



A Path Forward: Priorities and Early Strategies for B.C.

June 2022 Status Update



Ministry of
Public Safety and
Solicitor General

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Taking Care

We recognize that this report may contain information that is difficult for many and that our efforts to honour survivors and families may act as an unwelcome reminder for those who have suffered hardships through generations of government policies that were harmful to Indigenous Peoples.

A Hope for Wellness Help Line for Indigenous Peoples is available at 1-855-242-3310 or through the online chat via the help line website at www.hopeforwellness.ca.

Message from the Minister

As B.C.'s Solicitor General and Minister of Public Safety, I am pleased to present this update on the Province's response to *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*, released on June 3, 2019.

In 2019, the Province committed to the development of a Path Forward to end violence and supported Indigenous-led community dialogue sessions in 2019 and 2021 to inform this work. Guided by the wisdom, advocacy and ongoing actions of family members, survivors, community leaders and partners across British Columbia, the past two years were dedicated to prioritizing early actions and meaningful solutions to prevent, protect and respond to violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples. *A Path Forward: Early Priorities and Strategies for B.C.* was released a year ago today, on June 3, 2021, reflecting community-based priorities and setting a solid foundation with early strategies and an initial investment of \$5.5 million in 2021-22.

As we report on progress towards honouring BC's Path Forward early commitments a year after their release, a province-wide, whole-of-government approach to achieve the objectives of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and implement provincially relevant Calls for Justice was released in the [Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan \(2022-2027\)](#) on March 30th, 2022. The goals and outcomes of this five-year plan are far-reaching and focus on addressing the systemic inequities experienced by Indigenous Peoples, by achieving the highest attainable standard for health and well-being over time. Through this roadmap for transformative action, the Province has committed to a holistic approach towards addressing the intergenerational trauma and structural discrimination faced by Indigenous communities since colonization.

As such, early commitments outlined in the Path Forward are now critical parts of a broader, evolving journey intended to implement actions identified in collaboration between the Province and our Indigenous partners. While we recognize that the milestone achievement of the Declaration Act Action Plan may now become the driving framework to implement the long-term vision of change that reconciliation requires, we remain committed to amplify the voices of those who have experienced violence and the wisdom of their journeys towards healing. The courageous testimonies shared by survivors, family members and communities during the National Inquiry into MMIWGs and our province-wide dialogues will not be lost – they will continue to guide our work towards ensuring our work is responsive to both short and longer-term safety and healing needs.

We hope the information we are sharing today will contribute to guide meaningful discussions on a way forward together. The work of forming renewed relationships based on respect, partnership, and the recognition and implementation of the rights of Indigenous peoples is far from complete and continues to be at the forefront of the Province's commitments to British Columbians.

We look forward to continuing this journey with all of you.



Honourable Mike Farnworth
Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General and Deputy Premier

Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan

On March 30th, 2022 the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation introduced a [five-year Declaration Act Action Plan](#) to achieve the objectives of the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) (UN Declaration). The Action Plan achieves one of the early actions in the Path Forward and is a commitment in the [Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act](#) (Declaration Act), but it is much more than a legislative requirement. It provides a collectively identified long-term vision for the implementation of the UN Declaration in B.C. including 89 priority actions that will be taken towards that goal over the next five years.

The Action Plan acknowledges the widespread socio-economic and health inequities for Indigenous Peoples in B.C. and across Canada. This includes the overrepresentation of Indigenous Peoples in the justice and child welfare systems, lower rates of education, and higher instances of poverty, unemployment and homelessness. The 89 actions are expressed in four themes represented by articles in the UN Declaration: self-determination and self-government, rights and title, ending anti-Indigenous racism, and enhancing social, cultural and economic well-being. The goals and outcomes were identified in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous Peoples around the Province; they are fully aligned with the Path Forward early actions and updates outlined in this report and are consistent with provincially relevant Calls for Justice outlined in the [Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls](#).

The actions identified in the plan are intended to support changes in understanding, behaviours and systems to shift the status quo, address Indigenous-specific racism and establish new foundations in

government that respect and uphold the human rights of Indigenous Peoples. They advance a distinctions-based approach that recognizes First Nations, Métis and Inuit as the Indigenous Peoples of Canada, while building on priorities brought forward through decades of advocacy and leadership by Indigenous Peoples, including the findings and recommendations of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

Moving forward, the Province will continue to work in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous Peoples across the province to implement actions identified in this plan, reflecting our mutual commitment to work together in partnership. As the Action Plan is province-wide in scope, it requires an all-of-government approach with coordination across ministries to support implementation. A new Declaration Act Secretariat will be established to guide and assist government to meet its obligation to ensure legislation is consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and is developed in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous Peoples.

The Province will also work with Indigenous Peoples to identify suitable tools, indicators and measures for monitoring, assessing and reporting progress on implementation of the Declaration Act. Progress under the Action Plan will be reviewed on an annual basis and publicly reported in an annual report that will be prepared through consultation and cooperation with Indigenous Peoples, and submitted to the B.C. Legislature by June 30 each year. The Action Plan will be comprehensively updated within five years.

Progress on the Path Forward

On June 3, 2021, the second-year anniversary of the release of the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, the National Action Plan – a path towards ending violence against Indigenous Women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ peoples was released. On the same day, BC released [A Path Forward: Priorities and Early Strategies for BC](#) (the Path Forward).

The Path Forward is grounded in the Province’s participation in the National Inquiry, research and review of historic reports and more than 3,000 recommendations, and engagement with Indigenous leadership, survivors, family members and community organizations undertaken in 2019 and 2021.

The Path Forward establishes **FOUR CORE PRINCIPLES** that guide the Province’s approach:



PEOPLE CENTRED

Actions centre the people impacted by violence.



HEALING CENTRED

Actions support community and family healing.



RECIPROCAL

Engagements provide information and resources to communities rather than being information-seeking only.



COMMUNITY DRIVEN AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

Actions focus on building capacity among Indigenous communities and support self-determination.

