



Report in Response to

Forsaken: The Report of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry

2021 Status Update

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Message from the Minister

As B.C.'s Solicitor General and Minister of Public Safety, I am pleased to present the 2021 status update in response to *Forsaken: The Report of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry* (the Report).

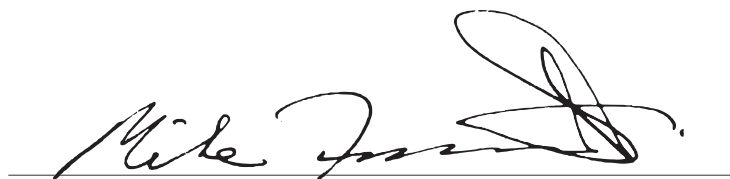
The Province continues to make progress to address recommendations outlined in the Report, and to address broader systemic causes of violence against women and girls. In particular, over the past year, this includes:

- ▶ British Columbia recently endorsed a [Joint Declaration for a Canada Free of Gender-Based Violence](#) along with Federal, Provincial, and Territorial Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women. This declaration is a historic milestone in the response to gender-based violence (GBV) and the advancement of gender equality for people across Canada. This federal, provincial and territorial collaboration represents an important step in developing a National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence in Canada, which is being developed in complement to the National Action Plan on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.
- ▶ The Director of Police Services initiated a project to develop BC Provincial Policing Standards to govern the police response to sexual assaults. The police response to sexual assaults is critical, from intake, interviewing, and other aspects of the investigation, and it is vital that we build on trauma-informed practices to better recognize and understand trauma and its effects on victims, and how we can reduce potential re-traumatization.
- ▶ The Ministry of Children and Family Development is working to improve supports for children, youth and families of all sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions in response to recommendations in the Final Report on the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. In Summer 2020, Ministry Executive signed a ministry-wide [corporate commitment](#) to support 2SLGBTQ+ (two-spirit; lesbian; gay; bisexual; transgender; queer+) children, youth and families. This commitment is applicable to all Ministry employees and is grounded in the BC Human Rights Code. Under this commitment, Ministry employees are expected to recognize, respect, support and care for 2SLGBTQ+ children and youth in a manner which affirms their sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

- The delivery of Gladue services is being transitioned from Legal Aid BC to a First Nations controlled entity effective April 1, 2021. This transition is intended to lessen the daily negative impacts of the justice system on Indigenous peoples, and concurrently build greater trust, working relationships, and functionality between First Nations and sectors throughout the justice system.
- The Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General has also supported an additional series of Indigenous-led, community-based conversations to confirm priorities for action and opportunities for collaboration to address the systemic causes of violence, and to inform the development of a National Action Plan on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

These initiatives highlight just a few of the ways in which Government is working with communities and partners to address broader causes of violence and respond to the recommendations of the Report. Additionally, this update provides information regarding progress over the past year – more information on important policy and program initiatives undertaken to respond to the Report can be found on Government's [public inquiry webpage](#).

We remain committed to working with survivors, family members of missing and murdered women, and their communities to end violence.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Farnworth", is positioned above a horizontal line.

Honourable Mike Farnworth
Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General

Introduction

In September 2010, the Lieutenant Governor in Council issued an Order in Council establishing the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry (MWCI), which examined the conduct of police investigations into the disappearance of nearly 50 women reported missing from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside between 1997 and 2002. In December 2012, the Commission released *Forsaken – The Report of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry (MWCI Report)*¹, outlining 63 recommendations – 54 of which were directed to the Province – and two urgent measures.

In November 2013, the Province published a status report² that described progress made to implement the recommendations of the Commission and enhance the safety and security of women in British Columbia (B.C.). In December 2014, a second and final status report³ provided information on further progress made since 2013, and spoke to how the intent of the recommendations would be used to inform future government action, including efforts to end violence against women and girls.

