



Government of B.C. Reflection on Ending Violence Against Indigenous Women and Girls:

*A Statement on the Anniversary of the Release
of the Final Report of the National Inquiry into
Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.*

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Opening Statement

As B.C.'s Solicitor General and Minister of Public Safety, I am pleased to present this milestone 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*, which was released one year ago today on June 3, 2019.

First, I want to acknowledge the Indigenous women and girls who have gone missing or have been murdered – their loss continues to be deeply felt by family members and loved ones who grieve them. I also want to acknowledge the courage and leadership demonstrated by survivors and families who participated in the National Inquiry and shared their lived experiences of systemic discrimination and violence faced by Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people. Finally, I want to acknowledge the tremendous effort of community members and leadership to advocate for missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, and to pursue meaningful change and reconciliation for all Indigenous people.

As we observe the one-year anniversary of the release of the final report, the COVID-19 pandemic is keeping us separate at a time when we would normally come together to grieve and to commemorate. At a time when attention is so significantly focused on keeping British Columbians healthy and safe, we know that this pandemic is resulting in an increase in incidences of domestic and intimate partner violence. We also know that Indigenous women and girls are more likely to be impacted. We cannot run the risk of turning our attention away from them, and from the very real opportunities to address the systemic causes of violence.

At the same time, I want to reflect on the incredible resiliency of communities, and their unflinching efforts to keep a spotlight on ending violence against Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people. On behalf of the Province, I confirm our continued commitment to work in partnership to make meaningful change that dismantles the underlying and systemic issues of violence.

The Province has committed to developing a path forward to ending violence that is informed by community priorities and decades of valuable insight and contributions by family members, community leaders and organizations. We recognize that this is a journey. The systemic causes of violence are complex, interconnected, and rooted in our colonial history. Immediate action, as well as long-term, fundamental shifts, are required to our approaches and practices.

This document is not a 'final response' to the National Inquiry that outlines a provincial strategy. Instead, we want to take this opportunity to reflect on where we are in this journey, focusing in particular on the key initiatives we have undertaken over the past 12-18. This document also shares what we have learned in conversations with communities about where we need to go next – where gaps remain and where more must be done. As we move forward together, the Province will continue to be guided by a shared interest in building community capacity, supporting healing, and ensuring safety.



Honourable Mike Farnworth
Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General

National Inquiry

The [National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls](#) was established in September 2016 by the federal government. Comprised initially of five (later four) Commissioners, the mandate of the Commission was, in summary:

- to inquire and report on:
 - » *systemic causes of all forms of violence against Indigenous women and girls in Canada; and,*
 - » *institutional policies and practices implemented in response to violence experienced by Indigenous women and girls;*
- to make recommendations on:
 - » *concrete and effective action that can be taken to remove causes and increase safety; and,*
 - » *ways to commemorate murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls.*

In order to inform reporting and recommendations, the Commission gathered information through a 'truth gathering process' that was comprised of two primary streams of work:

- literature and document/file review; and,
- hearing testimony (community, institutional and expert)
 - » *In the Province of B.C., community hearings were held in both Smithers and in Richmond, and were supplemented by statement gathering events in Prince George, Lower Post and the Downtown*

Eastside of Vancouver. Transcripts from healings, including institutional and expert hearings are available online.

National Inquiry: Fast Facts

- More than **2,380** people participated in the National Inquiry in some way
- **468** family members and survivors shared experiences in **15** community hearings
- Over **270** family members and survivors shared their experiences in **147** private/in-camera sessions
- **750** people shared their experiences in statement gatherings
- **879** people created artistic expressions
- **83** expert witnesses, elders and knowledge keepers shared their experiences and perspectives in **9** institutional/expert hearings

On June 5, 2018, the Commission was granted a six-month extension by the federal government. The Commission completed its truth gathering process in December 2018 and released a [final report](#) in Gatineau, Quebec on June 3, 2019.

Province of B.C. Participation

As a 'party with standing' the Province of B.C. participated in the National Inquiry in a number of ways, which included:

- Providing research and information related to B.C. communities, programs and services, policy and legislation, and governance;
- Responding to subpoenas for information related to specific files/cases;
- Participating in all institutional and expert hearings, and all B.C.-based community hearings; and,
- Engaging in regular meetings with National Inquiry staff and cross-jurisdictional partners to provide information and answer questions.