The number one priority identified across all community engagement sessions since 2019 is the need for increased capacity so that Indigenous communities can create and implement their own culturally safe and appropriate solutions to the systemic issues resulting in violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ people.

The Province heard that planning is central to Indigenous communities’ path to addressing systemic causes of violence and self-determination, and made a foundational investment of \$5.5 million in 2021-22. With these resources, B.C. committed to invest directly in a Community Fund - accessible to First Nations communities, urban/off reserve communities, Métis, Inuit citizens and 2SLGBTQIA+ communities – to support capacity to develop safety plans.

Update on the Province's Path Forward Community Fund

The [Path Forward Community Fund](#) is intended to help address violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, by actioning the number one priority identified through Indigenous-led community engagement sessions held in 2019 and 2021 – the need for safe spaces and safety plans so that Indigenous communities can create and implement their own solutions. Since the release of the Path Forward Update on June 3, 2021, the Province has engaged with Indigenous partners and community members to ensure the initial activities are implemented in a collaborative, beneficial, and culturally safe manner. A cornerstone of this work includes taking an intersectional, distinctions-based approach (i.e., an approach that recognizes the diversity of Indigenous communities across BC) that honours and respects the expertise, agency, and leadership of Indigenous peoples throughout all stages of planning and implementation.

The BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres (BCAAFC) will manage the Fund, including developing and administering the grant program, defining criteria, reviewing applications and distributing grants to Indigenous communities and organizations throughout the Province. As part of this work, the BCAAFC will engage communities and work collaboratively to inform and develop the objectives, intended outcomes and key indicators of the Fund. This will include making best efforts to establish an advisory committee that reflects regional representation, on and off reserve Indigenous members, differently-abled community members, 2SLGBTQQIA+ communities, Elders and youth, First Nations, Inuit, Metis, and non-status communities.

Progress on Key Path Forward Actions

In addition to the Province's \$5.5 million foundational investment, the Path Forward identified key commitments that align priorities identified through the 2019 and 2021 community dialogues with government's early strategies to address the systemic causes of violence. These commitments touch upon virtually every area of government's work, in recognition of the interconnected, multi-dimensional nature of the inequities facing Indigenous peoples.

As we build towards meaningful reconciliation, it is critically important to recognize that – in addition to the many harmful effects of colonial violence and marginalization on Indigenous families, communities, and First Nations – decades of systemic discrimination have also reinforced the structural barriers that still prevent Indigenous peoples from accessing and fully benefitting from government services to this day. Through work included in this report, British Columbia emphasizes its ongoing commitment to invest in services and programs that are accessible, trauma-informed and culturally appropriate.

The following section highlights key thematic updates that are responsive to priorities shared during engagement with our Indigenous partners since 2019. The themes provide a way to organize the initiatives; at the same time, we recognize that these themes are interrelated and that many initiatives cannot easily be categorized under just one theme. While all of these initiatives are instrumental to addressing the root causes of violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ people, they also support other provincial priorities in areas like ending gender-based violence, promoting reconciliation, ensuring health and safety for all British Columbians, and focusing on recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Path Forward commitments represent a step towards advancing reconciliation with Indigenous peoples by addressing existing gaps in legislation, policy, services, programs and practice. The Province will continue to advance this work with Indigenous partners beyond the foundational Path Forward actions and in alignment and coordination with the renewed commitments included in the five-year Declaration Act Action Plan.

COMMUNITY-BASED SUPPORTS

Flexible and accessible community-based supports are instrumental to amplify the successes of Indigenous-driven initiatives and approaches, and are key for strengthening locally available programs and services that are truly responsive to community needs, resources and expertise. Initiatives highlighted in this section are aimed at amplifying the wisdom and solutions that exist within Indigenous communities.

Giving Voice Project

In recognition of the many strong, courageous individuals and organizations that work diligently to stop violence against women and girls, the Minister's Advisory Council on Indigenous Women (MACIW) launched Giving Voice as a two-year pilot in 2013. The project "gives voice" to issues of violence within Indigenous women's lives through community-driven healing projects that inspire change. Giving Voice is based on the underlying approach that Indigenous communities know how to heal themselves. The program is guided by MACIW's expertise and implemented by staff in the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation. The project was relaunched in 2019 and by the end of fiscal year 2022, a total of 136 projects had been funded for a grand total of \$1.3 M, bringing hope and healing to over 2,800 participants.

Moose Hide Campaign

Established in B.C. in 2011, the Moose Hide Campaign is an Indigenous-led movement to engage men and boys to act in ending violence against women. The campaign aims to help men be accountable – and part of the solution – for the push to end violence against women and children. Campaign participants can fast, wear a moose hide pin, or both to show their commitment to honour, respect and protect the women and children in their lives. They also commit to work together with other men to end violence against women and children. B.C. has provided more than \$2.7 million in seed money to grow and develop Moose Hide from a provincial initiative into a national campaign, including \$500K to support the campaign in 2021/22. Thousands of provincial government staff participate in the campaign each year.

Civil Forfeiture Crime Prevention and Remediation Grant Program

The Civil Forfeiture Crime Prevention and Remediation Grant Program provides one-time funding to projects that align with funding streams chosen on an annual basis. These funding streams support projects that address gender-based violence, violence against women, human trafficking, sexual exploitation, sex worker safety, and support healing in Indigenous communities. More information about the Civil Forfeiture Crime Prevention and Remediation Grant Program and the application process can be found here: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/crime-prevention/community-crime-prevention/grants>

Indigenous Healing - Civil Forfeiture Crime Prevention and Remediation Grant Program

Government continues to prioritize community-led projects that promote healing of Indigenous individuals, families and/or communities from the impact of intergenerational trauma, crime, or victimization. Projects funded through this stream must focus on healing approaches that reflect or

align with Indigenous culture and world views. Since 2014/15, over \$7.2 million in grant funding has been provided through the Grant Program to community-led projects. In March 2021, 54 Indigenous healing projects totalling over \$1.5 million were funded, including projects that have a specific focus on Indigenous women and girls. Examples of funded projects include the following:

