government in health, social and economic initiatives, and when a government fails to effectively create a safe environment, the credibility of that government is questioned.

***RECOMMEND:** That the Province of British Columbia immediately conduct an analysis that outlines the cost of violence against Aboriginal women, and the benefits to ending it. The study would review the impact of violence on the economy, health, families, cultures and community.*

7.2 Research Funding - Within Aboriginal communities specialized research is often needed on matters that deter ending violence. Aboriginal communities and organizations are best suited to conduct this research.

***RECOMMEND:** Allocate funding for Aboriginal organizations and communities to conduct research, data collection, and analysis.*

7.3 Environmental Assessment / Gap Analysis - Acknowledging that roughly 1 in 4 women report violence, and that unreported crimes can result in greater occurrences in the future, it can be concluded that there are barriers and gaps that deter women, especially Aboriginal women, from reporting these crimes. An evaluation of existing programs and services within British Columbia is needed to identify any systemic barriers like cultural elements, economic, location of services, fees and system structures, lateral violence systems, and service provider knowledge and awareness of Aboriginal people.

***RECOMMEND:** Conduct an environmental assessment of services for women that are victims of violence, and identify where gaps exist.*

Taking Action

7.4 Best Practices - Countless

organizations and regions have devised strategies and taken action to end violence against women. The Province can learn means from these on how to eliminate violence against Aboriginal women.

RECOMMEND: Conduct participatory research to identify the best practices that have been effective in reducing and eliminating violence against women.

7.5 Options for Restorative Justice

Resolution - Restorative Justice is an approach that focuses on the needs of the victims and offenders, as well as the community. In a reformed justice system victims will take an active role in the judicial system, while offenders

are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions. This form of judicial system has been welcomed in Aboriginal communities as a more suitable and comprehensive means to better addressing the full scope of the problem, and to achieving just solutions that best suit the needs of the victim and the community, and more effectively enable rehabilitation of the offender. A Restorative Justice approach is recommended added to the BC justice system, as an option to mainstream legal options.

RECOMMEND: Conduct a study that identifies the options of Restorative Justice Resolution options and their potential effectiveness in British Columbia.

Strategic Direction 8: Accountability

Accountability demonstrates to Aboriginal people the fulfillment, commitment and value that the Province has in its relationship with Aboriginal people to end violence against Aboriginal women and to improve their lives and communities. Accountability requires ongoing communications, engagement, and leadership directing and enforcing the mandate (see previous **Strategic Direction 1: Leadership and Leadership Principle**). It is confirmed through leadership's involvement in

events and discussions, providing support, accountability and review.

GOAL: To demonstrate that the provincial government is committed to creating healthy and safe communities for Aboriginal women through a principle-based accountable approach.

Taking Action

Specific Actions

8.1 Secretariat for Aboriginal Women -

Provincial actions to end violence against Aboriginal women must be accountable to Aboriginal communities. A Secretariat is required to oversee these initiatives, provide advice and support to the Province, and annually conduct an evaluation of the Province's actions, as well as specific Ministries and agencies, in their role of ending violence against and improving the lives of Aboriginal women in BC.

RECOMMEND: Establish an Aboriginal Women's Secretariat to support the work of the Minister's Advisory Council on Aboriginal Women and the implementation of "Taking Action".

8.2 **Annual Forum** - Forums provide a venue for stakeholders in ending violence against Aboriginal women to discuss the outcomes of their initiatives, identify challenges, share information, and be accountable. An Annual Forum will bring together Provincial Ministries, agencies and programs with the Aboriginal community, and others, such as federal and private sector initiatives. The forum would be a venue for reporting on progress and actions, for coordination of activities, and a place to revise activities.

RECOMMEND: Co-host with the Minister's Advisory Council on Aboriginal Women an annual forum that brings Aboriginal women, government, and community organizations together to evaluate progress on stopping violence against Aboriginal women.