Family Information Liaison Unit

THE B.C. FAMILY INFORMATION LIAISON UNIT (FILU) began in July 2017 ahead of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls family hearings process to support family members to access information from government agencies and ensure that this information is provided in a trauma-informed and culturally sensitive manner.

In addition, B.C. FILU staff support proactive referrals, based on the needs and wishes of the client, to community programs and resources that can promote wellness and healing. In 2020, the federal government extended funding to support FILU teams for an additional three years, through March 31, 2023

During the National Inquiry, the Province also conducted a significant amount of its own research and engagement, to better understand historical recommendations, and current context. For example, government staff:

- engaged with key Indigenous organizations to solicit input into how best to approach next steps in responding to the National Inquiry, and to ending violence more broadly in a way that would address the unique experiences of Indigenous communities in B.C.;
- Reviewed over 250 historical documents and reports either commissioned by, or presented to, the Province related to systemic causes of violence; and,
- Created a [comprehensive submission](#) to the National Inquiry, outlining key considerations, leading practices, and identified gaps and challenges, in order to support the development of final recommendations.



Key themes

In summary, the final report identified four key sources of systemic causes of violence:

- historical, multigenerational and intergenerational trauma;
- social and economic marginalization;
- maintaining the status quo and institutional lack of will; and
- ignoring the agency and expertise of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people.

In addressing these systemic causes, the final report outlines 231 Calls for Justice, targeted towards both federal and provincial/territorial governments, as well as the public, industry, media, service providers and others. The Calls for Justice seek to establish a new framework that acknowledges and implements rights to culture, health, security and justice.

Since its release, government has been taking steps to understand the report and the Calls for Justice in the provincial context, and to identify key priorities for action. These are discussed at greater length below.

B.C. Context

As the Province participated in the National Inquiry, and as we considered the potential development of a path forward to ending violence against Indigenous women and girls, it was important to acknowledge the diversity of Indigenous communities, languages and culture in B.C. This diversity requires us to consider solutions and approaches that respect the unique governance, history and expression of each community. For example:

- More than 270,000 people living in British Columbia self-identify as Indigenous, representing approximately 5% of the province's overall population.
- This number includes members of 203 First Nations (out of 600 in Canada) and the third largest Métis population in Canada, as well as Indigenous people who come from many territories outside of B.C.

- Over the past decade, the Indigenous population in B.C. has grown by 38% which is more than three times the proportionate growth of the province's population as a whole.
- The average age of Indigenous people living in B.C. is relatively young – only 33 years of age compared to 42 years of age for non-Indigenous people in the province.
- Approximately one-quarter of Indigenous people in B.C. live in Vancouver, while only 33% live on reserves.¹
- Within B.C, there are 34 distinct Indigenous languages – approximately 60% of all Indigenous languages in Canada – with 61 different dialects.²

1 Statistics Canada. "Aboriginal Peoples: Fact Sheet for British Columbia." March 14, 2016. Retrieved July 26, 2018. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-656-x/89-656-x2016011-eng.htm>

2 First Peoples' Cultural Council. 2014. "Report on the Status of B.C. First Nations Languages 2014." 2nd ed. Retrieved July 27, 2018. <http://www.fpcc.ca/files/PDF/Language/FPCC-LanguageReport-141016-WEB.pdf>

Historic Relationship and Impacts

THE HISTORIC AND ONGOING LEGACIES of colonization have a lingering effect on Indigenous families, communities, and nations. In looking towards reconciliation, it is critically important that we recognize and acknowledge the profound inter-generational traumas that are the consequences of colonialism on Indigenous people. Prior to contact with European traders and settlers in the late 1700s, this region had one of the densest and most linguistically diverse populations. However, upon contact and the implementation of colonial governments on these territories, Indigenous families, communities, and nations were devastated through legislation, policy and actions that sought to dispossess Indigenous people and destroy their cultures.

During the residential school system, there were at least 22 residential schools that operated in British Columbia between the early 1860s and 1984. Attendance at residential schools was made mandatory by law and families who refused to send their children were threatened with serious consequences.³ For the children who were taken many never returned home, with an estimated 580 children dying in B.C.'s residential schools from 1867 to 1984.⁴

In addition to residential schools, colonial child welfare policies that began in the mid-20th century also contributed to the dislocation of Indigenous children from their families and communities. During the period known as the Sixties Scoop, thousands of Indigenous children in B.C. were taken into either the foster care system or adopted out into primarily white middle-class families. Through the removal of Indigenous children from their families and communities, these children were also removed from their culture, language, and traditions with devastating consequences.