- **\$30,000** to the Indian Residential School Survivors Society for the “Sisters in Strength Healing Retreat”: This project was funded to provide a low barrier 3-day healing experience for women effected by the trauma of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women & Girls. Survivors are provided a safe, supportive space that has culturally appropriate services and traditional healing activities available. The retreat and activities support Indigenous women on their healing journey and to empower them to make healthy choices in their lives to address the trauma of having a family member go missing or be murdered. Cultural support and connection with other bereaved Indigenous women help foster the expression of buried emotions.
- **\$30,000** to Positive North Living for the “Fire Pit: Cultural Healing Project”: This project supports Indigenous adults exposed to trauma, crime and victimization. The project was funded to engage participants in sharing circles, men’s and women’s groups, seasonal medicine/traditional food gathering outings, smudging, teaching Potlatches, and life-skills training sessions that will guide them through the healing journey. By improving mental, emotional, and spiritual health, risk factors such as homelessness and substance use will decrease. The Fire Pit provides a space for healers, practitioners, and communities to come together to share ideas, build knowledge, and develop strategies for wellness.
- **\$24,965** to Cowichan Tribes, Lalum’utul’ Smun’em for the “Women Healing Program”: This project was funded to support women dealing with relationship violence, domestic violence, or inter-generational trauma who may be involved with child welfare or the justice system. Through this project, a program facilitator

provides guidance to adult woman to support healing and rebuilding cultural skills through traditional learnings and provides support for healing and building confidence, self-esteem and holistic knowledge. Key issues addressed include intergenerational trauma, breaking the cycle of violence, and understanding the root causes of violence.

Prevention of violence against Indigenous women - Civil Forfeiture Crime Prevention and Remediation Grant Program

Seventy-six projects that address human trafficking, gender-based violence and sexual exploitation of marginalized and vulnerable women, and sex worker safety totalling also received over \$2.4 million in grant funding in March 2021. Examples of funded projects include the following:

- **\$30,000** to the Victoria International Development Education Association (VIDEA) for “Raised Voices: Strengthened Indigenous Sex Worker Safety”: This project was funded to support 100 Indigenous youth of all genders that are vulnerable to engaging in sex work. Through this project, six Indigenous youth co-created an Indigenous youth-led, culturally effective, Indigenous-social media influencer-engaged, elder supported mass media campaign, and youth outreach strategy. The project used an Indigenous youth-led, culturally effective, and trauma-informed approach that integrates the Calls for Justice.
- **\$30,000** to WAVAW Rape Crisis Centre for “The Enhancing Access to Justice for Vulnerable Indigenous Survivors in the Sex Trade”: This project was funded to serve Indigenous survivors of sexualized violence, including Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit survivors, at various locations across Vancouver and online through one-to-one counselling, support groups and virtual programming.

- **\$30,000** to Nak’azdli Alternate Justice Centre for “Regaining your Inner Strength and Empowerment”: This project supports Indigenous women in Fort St. James who may be at-risk or vulnerable to violence, and those who have been impacted by sexual assault. This project was funded to take a proactive approach by providing workshops, cultural activities, and increased support to victims and possible victims of domestic and/or sexual violence. Women participating in this program are supported to become more self-aware, have increased confidence, increased mental wellness, and to master tools to deal with the effects of being a victim of violence.

Community Counselling Grants

The pandemic, toxic drug crisis and extreme weather events and their impacts on British Columbians have led to an increase in mental-health and substance-use issues for many people across B.C., while Indigenous survivors and their families have grappled with the confirmation of hundreds of children buried in unmarked sites on the grounds of former residential schools. To support the growing demand for low and no-cost mental health care and counselling services, the Province provided \$10 million for Community Counselling Grants administered by the Community Action Initiative. An additional \$2.4 million was provided in COVID-19 surge funding. Grants provided for gender-specific initiatives include organizations that service:

- Counselling specifically for Indigenous 2SLGBTQQIA+ people and those that need gender affirming support.
- Non-binary people and transgender women along with cisgender women, including 2S+ people.
- Women impacted by domestic violence/abuse who are struggling with misuse and/or mental health concerns.
- In either group or one-on-one settings, men and women with histories of sexualized abuse.

- Counselling for sex workers with a focus on women and two-spirit and non-binary people with counsellors trained in trauma-informed, anti-oppressive and non-judgemental approaches.
- Additionally, of the 29 organizations that received surge funding since May 2020, 8 have dedicated services for Indigenous clients and 5 have dedicated services for women. Women and Indigenous clients are represented in all organizations, even if the organizations do not specifically have programming dedicated to these groups.
- Eight Surge-funded organizations have dedicated services for Indigenous clients, 4 of which are Indigenous-mandated organizations.

Bridges for Women Society

Bridges for Women was established in Victoria in 1988 as an employment training program for women with a history of trauma and abuse. Initially a three-year pilot project, Bridges was incorporated as a non-profit society in 1993 and continues to provide programming and counselling services for women overcoming the effects of trauma.

Bridges for Women offers Indigenous programs for self-identified Indigenous peoples living in urban areas of Greater Victoria, as well as for First Nations women living in the reserve communities of individual nations within the WSÁNEĆ and ləkʷəŋən territories.

The Indigenous Women's Bridging Programs in particular aim to inspire Métis, Inuit and First Nations women, living in reserve communities and in urban areas, to break the cycles of abuse and trauma through counselling, cultural education and employment training. Group circles include stories, identifying interests and skills to develop long-term life and career goals. A variety of guest speakers, arts and craft activities, elders and field trips are also included.

In 2020 and 2021, the Province announced funding totalling \$100,000 to assist in recovery and referral services for women.