In December 2016, the BC Office of the Auditor General (OAG) released *Follow-Up on The Missing Women Commission of Inquiry*⁴, examining the degree to which the Province responded to the 21 recommendations and two urgent measures

selected for audit by the OAG. The report found that eight recommendations had been implemented, six recommendations had been partially implemented, five had not been implemented, and four recommendations were not far enough along to determine whether the Province's approach would address the intent of the recommendation. The report issued one recommendation: that the Province report publicly each year on how government's actions are meeting the intent of the Commission's recommendations.

The Province subsequently committed to implementing the OAG's recommendation, and in February 2018, released a status update⁵ that reported on activities undertaken since 2014. This was followed in February 2019, and again in March 2020 with the release of status updates detailing progress since the previous year.⁶

This *2021 Status Update* continues the Province's commitment to annual reporting on initiatives undertaken since 2019 related to the MWCI recommendations. This update again highlights additional initial initiatives that the Province has undertaken to address the systemic causes of violence against women and girls.

- 1 Missing Women Commission of Inquiry (2012). *Forsaken – The Report of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry*. <http://www.missingwomeninquiry.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/Forsaken-ES-web-RGB.pdf>
- 2 Government of British Columbia (2013). *Safety and Security of Vulnerable Women in B.C.: A Status Report in Response to: Forsaken – The Report of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry*. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/law-crime-and-justice/about-bc-justice-system/inquiries/bcgovstatusreport.pdf>
- 3 Government of British Columbia (2014). *A Final Status Update Report in Response to: Forsaken – The Report of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry*. https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/law-crime-and-justice/about-bc-justice-system/inquiries/mwci_report_2014.pdf
- 4 BC Office of the Auditor General (2016). *Follow-Up on the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry*. https://www.bcauditor.com/sites/default/files/publications/reports/FINAL_MWCI_2.pdf
- 5 Government of British Columbia (2018). *Report in Response to Forsaken – The Report of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry: Status Update*. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/law-crime-and-justice/about-bc-justice-system/inquiries/mwci-status-update-2018.pdf>
- 6 Government of British Columbia (2018). *Report in Response to Forsaken – The Report of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry: Status Update*. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/law-crime-and-justice/about-bc-justice-system/inquiries/mwci-status-update-2019.pdf>

Updates on Actions by Theme of the MWCI

Restorative Measures

HEALING AND RECONCILIATION (REC. 3.3)

Supporting Indigenous-led Solutions to Mental Health and Wellness

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. The funding opportunity remains open and the partners are reviewing projects on an ongoing basis.

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 BC 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 BC.

Civil Forfeiture Crime Prevention and Remediation Grants

The government continues to prioritize community-led projects that promote healing of Indigenous individuals, families and/or communities affected by violence and trauma. Since 2014, just over \$5.7 million in grant funding has been provided through the Civil Forfeiture Crime Prevention and Remediation Grant Program to community-led projects supporting healing and rebuilding from violence in Indigenous communities. In March 2020, 63 Indigenous healing and rebuilding projects totalling just over \$1.8 million were funded, including projects that have a specific focus on Indigenous women and girls. Examples include:

- **\$30,000** to Métis Nation British Columbia's "In the Words of Our Elders" – Michif Language Revitalization' project. This project was funded to bring together Métis youth, Michif-speaking Elders and knowledge keepers for a 12-week language and culture program. Each session is recorded and made available online to thousands of other Métis youth and community members across the province via the Métis Nation British Columbia website.
- **\$28,000** to the Cariboo Chilcotin Tribal Council's 'Keyoh What'en, Dākelh Keyoh Hubughunek Ulhtus (Grease Trail Ride) project. This project was funded to support the facilitation of the connection of Indigenous youth with their culture, communities, and families through a five-day horseback ride on the traditional Grease Trail, an important trail network historically used by the Dākelh Keyoh people, where at-risk youth will learn traditional Dākelh cultural and wellness activities from Elders and Knowledge Keepers.

Youth ride to a Nation Gathering of approximately 300 people for an additional three days, where they have the opportunity to share their experience with their communities and be honoured for their journey by Elders of the Southern Dākelh Nation.