These losses were compounded by prohibitions placed on many Indigenous ceremonies and traditions, such as the potlatch ban which endured from 1885 to 1951 and the bans on speaking Indigenous languages within schools.⁵ ⁶ These colonial policies, legislation, and actions sought to systematically destroy Indigenous cultures and created a lasting legacy of poverty, dislocation, and trauma for Indigenous people in B.C. and across Canada.

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- 3 B.C. Teachers Federation. 2015. *Project Heart: Illuminating the hidden history of Indian Residential Schools in B.C.* Revised October 2015. <https://bctf.ca/HiddenHistory/eBook.pdf>
 - 4 Truth and Reconciliation Commission. 2015. Canada's Residential Schools: Missing Children and Unmarked Burials. The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada v. 4, p. 20. http://www.myrobust.com/websites/trcinstitution/File/Reports/Volume_4_Missing_Children_English_Web.pdf
 - 5 The Bill Reid Centre. n.d. The Potlatch Ban. Simon Fraser University. Retrieved July 30, 2018. https://www.sfu.ca/brc/online_exhibits/masks-2-0/the-potlatch-ban.html
 - 6 First Peoples' Cultural Council. 2010. "Report on the Status of B.C. First Nations Languages 2010." Retrieved July 27, 2018 <http://www.fpcc.ca/files/PDF/2010-report-on-the-status-of-bc-first-nations-languages.pdf>

Despite the challenges that Indigenous communities continue to face due to colonization and ongoing systemic inequality, great strides have been made at both the community and provincial level to rebuild capacity and reclaim governance and jurisdiction over such critical systems as health, education and justice. This is due in great part to the leadership of Indigenous communities and the establishment of relationships and protocols – many of which are unique to British Columbia.

For example, the signing of the Framework Agreement on October 13, 2011, 'changed the course of First Nations health in B.C. with the creation of a new First Nations Health Governance Structure that enabled First Nations in B.C. to participate fully in the design and delivery of these services.' This includes recognition and involvement of First Nations decision-making and service delivery processes, structures and institutions at provincial, regional and local levels. The [First Nations Health Authority](#) (FNHA) was established in 2013 as the first province-wide health authority of its kind in Canada, taking responsibility for the First Nations health programs and services formerly delivered by Health Canada. The FNHA has worked hard to be a 'champion of culturally safe practices throughout the broader health care system,' and works closely with partners, including the Province, to implement cultural safety into the delivery of health services and improve health outcomes for First Nations People.

First Nations Health Council

IN 2007, B.C. First Nations established the [First Nations Health Council](#) (FNHC) to implement the Transformative Change Accord: First Nations Health Plan. The FNHC is mandated by B.C. First Nations to support First Nations to achieve their health and wellness priorities, advocate for First Nations health and wellness, provide a leadership perspective to research, policy and programming related to First Nations health and wellness, and provide political leadership for the implementation of the tripartite health plans and agreements. In recent years, FNHC has provided leadership to advance a discussion with Canada and B.C. to improve mental health and wellness services and achieve progress on the social determinants of health and wellness.

Additionally, B.C. has benefited from the leadership of the [First Nations Education Steering Committee](#) (FNESC), which was established to advocate and provide direction regarding education matters that affect First Nations in B.C., in order to promote and support quality education to First Nations learners. In partnership with the First Nations Schools Association, FNESC's leadership led to the development of the *B.C. Tripartite Education Agreement: Supporting First Nation Student Success (BCTEA)* with the Province, Canada and B.C. First Nations.

BCTEA commits partners to pursue systemic changes in B.C. education, including:

- a more sufficient and sustained funding model for B.C. First Nations education;
- a new \$20 million investment in funding for First Nations schools, including increased resources for First Nations language and culture and technology to enhance learning opportunities for students;
- new policies to promote beneficial First Nations education agreements between First Nations and School Boards, including improved transportation services;
- commitments to support the creation of a First Nations language policy leading to full-course offerings of First Nations languages in public schools;
- joint efforts to monitor student achievement data in order to inform policy and practice, and;
- professional development and information sharing opportunities to expand and deepen understanding of issues related to First Nations education.