Red Fish Healing Centre for Mental Health and Addiction

People living with complex mental illness and addictions have now access to a new purpose-built treatment centre with a first-of-its-kind model of care in North America. The 105-bed facility located on səmíqʷəʔelə in Coquitlam provides several levels of care within its walls that allows people to progress to their recovery and reintegrate into their home communities. Red Fish treats mental illness and addictions simultaneously while providing trauma-informed, culturally safe care that focuses on mental and physical wellness. This includes treatment and recovery pathways which integrate meaningful activities to support connection to culture. The facility also includes research, education and teaching spaces where care providers can work with researchers to build capacity within the program and around the province to ensure that knowledge is put into practice.

Surrey Urban Indigenous Hub

Surrey has the largest urban Indigenous population in B.C. Through partners in the region, the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction learned that Indigenous Peoples experiencing poverty and/or homelessness often report obstacles to accessing social services, which perpetuates the intergenerational cycle of poverty. Seeking a solution, the Ministry partnered with the local Indigenous community and organizations to launch the Surrey Urban Indigenous Hub (Hub). A key part of the Hub involved hiring a Community Integration Specialist from a local First Nation to directly connect with Indigenous clients and collaborate with other partners. The Community Integration Specialist works out of Fraser Region Aboriginal Friendship Centre Association (FRAFCA) and Kekinow Native Housing Society (KNHS) locations. The Hub has had a significant impact on Surrey's Indigenous community. People are more aware of available services, and feel safer seeking them out. Word has spread beyond Surrey, with Indigenous clients contacting FRAFCA from other communities.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

The legacy of colonization and ongoing systemic inequities have resulted in long-term health disparities for First Nations, Métis and Inuit children, youth, and adults. This was outlined in *In Plain Sight: Addressing Indigenous-specific racism in BC health care*¹. *In Plain Sight* documented the magnified health disparities for Indigenous women who often are impacted by both racism and misogyny. The Province has committed to implement the 24 broad comprehensive recommendations designed to confront the legacy of colonization and establish a renewed foundation for Indigenous peoples' access to, interaction with and treatment by the health care system. In collaboration with Indigenous and health system partners, the Province is working to embed cultural humility and antiracism tools and practices to establish substantive equality and cultural safety in health care.

In addressing Indigenous-specific racism and Canada's legacy of colonialism, including in relation to health, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People is central. As detailed in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the UN Declaration is "the framework for reconciliation." As British Columbia strives for health and wellness services that are holistic, accessible, trauma informed, client-centred and culturally safe, the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People Act and Action Plan guide the province of B.C.

Initiatives highlighted in this section underscore an understanding of "health" that recognizes a holistic state of well-being that includes physical, mental and emotional wellbeing.

1 [In-Plain-Sight-Data-Report_Dec2020.pdf1_.pdf\(gov.bc.ca\)](#)

2 [fn_womenandgirlsreport_july19.pdf\(gov.bc.ca\)](#)

Scared and Strong: Upholding our Matriarchal Roles – The health and wellness journeys of BC First Nations Women and Girls

*In July 2021, the First Nations Health Authority and the Office of the Provincial Health officer published **Scared and Strong: Upholding our Matriarchal Roles – The health and wellness journeys of BC First Nations Women and Girls**². **Scared and Strong** is about – and for – all First Nations women and girls living in B.C. and focuses on First Nations' women's health and wellness – from conception to old age. It is a celebration of the incredible strength and resilience of First Nations women and girls.*

***Scared and Strong** shares information and stories of lived experiences with the focus to further empower women on their wellness journeys to be self-determining, healthy and thriving. **Scared and Strong** echoes the calls for justice for collective action to eliminate systemic barriers for all First Nation.*

First Nations Primary Care Initiative

In 2019, the First Nations-led Primary Health Care Initiative was established between the Ministry of Health and First Nations Health Authority to co-fund and develop up to 15 First Nations-led Primary Health Care Centres within local Primary Care Networks. The Centres are intended to significantly transform and improve access to primary health care for Indigenous peoples through the province by addressing the social determinants of health, health equity, access, and attachment to a team of care providers supporting both western and Indigenous health and wellness practices. To date, the Ministry of Health and First Nations Health Authority partnered with local First Nations to co-fund the first of these Centres, with ongoing work to continue the co-development of up to a total of 15 Centres.

A Pathway to Hope

Launched in June 2019, A Pathway to Hope is a roadmap for building a comprehensive system of mental health and addictions care that works for everyone in B.C., no matter who they are, where they live or how much money they make. A Pathway to Hope initially focused on a three-year plan to address priority needs across four areas: supporting Indigenous-led solutions; improving wellness for children, youth and young adults; saving lives through better substance use care; and improving access to quality care overall. New services and supports have been put into place across all priority areas.

Collaborating with Indigenous partners and supporting First Nations and Indigenous-led solutions to improve access and quality of care is a priority. For example, through a funding partnership between the Province, the Government of Canada and the First Nations Health Council (FNHC), 52 new First Nations-led mental health and wellness initiatives have been funded in 172 communities provincewide. As of May 2022, FNHC has funded First Nations to deliver land-based healing services at 147 sites.

Enhanced Substance Use Treatment, Recovery Care Services

A new investment in B.C.'s system of substance use care will build up treatment and recovery services for people who need them in communities throughout the province. As part of Budget 2022, the Province has provided health authorities with \$144.5M over three years to implement a full spectrum of substance-use treatment and recovery services, including new and enhanced withdrawal management services, transition and assessment services, treatment and recovery services and aftercare throughout the province, including:

- creating more than 65 new or enhanced services throughout the province,
- adding more than 130 Full Time staff,
- opening approximately 195 new substance-use treatment beds.

Additionally, in August 2020, government announced investments for 123 new youth substance use treatment and withdrawal management beds across B.C. and enhancements to existing provincially-accessible beds. Budget 2021 also secured an historic investment in youth substance use services ranging across the continuum of care from prevention and early intervention to crisis intervention and intensive treatment. Health authorities are working in partnership with the First Nations Health Authority and other Indigenous partners to ensure new and enhanced services are culturally safe, relevant and responsive to the needs of Indigenous clients and communities. For example, Indigenous youth will have priority access to at least 43 of the 123 new youth beds and Health authorities are working with Indigenous partners to plan and implement culturally safe substance use services.