8.3 **Legislative Requirements** - Legislation must also include a required reporting mechanism by the Provincial ministries to be accountable for its actions (or lack of) and provide resources to contribute to ending violence against Aboriginal women. Through legislation, the Province would mandate the coordination of provincial Ministries, agencies and programs that have a role in addressing violence against women, and those that provide support services related to improving the quality of life of Aboriginal women (e.g. health, housing, education, employment and training, justice).

RECOMMEND: Develop legislative requirement for ministries to annually report on efforts to stop violence against Aboriginal women (i.e. as per the Multiculturalism Act).

Taking Action

8.4 **ADM Committee** - When the Province commits to ending violence against Aboriginal women, it must coordinate its activities for effectiveness and consistency. Assistant Deputy Ministers play a critical role to ensuring the fulfillment of the Government mandate. ADMs are often also prime contacts to other related federal and private sector initiatives.

***RECOMMEND:** Establish an ADM Committee from relevant ministries that will meet at a minimum four times per year, including twice per year with the Minister's Advisory Council on Aboriginal Women.*

Taking Action

IMPLEMENTATION

The immediate actions are:

- a) THAT the Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation and the Premier meet with MACAW to receive and discuss the Action Plan; and
- b) THAT this meeting lead to the immediate signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Province and Aboriginal leadership to signal shared political commitment to ending violence; and
- c) THAT the Province establish a Joint Government Aboriginal Partners Table on stopping violence against Aboriginal women, and government partners report up through a Cross Ministry ADM Committee which oversees implementation, coordination and government accountability of actions; and
- d) THAT the Province create an Aboriginal Women's Secretariat that would coordinate efforts across government; and
- e) THAT the Premier mandate the relevant Ministries to make ending violence against Aboriginal women a priority, and provide the resources/support required; and
- f) THAT the Province conduct research on the cost and benefits of ending violence against Aboriginal women; and
- g) THAT the Province develop legislation that will protect all Aboriginal women against violence; and
- h) THAT there be commitment by the Province to host an annual forum which brings together Provincial Ministries, initiatives, programs and services with Aboriginal and community organizations.

Each of the actions listed in the eight Strategic Directions above focus on either a systemic or administrative change, or relate to addressing a stage of violence (Prevention, Intervention, Postvention). The following table lists the actions along with their focus, and the recommended implementation period associated with each Strategic Direction.

Taking Action

STRATEGIC DIRECTION	GOAL	ACTIONS	TIME
1 Leadership	To support all leaders to utilize a principle-based approach as outlined in “Taking Action”.	1.1 Re-Affirm Commitment	Short
		1.2 Memorandum of Understanding	Short
		1.3 Political Mandate	Short
		1.4 Legislation	Mid
2 Empower Aboriginal Communities	To allow communities to design, implement, and evaluate the necessary programs and services required to stop violence against Aboriginal women.	2.1 Provincial Skills Development	Mid
		2.2 Flexible Funding	Short
3 Education and Awareness	To provide all citizens in British Columbia with the information and tools to stop violence against Aboriginal women.	3.1 Provincial Public Awareness Campaign	Short
		3.2 Aboriginal Awareness Campaign	Short
		3.3 Provincial Youth Forum	Short
4 Prevention and Early Intervention	To develop a coordinated and pro-active approach to preventing violence against Aboriginal women.	4.1 Children and Youth Resources	Short
		4.2 Poverty Reduction Strategy	Mid
		4.3 Health Services Access	Mid
5 Healing and Wellness	To ensure investment in healing and wellness is effective and culturally appropriate.	5.1 Independent Program Review	Short
		5.2 Service Provider Aboriginal Training	Mid
		5.3 Healing and Wellness Support for Men	Mid
		5.4 Mental Health Treatment Services	Mid
6 Justice Reform	To ensure the justice system is responsive to the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal people.	6.1 Working Group	Short
		6.2 Justice System Review	Short