Minister's Advisory Council on Indigenous Women and Girls (MACIW)

THE MACIW provides strategic guidance and leadership to government on how to improve the overall quality of life for Indigenous women in British Columbia by:

- **ADVOCATING** for the well-being of Indigenous women
- **PROVIDING** advice and support to the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, and
- **OFFERING** guidance and direction that is rooted in Indigenous worldviews.

Members of the MACIW continue to play a significant role in guiding provincial initiatives to improve outcomes for all Indigenous women and girls, with a particular focus on ending violence. For example, through the guidance of MACIW, the Giving Voice project was established to provide grants to community groups to help create diverse and relevant programs that address the issue of gender-based violence and explore community solutions.

The Province has also signed Memoranda of Understanding with both the [First Nations Justice Council](#) and [Métis Nation BC](#) to establish a formal relationship and commitment to the development of an Indigenous Justice Strategy, with the goal of ultimately transforming the justice system and its impact on Indigenous people. In March 2020, the First Nations Justice Council and Province of B.C. released the First Nations Justice [Strategy](#), which aims to:

- reduce the number of First Nations people who become involved with the criminal justice system;
- improve the experience of those who do;
- increase the number of First Nations people working within the justice system; and
- support First Nations to restore their Indigenous justice systems and structures.

The Province continues to collaborate with partners in Métis Nation B.C. to develop a justice strategy that addresses the unique needs and opportunities of the Métis community.

Family Gathering and Quilt

IN JANUARY 2016 more than 350 family members from across B.C. and Canada came together in Prince George for a three-day gathering of healing and memoriam. As part of that process, many families shared their stories and crafted patches created from their loved ones' clothing, blankets, or other possessions, or from cloth in their favourite colour. Many of the patches are embroidered with messages and symbols of remembrance from family members. The central motif was designed by two members of the B.C. government's Indigenous Youth Internship Program.



The quilt was unveiled on May 10, 2016 and displayed in the Rotunda of the B.C. Parliament Buildings throughout the summer of 2016. It became a powerful catalyst for conversations on the causes and solutions to violence against Indigenous women and girls.

In May 2016, representatives from the Province of B.C. (comprised of the Ministries of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, Attorney General, and Children and Family Development) alongside First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) and First Nation leaders and other Indigenous representatives from across the province, attended a meeting to discuss the current state of child welfare. Representatives from the Government of Canada were also a part of the discussion. As a result of that meeting, the Province committed to improving child welfare services and supports through the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) to keep Indigenous children out of care; work with the Government of Canada (Canada) and the FNLC to build new jurisdictional and funding frameworks in the area of child welfare; and, establish a tripartite working group to guide the work of the Province, Canada and the FNLC. In 2017, the Tripartite Reconciliation Charter was signed between the Province, FNLC and Canada as a shared commitment to improve outcomes for First Nations children and families in B.C. To this end, the Province has engaged with Indigenous communities (First Nation and Métis organizations) in promoting the advancement of existing relationships and improving child welfare services while creating the space for new relationships to advance discussions with communities who have expressed an interest to exercise jurisdiction and authority over the well-being of their children and families.

The Path Forward

Based on provincial participation in the National Inquiry, research and review of previous recommendations, and engagement with Indigenous leadership and community organizations, in 2019, Government committed to developing a *path forward* to ending violence against Indigenous women and girls. This path forward is being developed in collaboration with Indigenous communities, leaders, families, survivors, and women who have been directly impacted by violence, to ensure it is reflective of the realities of those who have and continue to experience violence, and responsive to both short and longer-term safety and healing needs. The path forward is intended to be iterative – to evolve and respond to ongoing opportunities and solutions as identified in collaboration between the Province and partners.

Importantly, the path forward is intended to not only consider the Calls for Justice, but also to consider our unique provincial context. Specifically, the path forward is also being informed by:

- Historical recommendations provided by individuals, communities and organizations, related to systemic causes and solutions that are specific to, or relevant to, B.C.;
- Province of B.C. commitments and initiatives complementary to the goal of addressing systemic causes, such as the poverty reduction strategy, the mental health and addictions strategy, and the Indigenous justice strategy;
- Federal government commitments and investments related to Calls for Justice, including the development of a national action plan; and,
- Current community-based, Indigenous-led engagement – to identify key priorities.