HOUSING

Many Indigenous cultures define home as more than a physical structure, encompassing a network of relationships, connections, and responsibilities to human and non-human kin, spirit, and land. Indigenous experiences of homelessness are also unique, describing not only a lack of a physical place to live but including disconnected relationships and isolation from community, culture, and identity. In B.C., Indigenous Peoples in urban and rural areas, both on and off reserve, are disproportionately represented among those experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity; for example, in the 2020/21 Homeless Counts Indigenous People made up 39 per cent of the 8,655 people counted yet are six per cent of the general population. This overrepresentation is the result of the ongoing intergenerational and collective trauma caused by colonisation and systemic racism, manifested through policies including residential schools, the Sixties scoop, displacement from land, culture, and resources through the Indian Act, the overrepresentation of Indigenous youth in the foster care system, and ongoing violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ people.

Budget 2022 makes significant new investments to respond to and prevent homelessness through the development of a cross-government Homelessness Strategy and new programs such as complex-care housing, rent supplements with integrated supports, and extending support for youth aging out of care until age 27. Updates reported in this section highlight advancement towards a comprehensive, province-wide approach to preventing homelessness and supporting people experiencing homelessness in partnership with Indigenous peoples and communities, and through recognition of the distinct needs and identities of people at risk of and experiencing homelessness.

BC Homelessness Strategy

The BC Homelessness Strategy is a pathway to preventing and reducing homelessness through priority actions and a long-term vision. Through

Budget 2022, the Homelessness Strategy provides \$633 million in funding for homelessness supports and services, including the following:

- **\$170 million** for increased health supports, housing access, cultural supports, social inclusion and system navigation;
- **\$164 million** over 3 years to expand and transform complex care housing to support the most vulnerable;
- a new wraparound support rent supplement program with up to **\$600 per month** to support housing for 3,000 people;
- a permanent housing plan to ensure people in temporary spaces during the COVID-19 pandemic are stably housed;
- doubling the current number of community integration specialists to help people experiencing homelessness navigate government programs and available supports in communities throughout the province;
- **\$35 million** over three years for new and increased supports for young people in government care until the age of 27; and
- funding for research into how to better support women experiencing homelessness.

The Homelessness Strategy is a responsive and flexible plan that will build on best practices. The Homelessness Strategy provides for working in collaboration with Indigenous partners to co-develop approaches to meet the unique needs of Indigenous Peoples experiencing homelessness. In addition, the Province is supporting the development of the BC Indigenous Homelessness Strategy which is led by Indigenous organizations from across the province through the BC Indigenous Homelessness Steering Committee.

Complex Care Housing

Complex-care housing is a ground-breaking approach to address the needs of people who have intersecting mental-health and substance use challenges, trauma and acquired brain injuries and who are often left to experience homelessness

or are at risk of eviction. Budget 2022 invests \$164 million over the next three years to fund 20 complex care housing projects, providing an enhanced level of integrated health and social supports that serve people where they live. In total, the Province plans to serve up to 500 vulnerable people throughout B.C. this year. Recognizing that Indigenous people are over-represented in the population that needs complex care housing, Indigenous-led services have been prioritized for funding in this first phase of implementation. Complex-care housing is voluntary and integrated within the health-care system with direct connections to treatment and specialized care that could include support from nurses, peers, social workers and other health professionals. In addition to the various health, personal, social and job supports provided in supportive housing, the enhanced clinical and other services available in complex care housing include the following:

- physical, mental-health and substance-use care;
- psychosocial rehabilitation supports;
- social, emotional and community supports;
- personal care and personal living supports;
- Indigenous cultural supports; and
- co-ordination and navigation services.

Women's Transition Housing Fund

The Building BC: Women's Transition Housing Fund is an investment of \$734 million over the next 10 years to build and operate 1,500 new units of housing for women, including women fleeing violence with or without children. The Women's Transition Fund provides for the creation of transition houses, safe homes, second-stage, and long-term housing. It is one component of the Building BC funding streams which include additional housing and supports for women: Supportive Housing Fund, Indigenous Housing Fund, Community Housing Fund and the Rapid Response to Homelessness program.

JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY

In Canada, Indigenous Peoples are at high risk of becoming involved with the criminal justice system, both as victims and offenders. The effects of colonization and systemic inequities are evident in the continued overrepresentation of Indigenous Peoples throughout the justice and public safety system, including adults and youth in custody.

Initiatives highlighted in this section aim at advancing a justice system that improves public safety and community well-being while addressing the challenges faced by Indigenous Peoples. This important work is guided by the principles outlined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and its Action Plan, and by an integrative, holistic and comprehensive approach to address all forms of interactions between Indigenous Peoples and the justice system.

First Nations Justice Strategy

In partnership with the BC First Nations Justice Council (BCFNJC), work is underway to advance initiatives in the BC First Nations Justice Strategy, including the development of a First Nations Women's Justice Plan, with consideration of the MMIWG Inquiry Final Report and Calls for Justice.

Gender Based Violence Action Plan

The Parliamentary Secretary for Gender Equity and the Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General (PSSG) share a joint mandate commitment to develop an action plan to address gender-based violence, including minimum standards for sexual assault response, more training for justice personnel, and core funding for sexual assault centres. As part of the work to develop this multi-year, cross-sector action plan, the Ministry of Finance's Gender Equity Office and PSSG engaged with partners and stakeholders from across the province in March and April 2022 on key priorities that will inform the development of the action plan. Participants in these virtual engagement sessions, which were facilitated by the SFU Morris J.

Wosk Centre for Dialogue, included advocates and service providers representing the anti-violence sector, Indigenous communities, 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, racialized communities, immigrants and newcomers, sex workers, and survivors with disabilities, as well as other subject matter experts.