- **\$30,000** to Wish Drop-in Centre Society's 'The Aboriginal Health & Safety' project. This project was funded to provide a continuum of Indigenous-led culturally-safe programming for marginalized, sex-working Indigenous women, and to meet women wherever they are at on their healing journey including offering supports around housing, advocacy, detox/treatment to help women make meaningful changes, stabilize their lives and resist violence and exploitation.
- **\$30,000** to The Native Courtworker and Counselling Association of BC's 'Indigenous Justice Forums' project. This project was funded to host 2 forums for up to 100 participants including elders, local leaders and partner agencies to engage community members to collectively address systemic change, promote cultural-based healing, and propose Indigenous led solutions. The project was designed to specifically focus on strategically addressing the issues of child protection, violence against Indigenous women and girls, and exploitation/human trafficking.

CIVIL FORFEITURE CRIME PREVENTION AND REMEDIATION GRANT PROGRAM

The Civil Forfeiture Office, located within the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, operates to undermine the profit motive behind criminal activity by taking away the tools and proceeds of crime and putting them back into programs that support community crime prevention and remediation initiatives.

Through the Civil Forfeiture Crime Prevention and Remediation Grant Program, one-time funding is provided to crime prevention and remediation projects that align with funding streams chosen on an annual basis. The annual grant program includes funding streams to support projects that address violence against women, human trafficking and sexual exploitation, help implement the MWCI recommendations, and support healing and rebuilding in Indigenous communities.

More information about 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>.

Crime Victim Assistance Program

The Crime Victim Assistance Program (CVAP) assists victims, immediate family members, and, in some cases, witnesses in coping with the effects of violent crime. It provides financial benefits to help offset financial losses and assist in recovery. CVAP continues to support victims and their immediate family members through access to financial benefits that support healing, including funding for counselling or memorial services. In 2019/20, CVAP provided a total of \$15.185 million to claimants.

FUNDING TO HELP SEXUAL ASSAULT SURVIVORS

On May 26, 2020 the Province announced a multi-year, \$10-million grant program to support the delivery of co-ordinated emergency sexual assault response services in regions throughout B.C. The Ending Violence Association of BC (EVA BC) has received the funding to administer the grant program, in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, the Ministry of Finance - Gender Equity Office, the Minister's Advisory Council on Indigenous Women (MACIW), and the Ministry of Health. EVA BC has also contracted with an evaluator to evaluate all funded programs.

The grant program supports the delivery of coordinated community-based emergency sexual assault response services that are trauma informed and culturally appropriate. The services will meet the needs of sexual assault survivors around the province, including the unique needs of Indigenous communities and survivors.

In recognition of the substantial need for locally relevant and culturally safe supports for sexual assault survivors in Indigenous communities in BC, approximately half of the grant funding has been awarded to organizations funded under an Indigenous Services Stream led by Indigenous leaders, and the other half has been awarded to organizations under a General Services Stream.

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 launched Giving Voice in 2013. The project "gives voice" to issues of violence within their lives, families and communities and funds traditional activities like knowledge workshops and land-based practices with a goal to stop violence by changing behaviours and attitudes. It also includes projects with the intent to mobilize communities, such as monthly feasts, guided community dialogues, cultural retreats and workshops on healthy masculinity.

Starting in 2018/19, the Province provided \$400,000 over two years to the Minister's Advisory Council on Indigenous Women's Giving Voice. Additional funding was provided in 2019/20 and 2020/21 which meant a total of 106 projects have been funded to date for a grand total of \$1.06M.

MINISTER'S ADVISORY COUNCIL ON INDIGENOUS WOMEN

The Minister's Advisory Council on Indigenous Women (MACIW) was established in 2011 following the Collaboration to End Violence: National Aboriginal Women's Forum, which was co-hosted by the Province and the Native Women's Association of Canada.

MACIW is comprised of up to 10 members and provides advice to government on how to improve the quality of life for Indigenous women in British Columbia by:

- Advocating for the well-being of Indigenous women;
- Advancing the interests of all Indigenous women by advising, educating, and advocating to all aspects of government; and,
- Offering guidance and direction that is rooted in Indigenous worldviews.