As the Province has proceeded in developing a path forward, it has been guided by four core principles:

- **PEOPLE CENTRED:** Are people who have been impacted by violence at the centre of engagement (including the provision of culturally relevant supports and resources) and have they been meaningfully included in the identification of opportunities?
- **HEALING CENTRED:** Are actions focused on an empowering vision of community and family healing?
- **RECIPROCAL:** Are engagements providing information and resources to communities, as opposed to being information-seeking only?
- **COMMUNITY BUILDING:** Do actions focus on building capacity among Indigenous communities as opposed to perpetuating dependence on the crown?



Based on the number and scope of recommendations received both historically and through the National Inquiry, the Province supported community-based, Indigenous-led engagement sessions through summer 2019 to inform priorities for initial action on the path forward.

Community Dialogue

Under the leadership of Indigenous facilitator Elaine Alec (Alderhill Planning), and guided by the knowledge and expertise of community members and elders, a series of community dialogues were conducted in twelve communities across the province:

Merritt, Williams Lake, Prince George, Haida Gwaii, Fort St. John, Cranbrook, Smithers, Terrace, Nanaimo, Port Hardy, Harrison Hot Springs and Vancouver.

The engagement sessions represented a departure from standard government approaches, and were embedded in the Enowkinwixw process, which is founded on the traditional knowledge of the Syilx peoples. As noted in the [final engagement report](#), the process of Enowkinwixw is not one where participants come together and try to figure out something new; rather, it is a process of clarification of what is already known. It acknowledges the wisdom and solutions that exist within communities.



Prior to designing the community sessions, the facilitation team reached out to elders, language speakers and individuals who were active in communities and First Nations and asked them to provide information on events that would be held in their areas and regions over the summer so that our sessions could be planned around important community events such as hunting, berry picking, fishing, digging camps and canoe journeys.

Additionally, the sessions were crafted to support individuals to come together and talk about issues that have directly impacted and traumatized participants, and have been avoided because of fear and uncertainty. The team worked with community members to determine appropriate supports and resources that would provide a safe space for participation.

The process was designed to include the voice of every individual who came to the circle and ultimately over 300 community members participated who – identified as ‘women,

men, elders, youth, two-spirited, Indigenous, mainstream Canadians, community members, leaders and life-long advocates.’

While there is variation in the feedback and input provided in each session, there are a number of overarching recommendations and priority themes that surfaced. For example, participants identified the importance of:

- Training and education to support community capacity to lead conversations and develop safety plans that can be actioned;
- ‘Coming of age’ ceremonies for Indigenous children and youth, and ensuring that education regarding consent and safety begins in pre-school and carries on through adulthood;
- ‘Safe spaces’ where women and girls can get the support and resources they need – particularly in rural and remote communities where there may be a small policing complement, or where everyone knows everyone else; and,
- Culturally appropriate and safe healing practices and approaches as identified by community.

Through these community dialogues, participants provided important insight into key priorities for action, and also helped to shape a number of tools and resources that could be used by communities to support safety planning and initiatives. The Province has been reviewing these priorities and recommended actions with a particular focus on supporting community planning and capacity building.

Path Forward Progress

Over the course of the past 12-18 months, the Province of B.C. has made progress to address systemic causes of violence in a number of areas. Focus has continued to be placed on partnership with Indigenous communities to ensure that programs, services, and new policy direction is informed by an understanding of historic and current context, and by a commitment to meaningful reconciliation. The Province also continues to partner with the federal government to understand opportunities for increased collaboration and partnership to address systemic causes of violence.

This commitment is anchored in the Province's formal passage of the [*Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*](#) (DRIPA). Passed in November 2019 to implement the UN Declaration, this legislation is the first of its kind in Canada and was informed by collaboration between the Province and Indigenous leadership to advance reconciliation and recognize the human rights of all Indigenous peoples – a critical underpinning of all efforts to address systemic causes of violence.

B.C.'s 10 Principles

THE PROVINCE HAS INTRODUCED [*Draft Principles that Guide the Province of British Columbia's Relationship with Indigenous Peoples*](#). The Province's principles provide high-level guidance on how provincial representatives engage with Indigenous peoples.

They address areas such as:

- **THE RIGHT** of Indigenous peoples to self-determination and self-government, and the responsibility of government to change operating practices and processes to recognize these rights.
- **THE STANDARD** of conduct that government employees must demonstrate in all dealings with Indigenous peoples.
- **THE NEED** for treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements, to be based on recognition of inherent rights and respect.