Taking Action

STRATEGIC DIRECTION	GOAL	ACTIONS	TIME
7 Research and Data	To support Aboriginal organizations and communities to undertake comprehensive research, data collection and analysis on issues related to stopping violence against Aboriginal women to inform policy, programs, and services.	7.1 Cost / Benefit Analysis	Short
		7.2 Research Funding	Mid
		7.3 Environmental Assessment / Gap Analysis	Short
		7.4 Best Practices	Short
		7.5 Options for Restorative Justice Resolution	Mid
8 Accountability	To demonstrate that the provincial government is committed to creating healthy and safe communities for Aboriginal women through a principle-based approach.	8.1 Secretariat for Aboriginal Women	Mid
		8.2 Annual Forum	Short
		8.3 Legislative Requirements	Mid
		8.4 ADM Committee	Short

IMPLEMENTATION: Short-term = 0-1 year Mid-term = 2-5 years

Taking Action

ONGOING RELATIONSHIPS, ACCOUNTABILITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

MACAW believes that violence against Aboriginal women can be ended through ongoing collaboration based on mutually respectful relationships and accountability. The Province must direct its Ministries and initiatives to make this a priority, and work collaboratively with other agencies and governments, such as federal and municipal,

while ensuring the ongoing involvement of the Aboriginal community.

The progress of the Provincial actions must be reviewed regularly through monitoring and assessing the results against various health determinants, as well as socio and economic factors. Direct and indirect measures are listed below.

DIRECT:

- ▶ Services and programs - number and location
- ▶ Rate of violence against Aboriginal women
- ▶ Rate of Aboriginal children in care
- ▶ Rate of Aboriginal women homicide
- ▶ Rate of Aboriginal women in prison - related to violence
- ▶ Rate of men in prison - related to violence against Aboriginal women
- ▶ Rate of Aboriginal women and children living in poverty
- ▶ Rate of high school completion (and other training and education)

INDIRECT:

- ▶ Social Determinants of Health
- ▶ Housing
- ▶ Poverty
- ▶ Mobility

Taking Action

OUTCOMES

Through the Province implementing the recommended activities outlined in this Action Plan, the vision of the MACAW and all Aboriginal peoples can be achieved being, “A world where all Aboriginal people live free of violence and are empowered to achieve their full human potential. We believe this vision is a right of all people.” We further believe British Columbia can be a place where...

- ▶ Violence in our families and communities no longer exists.
- ▶ Our children and young girls are safe and empowered to live up to their full potential.
- ▶ There is no more poverty.
- ▶ Aboriginal voices are heard and taken seriously.
- ▶ Men treat their family with respect.
- ▶ Services are available throughout the whole province.
- ▶ Aboriginal people come together with Government to find a new way to move forward - doing things differently with a new relationship.

SOURCE: MACAW First Annual Report, January 2013.

“We don’t want to see any more inquiries into murdered and missing women or any forums on the Highway of Tears – that is why we are here – we must ensure that people talk about and commit to taking action to end abuse and violence”
– *First Annual Report of the Minister’s Advisory Council on Aboriginal Women*

Glossary

Aboriginal - refers to status and non-status First Nations, Métis, and Inuit populations in Canada.

Intervention - are actions (programs and services) that aim to change a situation for the better.

Post-incident - are actions (programs and services) that provide help after a harmful event has happened and that aim to make sure that such harms do not happen in the future.

Prevention - are actions (programs and services) that aim to stop illness or harm and support well-being and safety.

Root causes - are the deepest, underlying causes of a problem or situation.

Violence - for the purposes of this paper, includes all forms of violence.

- ▶ **Domestic violence** - is a pattern of behavior which involves the abuse by one partner against another, also known as spousal abuse, battering, family violence and intimate partner violence (IPV), and cases of missing and murdered Aboriginal women. It can take many forms from physical aggressions to sexual assault to homicide, stalking, and controlling or dominating, emotional to economic deprivation.
- ▶ **Lateral violence** - is displaced violence, it is directed at peers, where they lash out at each other, and may be a result of being oppressed. It is viewed as an

intergenerational learned pattern and major social problem in marginalized communities. Aboriginal people are at great risk to lateral violence.