Core Funding for Sexual Assault Services

Between March 2020 and March 2021, \$20 million was provided for a multi-year grant program to support the delivery of emergency sexual assault response services throughout the province until March 2023. In recognition of the substantial need for locally relevant and culturally safe supports for Indigenous survivors of sexual assault, 19 Indigenous emergency sexual assault programs received grant funding to provide services (representing more than 40% of the total funding provided through this grant program).

Budget 2022 provides \$22 million over 3 years for community-based sexual assault response services. This includes ongoing funding of \$10 million per year beginning in 2023/24 to provide trauma-informed and coordinated sexual assault response programs to support survivors of sexual assault throughout the province. This sustained funding will provide service stability which can be challenging via one-time grants.

Intimate Partner Violence Police Investigations Training

In September 2021, the Province announced the launch of the new online training module for police: BC Evidence-based, Risk-focused Intimate Partner Violence Investigations. The course provides training on using the new Summary of Intimate Partner Violence Risk Factors; practical tips on trauma-informed practice; and further considerations for safety planning, including an acknowledgement of unique factors Indigenous women may experience within the context of intimate partner violence. The training is mandatory and intended to support

consistent police practices, the Violence Against Women in Relationships Policy, and to reinforce the Province's commitment to a multi-agency, co-ordinated response to Intimate Partner Violence.

Special Committee on Reforming the Police Act

In July 2020, the Legislative Assembly appointed a Special Committee on Reforming the Police Act. The Special Committee's mandate was to examine and make recommendations to the Legislative Assembly on reforms related to the modernization and sustainability of policing, including the scope of systemic racism within B.C.'s police agencies; and whether there are measures necessary to ensure a modernized Police Act is consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Special Committee's report was released on April 28, 2022. The 11 recommendations included in the report are consistent with the mandate of the Committee. Beginning in Spring 2022, the Province will work together with Indigenous leadership organizations to discuss how they want to be engaged, and then work with these leadership organizations and Indigenous communities to co-develop priority policies. Broader engagement on the recommendations will commence in late Summer 2022 and be meaningful and inclusive of all British Columbians.

Provincial Policing Standards – Promotion of Unbiased Policing

In July 2021, standards on the promotion of unbiased policing were completed, which include requirements relevant to violence against Indigenous women such as:

- All police officers must complete Indigenous Cultural Safety training by July 2024 ([BCPPS 3.2.6 \(1\), \(2\) & \(3\)](#))
- front-line police officers and supervisors to complete BC Fair and Impartial Policing Training by July 2024 ([BCPPS 3.2.5](#));

- all front-line police officers and supervisors in BC to have completed Trauma-Informed Practice (TIP) Foundations Curriculum for Justice, Public Safety and Anti-Violence Community Sectors in British Columbia by July 2024. Ongoing TIP training will be required for specialized units ([BCPPS 3.2.6 \(4\) & \(5\)](#));
- police agencies have policies and procedures governing police response to, and investigations of offences related to intimate partner violence that are consistent with the Provincial policy on relationship violence (such as [VAWIR or Referral Policy for Victims of Power-Based Crimes](#)) and include trauma-informed practices ([BCPPS 6.1.1\(10\)](#));
- all front-line police officers and supervisors to take the Evidence-based, Risk-focused Intimate Partner Violence Investigations training course by December 2022 and also refresh their skills every 5 years ([BCPPS 3.2.6 \(6\) & \(7\)](#));
- police accept and support third party reports by community-based victim services (where these exist) on behalf of adult victims of sexual assault ([BCPPS 6.1.1\(14\)](#))

CHILD WELFARE AND EDUCATION

Reforming the Child Welfare System

The Province is reforming child and family service legislation to improve services for all children and families. These changes will also better support the rights of Indigenous Peoples, including Indigenous governments, as they deliver child and family services under their laws. The goals of this initiative are:

- Changing the current legislative model to one that promotes prevention supports and keeps children with their families, communities, and cultures;
- Aligning the child and family service legislation with the federal Act respecting First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children, youth and families (Federal Act) and the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (Declaration Act); and

- Pursuing both short-term and longer-term legislative amendments to support systemic transformation.

Expanded Supports for Youth in Care

As previously highlighted, Budget 2022 invests \$633 million over the fiscal plan to expand services and shift the approach to homelessness in B.C. from reactive to proactive. This includes:

- Providing **\$35 million** over the next three years to respond to the heightened risk of homelessness faced by former youth in care, through improved supports for these youth beyond their 19th birthday. For example, ongoing housing measures, ensuring young adults can continue to stay where they are leaving past age 19 and up until their 21st birthday as well as additional supports until their 27th birthday will be provided, based on participation in programming.
- Over the course of 2023/24 and 2024/25, the Agreement with Young Adults program will be phased out and a new suite of services will be implemented; including an earnings exemption, a new rent supplement program, and improved health and life skills supports (i.e., counselling) that will continue for youth transitioning from care until the age of 27. An unconditional income supplement will also be added from 19 to 20 years, and program eligibility will be expanded to reach more young adults from care.

Tuition Waiver Program for Former Youth in Care

The Provincial Tuition Waiver Program supports B.C. students who are former youth in care pursuing studies at a B.C. public post-secondary institution, Native Education College or one of 10 eligible union trades training centres. It does so by covering tuition and other mandatory fees. There is ongoing work by the Province to expand this program to all former youth in care regardless of age.

First Nations Children and Youth in Care Protocol and Action Plan

The Province, First Nations Leadership Council and First Nations Education Steering Committee also signed the First Nations Children and Youth in Care Protocol on May 26, 2020, committing to work together to improve the educational outcomes and well-being of First Nations children and youth in care and former youth in care through legislative, policy and practice reform.

The new protocol commits all signatories to develop a strategic plan and meet twice a year to review progress toward the common goal of addressing systemic barriers facing First Nations students transitioning into independence. The First Nations Children and Youth in Care Protocol and Action Plan is currently being developed.

Legislative Changes to Support First Nations Jurisdiction over Education

The Province will soon be able to provide operational support for First Nations participating in the education jurisdiction initiative in B.C. to certify and regulate teachers who work in schools under their jurisdiction.