The Province has also made targeted investments into key programs and services that are aligned with the Calls for Justice and community priorities. Some key, recent highlights include:

- The Civil Forfeiture Crime Prevention and Remediation Grant Program provides one-time funding to crime prevention and remediation projects across B.C. The 2019/2020 program cycle awarded a total of over \$7 million in funding to projects that align with Calls to strengthen supports to victims and promote Indigenous healing. This includes funding towards initiatives addressing gender-based violence, violence against children and youth, Indigenous healing and rebuilding, human trafficking, sexual exploitation and vulnerable women in the sex trade.

Giving Voice

IN 2018/19, the Province committed to providing \$400,000 over two years to the Minister's Advisory Council on Indigenous Women (MACIW) for the Giving Voice program. Additional funding was provided in 2019/20 which resulted in a total of 54 projects funded to date for a total of \$546,000. Giving Voice projects promote healing from gender-based violence by providing safe spaces for Indigenous women and girls to speak about issues of violence and create community-based solutions, both on- and off-reserve. Projects include traditional activities like knowledge workshops and healing circles. It also includes more community-focused projects, such as monthly dinners, guided community dialogues, cultural retreats and workshops on healthy masculinity.

- In March 2019, the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction [announced](#) the release of the Province's first ever poverty reduction strategy: TogetherBC. Informed by a Poverty Reduction Advisory Council that includes Indigenous representation, the strategy aims to lift 140,000 people out of poverty.
- In June 2019, the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training provided \$1.4 million to support teacher education seats for Indigenous students, and \$730,000 for the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology, B.C.'s only public Indigenous post-secondary institution, to deliver two Master's of Education cohorts in partnership with the University of British Columbia. In addition, the Ministry provided \$600,000 to B.C.'s public teacher education programs to integrate Indigenous knowledge and culture into the B.C. teacher education curriculum.
- The Ministry has also dedicated \$24 million annually to deliver Indigenous skills training and education initiatives to Indigenous communities across B.C. The innovative approach is Indigenous-led and community-based to allow communities equitable access to quality programming in B.C.

- In June 2019, the Province released [*A Pathway to Hope: A Roadmap for Making Mental Health and Addictions Care Better for People in British Columbia*](#). As part of this, the Province has made important investments to support Indigenous-led solutions to mental health and wellness and substance use. In 2018, the Province (represented by the Ministries of Health, Mental Health and Addictions, Children and Family Development, and Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation), signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of Canada and the First Nations Health Council to improve mental health and wellness services. The partners collectively committed \$30 million over a two-year period to support First Nations to plan, design and deliver new mental health and wellness services based on their health plans and priorities. A key focus for the partners is supporting First Nations to design a full continuum of care that affirms, promotes and restores the mental health and wellness of First Nations in B.C. and that contributes to healing, Nation rebuilding and reconciliation. A number of new service delivery models for mental health and wellness are already emerging across the province as a result of this partnership approach.

This tripartite partnership is complemented by new investments by the Province to support the diverse healing journeys of First Nation individuals, families and communities. This includes new funding for Indigenous land-based healing and a commitment of \$40 million by the Province and the First Nations Health Authority to support the renovation, replacement and construction of First Nation-run treatment centres throughout B.C.

Provincial Policing Standards

IN 2019, as part of the development of provincial policing standards to promote unbiased policing, the Director of Police Services addressed concerns regarding the police practice often referred to as ‘street checks’ or ‘carding’, including concerns about the over-representation of Indigenous and racialized persons. The standards require that police agencies provide policy direction to officers, to ensure practices are in line with existing law. The standards also establish that police stops cannot be random or arbitrary, or based on a person’s race, social or economic status. The standards require police agencies to provide guidance to officers on the steps that must be taken to ensure a person’s rights are upheld during a stop. They also require procedures regarding record-keeping and audits, and that policies be accessible to the public. These standards were implemented in 2020. Standards to promote unbiased policing more broadly are in the final stages of development.

- On August 27, 2019, in partnership with the First Nations Education Steering Committee, Métis Nation B.C. and the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation, the Ministry of Education announced that work is underway to develop two new resources for teachers to support increased integration of Indigenous knowledge, perspectives and content in K-12 classrooms. The Ministry of Education is working collaboratively with local Indigenous communities to create resources and bring local Indigenous knowledge and perspectives into the classroom. In addition, a number of Indigenous-focused courses were introduced for students to undertake.