- ▶ **Racial violence** - is based on the idea that race or ethnicity justifies a violent action.
- ▶ **Stranger violence** - is an increasing amount of violence is being committed by people who have no prior relationship with the victim; it undermines the trust in the society, its leadership and authorities.
- ▶ **Systemic violence** - is a root cause of violence that leads to the degradation and undervaluing of Aboriginal women, and can promote or enable further violence of victims.

Social Determinants of Health - influence a wide range of health vulnerabilities and capacities, health behaviours and health management. Individuals, communities and nations that experience inequalities in the social determinants of health not only carry an additional burden of health problems, but they are often restricted from access to resources that might ameliorate problems.

- ▶ Income and social status
- ▶ Social support network
- ▶ Education
- ▶ Employment and working conditions
- ▶ Social environment
- ▶ Physical environment
- ▶ Personal health practices and coping skills

Glossary

- ▶ Healthy child development
- ▶ Genetic endowment
- ▶ Access to health services
- ▶ Gender
- ▶ Culture

Aboriginal Specific Social Determinants:

- ▶ Colonization
- ▶ Cultural continuity
- ▶ Territory
- ▶ Self determination
- ▶ Poverty
- ▶ Access

SOURCE: Health Inequality and Social Determinants

Vulnerabilities - are the risks or disadvantages that make a person or group of people more likely to be physically or emotionally wounded or hurt.

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Minister's Advisory Council on Aboriginal Women

MEMBER PROFILES

Wendy Grant-John (Chair) - is a mother, grandmother, former Chief of the Musqueam Nation and the first woman to be elected as vice-chief to the Assembly of First Nations. She has been working to advance Aboriginal cultural, social and political issues for more than 30 years.

Chastity A. Davis (Vancouver/West End) (Co-Chair) - is the Principal and Lead Consultant with Chastity Davis Consulting. Previously, she was a Key Account Manager with BC Hydro and prior to that, a Project Manager with Refinery Leadership. Active in the community, Ms. Davis is a Director on the Industry Council of Aboriginal Business and a Council Member on the Minerva Foundation. In the past, she was the Vice President of the Aboriginal Women's Leadership Association of BC and is a frequent speaker at events including the Women's World Conference, National Women's Retreat, Healing Our Spirit Worldwide, and BC Institute of Technology's (BCIT) Aboriginal Alumni. Ms. Davis holds her Diploma in Marketing Management and Professional Sales from BCIT and her Bachelor of Arts in Professional Communications from Royal Roads University.

Kim Baird - is from the Tsawwassen First Nation on the Lower Mainland. Kim served as Chief of the Tsawwassen First Nation from 1999 to 2012. She successfully negotiated BC's first urban treaty and has the distinction of being the first Aboriginal woman to address the BC legislature in October 2007 when the Tsawwassen Treaty legislation process was initiated.

Charlene Belleau - of the Esketemc First Nation is from the Interior of British Columbia. She is a former Chief of her First Nation and is currently Director of the Residential Schools Unit of the Assembly of First Nations.

Paulette Flamond - is from Northeast BC. Paulette sat on the Native Economic Development Advisory Board for the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation before it was disbanded, and is currently Vice President of the BC Aboriginal Business Service Network Society and a Board Member of the Fort St. John Métis Society.

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Sophie Pierre - is the current Chief Commissioner of the BC Treaty Commission. She led the St. Mary's Indian Band for 30 years as elected Chief and was the administrator of the Ktunaxa/Kinbasket Tribal Council for 25 years. She has also served on the boards of many major organizations, including BC Hydro and the First People's Congress.

Darlene Shackelly - is Executive Director of the Native Courtworker and Counselling Association of BC. Darlene is from the Kwakiutl First Nation on Vancouver Island and is a member of the Nooaitch First Nation band. She has dedicated the last 28 years to working with the Native Courtworker and Counselling Association of British Columbia, and has been the Executive Director for the past 10 years.