On November 25, 2021, legislative changes received Royal Assent, making it possible for the Province to provide operational support for this new certification and regulation process. The legislative changes were brought forward and co-developed with the First Nations Education Steering Committee, acting under the direction of Negotiating First Nations.

The legislation will also change the composition of the British Columbia Teachers' Council, the provincial body whose responsibilities include establishing certification, conduct and competence standards for provincial teaching certificate holders. The changes will ensure representation on the council by the First Nations Education Authority, which is the body made up of individuals appointed by First Nations participating in jurisdiction.

First Nations in B.C. have been working to advance jurisdiction over education for more than 20 years. Teacher certification and regulation is one of the key components of jurisdiction. Supporting First Nations control over First Nations education, including greater control over teacher certification and regulation, is likely to lead to improved outcomes for students.

The British Columbia Tripartite Education Agreement

The Province recognizes that education is a critical part of reconciliation. [The British Columbia Tripartite Education Agreement](#) is the only funding agreement of its kind in Canada, whereby the federal, and provincial governments, and First Nations have collaborated to support the educational outcomes of First Nation students. Signed in 2018, this five-year agreement is intended to initiate further systemic changes to improve outcomes for First Nation student and ensure an equitable education for First Nations students no matter where they live.

RECONCILIATION, INDIGENOUS RIGHTS AND CULTURAL PRESERVATION

Anti-racism Data Legislation

The Province introduced the Anti-Racism Data Act in Spring 2022 to identify and address systemic racism and advance racial equity in B.C. The provincial government is working with B.C.'s Human Rights Commissioner, First Nations and Métis leadership, racialized communities and other British Columbians on an approach to securely collect and safely analyze demographic information on race, ethnicity, faith, gender, sex, ability, income and other social identity markers. This data will help the Province to understand where there are systemic barriers and gaps in programs and service for Indigenous peoples and other racialized communities, and will support sectors such as health care, education and policing. This Act is one of the first pieces of legislation to be co-developed with Indigenous Peoples under the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act. The Province has taken the following important steps:

- *Co-developed this legislation with Indigenous partners (First Nations Leadership Council and Métis Nation BC)*
- *More than 13,000 people provided input, online through community-led engagements and Indigenous-led engagements, including grants to support almost 70 community organizations in leading more than 450 engagement sessions with nearly 10,000 people to inform implementation.*
- *Provided grants to Métis Nation BC and the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres to engage their citizens and membership and hired a Quintessential Research Group to engage all First Nations.*
- *Worked with community organizations to support a community-led consultation process, through which to better understand the needs of specific communities and their thoughts on how the legislation should be implemented, such as data standards and directives.*

First-of-its-kind agreement signed with Lake Babine Nation

Lake Babine Nation and the Province have signed a collaborative agreement to advance reconciliation, social and community well-being, and regional economic growth under environmental assessment legislation. The agreement is an important step in shared decision-making between the Province and Lake Babine Nation and contributes to the implementation of the Relationship Principles and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act. The collaboration agreement describes how the Environmental Assessment Office (EAO) and Lake Babine Nation will work together on future environmental assessments for projects in the Nation's territory. It highlights the Nation's assessment criteria for proposed projects, including the Nation's Sustainability Framework and Socio-Economic Impacts Framework, allowing proponents to understand what Lake Babine Nation expects of projects proposed for its territory. Lake Babine Nation's Socio-Economic Impacts Framework includes components related to a project's risk in contributing to increased violence or sexual exploitation of Lake Babine Nation members in community or in an urban centre and a project's risk in increasing Lake Babine Nation members' exposure to discrimination, racism, and harassment at home, on the project worksite, or on the Territory. The frameworks are applied to the assessments of proposed projects partly or wholly within Lake Babine Nation's Territory or where their rights and title could be affected by a project.

Province and Tahltan Nation begin talks on shared decision-making

The Tahltan Central Government and the Province have begun negotiations on the first consent-based decision-making agreement ever to be negotiated under the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act. The Province and Tahltan Central Government are seeking an agreement related to environmental assessment approvals for two mining projects in Tahltan Territory – the restart of the past-producing Eskay Creek Mine and an expansion of the Red Chris Mine in northwestern B.C. Once signed, these projects may not proceed without the consent of Tahltan Nation.

Renaming and Establishment of provincial parks and protected areas

BC Parks has a mandate to reflect Indigenous peoples' history and cultures in provincial parks and wilderness areas. In partnership with Indigenous Peoples, BC Parks has been working to identify new strategies and expand on current initiatives to help achieve mandate commitments, with an initial focus on Indigenous naming and interpretive opportunities such as signage.

Legislation was passed in November 2021 to establish a new, 143-hectare Class A park near the Koksilah River in the Cowichan Valley, which will protect a vital ecosystem important to the Cowichan people, honouring Indigenous cultural and spiritual history, and aiding in the conservation of threatened species. In the same legislative package, Chilliwack Lake Park was renamed Sxótsaqel / Chilliwack Lake Park (Skot-sa-qel), and Newcastle Island Marine Park was renamed Saysutshun (Newcastle Island Marine) Park (SAY-sut-shun).

In January 2022, through Order in Council, Mount Edziza Conservancy was renamed Tenh Dzetle Conservancy (Ten-thet-luh), which translates to Ice Mountain. The new name was provided from the collective input of Elders, language keepers and knowledge holders from the three main Tahltan communities of Dease Lake, Iskut and Telegraph Creek.

Support for Indigenous Language Revitalization

Revitalizing Indigenous languages is a key aspect of meaningful reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. The Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training is working with post-secondary institutions and Indigenous partners to expand language revitalization resources and increase the number of language programs delivered on campuses and within Indigenous communities. Since 2017, the Ministry has provided \$2.33 million towards Indigenous language revitalization.