- On September 3, 2019 Kasari Govender commenced her term as B.C.'s first Human Rights Commissioner. [BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner](#) was created to address the root causes of inequality, discrimination and injustice in B.C. by shifting laws, policies, practices and cultures. The Office was informed by consultation with Indigenous partners, and will achieve their work through education, research, advocacy, inquiry and monitoring – aligning with Calls to eliminate jurisdictional gaps and neglect that result in the denial of services.
- On September 14, 2019, the Ministry of Health and First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) [announced](#) that they are partnering to provide more than \$1.8 million in ongoing funding and over \$200,000 in one-time funding to the Lu'ma Medical Centre to expand Indigenous primary care services. First Nations and other residents in Metro Vancouver will have increased access to culturally safe and appropriate primary health care thanks to the Province and FNHA supporting expansion of the Lu'ma Medical Centre. The enhanced centre is the initial First Nations-led project to be announced in B.C. under the government's primary care strategy. Lu'ma provides health and outreach services to urban-based First Nations, Métis and Inuit, many of whom are living away from home and others who travel to the metro area to access medical treatment not available where they live.
- Lu'ma will soon be able to hire 12 more full-time equivalent health-care professionals who will provide culturally respectful, First Nations-focused care to 1,750 new patients, serving about 2,900 patients in total. The patients will receive wraparound support from a team of new and existing health-care providers, including doctors, nurse

practitioners, nurses, social workers, as well as access to traditional healers, Elders and social navigators. Together they will deliver integrated, holistic and person-centred care that aligned with Calls to provide services that are rooted in tradition and culture, and are trauma-informed.

- On Sept. 16, 2019, the Ministry of Children and Family Development [announced](#) the end of the child welfare practice of non-consensual 'birth alerts' which disproportionately impacted marginalized and Indigenous women. Moving to a voluntary approach of providing early supports and preventative services to expectant parents will help them plan and safely care for their babies. This change to practice allows for a more trusting, collaborative relationship with service providers right from the beginning, while empowering women, their families and their communities to work together to care for their children. This step is consistent with the Province's commitment to provide better supports to keep Indigenous children at home and out of care. It responds directly to the recommendation from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls to stop using birth alerts and reflects the B.C. Government's commitment to implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action.

These initiatives highlight just a few of the ways in which the Province has increased its focus on addressing the systemic causes of violence and we continue to identify additional opportunities to build a path forward in partnership with Indigenous communities.

Reflections and Next Steps

The past 12-18 months have been a time of reflection and action for the Province as we concluded our participation in the National Inquiry and reached important milestones related to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. While progress has been made in a number of important areas, we know there is more to do. Our review of the Calls for Justice and historic recommendations, and our dialogue with Indigenous survivors, families, communities and leadership, has helped to identify priorities and areas of focus, including:

- Improved data collection and evaluative frameworks to better understand the impacts of systemic causes, and identify evidence based and data-informed metrics for success. This includes the development of meaningful reporting.
- Increased community capacity to identify safety priorities and develop safety plans is of continued interest. This includes interest in opportunities to establish culturally appropriate protocols and approaches,

improve information sharing, and increase access to available resources and community investment.

- Ceremonies to support healing and wellness, re-establish traditional practices, and improve relationships and community safety.
- Culturally appropriate tools and resources to increase awareness and understanding of consent, personal safety and available resources.
- Improved awareness and understanding across the public service as it relates to the experience of Indigenous youth and the 2SLGBTQQIA community is a significant area of opportunity for growth. Increased engagement with the Indigenous 2SLGBTQQIA community and focused resources for public servants to increase their knowledge and capacity are important steps.

These priorities, and those that are surfaced by ongoing engagement with Indigenous communities, will continue to inform a meaningful path forward.

Closing Comments

As we reflect on the one-year anniversary of the release of the Final Report of the National Inquiry, we continue to be committed to addressing the systemic causes of violence against Indigenous women and girls. The resiliency and innovation in community, and the leadership and expertise of Indigenous women in particular, must be acknowledged and supported.

This update has provided examples of some of the key recent initiatives we have undertaken to fulfill this commitment. 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 the federal government.



Illustrations courtesy of Evelyn Marie White



Ministry of
Public Safety and
Solicitor General