Mary Tegee - is from the Takla Lake First Nations in north-central BC. She is the Carrier Sekani Family Services Director and provides cross-cultural training to agencies and individuals who offer services to the Carrier Sekani people. She believes that community wellness depends on nurturing tradition, cultural values and the environment.

Marjorie White (New Westminster) - is an Elder Advisor and former Executive Director of Circle of Eagles Lodge Society. Currently, she serves as Founder and member of the BC Association of Friendship Centre Elder Council, President of Aboriginal Mother Centre, Senator of the National Association of Friendship Centres, Vice President of Luma Native Housing, Chair of the Vancouver Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee, and a member of the Pacific Association of First Nation Women, the Vi Fineday Transition Society, Urban Spirit Foundation, Huu-ay-aht Government, and Vancouver Aboriginal Transformative Justice Service Society. Ms. White is the recipient of the Queen's Golden Jubilee Commemorative Medal, the International Year of the Volunteer Award from Correctional Services Canada, Women Making a Difference Award from the Vancouver Society Immigrant and Visible Minority Women, Volunteer Recognition Award from Volunteer Vancouver, the Women of Distinction Award from the YWCA, and the Gold Feather Award from the Professional Native Women's Association, to name a few. In addition, she was previously appointed to the Langara College board, Citizenship Courts, the Vancouver Police Commission, and the Safer Cities Task Force.

Minister's Advisory Council on Aboriginal Women

Debbie Williams - is the Executive Director of the Hiiye'yu Lelum House of Friendship Association in Duncan on Vancouver Island, and has an urban Aboriginal focus. She also serves as the Representative to the National Association of Friendship Centres Board of Directors, an ex-officio position to the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres Executive Committee.

Minister's Advisory Council on Aboriginal Women

TERMS OF REFERENCE

BACKGROUND

The Province of British Columbia wishes to work respectfully and in partnership with Aboriginal women, organizations and leadership to improve the quality of life for Aboriginal women. Following the June 15-17, 2011 *Collaboration to End Violence: National Aboriginal Women's Forum* and respecting the theme *x̣simíwən ct ʔiʔ θáyθət ct* (We are courageous and we are healing ourselves), the province is committed to work with Aboriginal women and key informants to develop the necessary framework and support systems to address the risks and violence that many Aboriginal women are currently exposed to. The overarching goal of the advisory council is to provide advice to government on how to improve the quality of life for Aboriginal women across British Columbia. The establishment of the advisory council will support the successful implementation of this commitment and work to empower those women.

MEMBERS

Core membership will include key British Columbia Aboriginal leadership, organizations and women, and other organizations or individuals based on their unique ability to contribute to the work of the council.

GOALS

- ▶ Develop and review an inventory of current programs available to support Aboriginal women.
- ▶ Identify outcomes needed to improve quality of life for Aboriginal women.
- ▶ Develop targets to achieve outcomes of Goal 2.
- ▶ Maintain the baseline and update outcomes annually.

Minister's Advisory Council on Aboriginal Women

TASKS

- ▶ Provide advice to government to ensure programs supporting Aboriginal women will respond to their needs, build on effective practices and success, and be supported by key partners.
- ▶ Review, revise and help implement an engagement plan if required (e.g. co-hosting discussions with partners and communities).
- ▶ Review, revise and maintain a progress report on outcomes.

GOVERNANCE

- ▶ The council will report to government through the Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation.
- ▶ The Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation will appoint the chair and council members.
- ▶ The council will consist of up to ten members, including one position designated for an Elder.
- ▶ The council will utilize a consensus decision making model founded on the principles of shared responsibility and cooperation.
- ▶ The Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation will provide administrative support for the council with support from a cross-ministry team.

TERM

The term will be for up to two years and the Council will meet quarterly, or as determined by the chair, and at least twice a year with the minister.

March 27, 2012