BC Arts Council Funding

The BC Arts Council has a continued partnership with First Peoples' Cultural Council (FPCC). The Council provided \$1.725 million in 2021/2022 to support FPCC's Indigenous Arts Programs, including the Indigenous Arts Scholarship. Indigenous Arts and Culture is a key strategic direction in the BC Arts Council strategic plan and is implemented through its partnership with FPCC and core programs. This includes funding provided directly to Indigenous individuals and organizations, including for example, \$627,830 in 2020/21, to individual applicants who identified as Indigenous and \$2,817,827 to organizations who identified supporting the work of Indigenous peoples as the primary purpose of their organization.

Commitments towards Indigenous Languages in the K-12 Sector

The Ministry of Education and Child Care is committed to supporting full course offerings in Indigenous languages. There are currently 18 Indigenous Language Curriculum documents to support the teaching and learning of 18 First Nations Languages developed by First Nations communities and school districts.

TRANSPORTATION AND CONNECTIVITY

Safe and affordable transportation options and cellular connectivity services are instrumental to enhancing the safety of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ people and preventing violence, particularly in rural and remote communities. For years, the Highway of Tears has become an iconic example of the tragedy of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. Families and survivors have highlighted the connection between MMIWG and gaps in cellular service and transportation along Canadian highways, especially in rural and remote areas. The investments highlighted in this section are an important and concrete step towards ensuring all travellers, especially women and girls, along Highway 16 from Prince George to Prince Rupert can reliably access transit options and call for help if and when they need it.

Highway 16 Transportation Action Plan

The Highway 16 Transportation Action Plan was created in response to the [Missing Women Commission of Inquiry](#). The BC Transit inter-community service continues to provide reliable, affordable and safe transportation since service along Highway 16. In 2021, ridership was 13,700 bring the total number of passengers to about 65,000 since the service began in 2017. The bus service allows people to travel to their nearest large community and return home the same day.

Community Transportation Grants

The Highway 16 Transportation Action Plan resulted in the award of twelve grants to communities off of Highway 16. In spring, 2021, Northern Development Initiative Trust (NDIT) received a \$7.9 million grant to provide northern transportation services. In the fall, NDIT posted an opportunity for Community Shuttle Grants and in the spring, awarded a total of \$2.8 million to 18 communities across the North. Two-thirds of the recipients are First Nation communities.

Cellular connectivity for Highway of Tears

Thanks to federal and provincial investments, Highway 16 from Prince Rupert to Prince George is expected to reach complete cellular coverage along the entire route by Fall 2022 – fulfilling a critical recommendation of the Highway of Tears Symposium, and echoed in the final report from the National Inquiry.

The Connecting British Columbia program and the Government of Canada's Universal Broadband Fund will provide Rogers \$4.5 million towards the \$11.6 million cost of installing cellular infrastructure to extend cellular coverage in areas of weak signal strength between Prince Rupert and Smithers, including the installation of 12 cellular towers along the highway. This will provide 252 kilometres of new highway cellular coverage, closing several gaps along this corridor. This project will also provide coverage to three rest areas along Highway 16, located at Boulder Creek, Basalt Creek and Sanderson Point. Rogers began construction on this project in December 2021.

This funding is part of over \$500 million committed by the Province since 2017 into expanding connectivity to rural and Indigenous communities across BC.

BC Bus North

In June 2018, in response to Greyhound discontinuing service, the province launched BC Bus North. In spring 2021, in collaboration with Northern Indigenous Arts Council, a competition was held to select four Indigenous artists to produce artwork for the four BC Bus North motorcoaches. Each chosen artist received a \$4,000 commission. The artwork was unveiled in Prince George in August and the buses are acting as mobile art galleries as they travel the North. Under the grant provided to NDIT, BC Bus North will continue to be funded through March 2023. In 2022, NDIT will be conducting engagement on intercity bus service in the North with the objective of implementing an improved service through March 2025.

Active Transportation

*Every transit trip begins and ends with active transportation and the Province continues work to connect people with their transit options. B.C.'s first active transportation plan, **Move. Commute. Connect.**, was developed with important engagement with Indigenous Peoples to support more sustainable transportation options for diverse communities. The release of the plan aligned with a renewal to the B.C. Active Transportation Infrastructure Grant Program.*

The Active Transportation Infrastructure Grant program provides cost sharing grants to Indigenous and local governments to plan and build active transportation infrastructure. To support Indigenous communities, a sliding scale for cost-share funding provides the highest percentage of cost-sharing (80 per cent) for projects led or in partnership with Indigenous communities. In addition, these projects are prioritized through the evaluation process. Since these elements were included in 2019, the number of Indigenous projects increased from four projects over five years to 26 projects in two years. Among the successful applicants was the Toquaht Nation, who received funding for a trail project that will connect the community to a community services and employment area that is currently only accessible through narrow logging roads, which according to residents does not feel safe for active transportation.

Reflections and Next Steps

As we reflect on the third anniversary of the release of the Final Report of the National Inquiry, our continued focus on addressing the systemic causes of violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples remains unchanged. The resiliency and innovation in community, and the leadership and expertise of Indigenous women in particular, must be acknowledged and supported.

The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan five-year plan represents a significant milestone towards fulfilling our shared responsibility for meaningful reconciliation through enhanced safety and wellbeing of Indigenous Peoples, and brings significant provincial investments to housing, child welfare, justice and public safety, cultural preservation, transportation and connectivity to the forefront of our government's work in the next five years.

Ending violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ Peoples requires sustained commitment and efforts by all, with the flexibility to adapt based on emerging needs and priorities. Our government has strongly renewed its commitment to doing its part to ensure that its legislation, policies, programs and services meet the needs of those who they are intended to serve.

This update has provided examples of some of the key recent initiatives we have undertaken to advance this agenda – we know there is significant work left to do and our path forward will be guided in partnership with community, collaboration with Indigenous leadership, and coordination with all provincial stakeholders and the federal government.

In the year ahead and moving forward, the Province will be keenly focused on working collaboratively to advance all relevant initiatives intended to fulfill provincially relevant Calls for Justice, and to align our efforts towards meaningfully implementing the Declaration of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan.



Ministry of
Public Safety and
Solicitor General