Moosehide Campaign Day

The Province is committed to the work of ending gender-based violence and racism that make many Indigenous women, girls, gender-diverse and two-spirit people unsafe. As part of this commitment, the Province proclaimed February 11, 2021 as Moose Hide Campaign Day in B.C, which is a grassroots movement of Indigenous and non-Indigenous men and boys who are standing up against violence towards women and children. In 2018/19, the Province committed \$2 million over four years to support the campaign. Provincial funding for the Moose Hide Campaign Development Society has provided resources the past two years to work with K-12 schools, now with 27 communities participating, as well as post-secondary institutions to expand its anti-violence message with children and youth.

THE MOOSE HIDE CAMPAIGN

The Moose Hide Campaign collaborates with post-secondary institutions and their Sexualized Prevention Offices, Indigenous Education Departments, Student Unions and Residence Departments, and many campuses host Moose Hide Campaign Day events.

The Campaign has also developed a First Nations outreach and engagement strategy.

A few examples of this work include:

- Using the B.C. First Nations Leaders Gathering as a platform to engage with First Nations representatives from all parts of the province.
- Actively engaging and getting support from Indigenous political leadership in B.C.
- Working with the First Nations Health Council to explore community-based programming, and
- Liaising with communities regarding what they are doing on the ground to end violence against women.

Equality-Promoting Measures

PROVINCIAL POLICING STANDARDS (REC. 4.1, 4.2, 4.12)

Police Response to Sexual Assaults

In 2020, the Director of Police services initiated a project to develop BC Provincial Policing Standards governing the police response to sexual assaults. The police response to sexual assaults, from the initial reporting of a complaint to police through to the conclusion of an investigation and beyond, is vitally important. It has also been the subject of critical attention including concerns related to intake, interviewing and other aspects of investigations. The standards will address these and other areas. Building on the trauma-informed practice curriculum highlighted in the police training section below, the Director will also determine additional training that may be required for police officers. This work is in the early stages and will include stakeholder engagement in the process, and coordination with other government efforts to address gender-based violence.

COMMITMENT TO EQUAL PROTECTION OF THE LAW (REC. 4.3, 4.4, 4.5 4.9)

Supporting Vulnerable Witnesses

A comprehensive policy review related to equality and vulnerable witnesses has been completed by the BC Prosecution Service. A new policy addressing vulnerable victims and witnesses in serious cases was implemented in December 2014.

On January 15, 2021, the BC Prosecution Service released updates to several policies – including *Vulnerable Victims and Witnesses* (VUL 1).

This policy now includes an expanded set of factors to be addressed in order to support an individual's effective participation in the criminal justice system, including additional advice specific to files involving Indigenous victims. The policy and related media statement are available on the BC Prosecution Service public website: gov.bc.ca/prosecutionservice.

INDIGENOUS JUSTICE FRAMEWORK

On April 16, 2019, the BC Prosecution Service released a media statement, launching its Indigenous Justice Framework overview, and several related policy changes – including a revised Charge Assessment Guidelines (CHA 1). CHA 1 now includes the following passage:

"In assessing the evidence, Crown Counsel should assume that the trial will unfold before an impartial and unbiased judge or jury acting in accordance with the law, and should not usurp the role of the judge or jury by substituting their own subjective view of the ultimate weight or credibility of evidence for those of the judge or jury."

Along with updated policies released on January 15, 2021, CHA 1 now includes additional advice about tracking when the accused or victim identifies as an Indigenous person to aid in data collection and in monitoring results, which have been hampered somewhat by concerns about the reliability and completeness of existing data.

TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICE (REC. 4.9, 4.12)

Cross-sectoral Training

With the support of the Department of Justice Canada, B.C. is currently in the final year of a five-year project to develop and implement a cross-sector trauma-informed practice (TIP) curriculum for the justice, public safety and anti-violence community sectors. The TIP curriculum, which consists of a self-directed online course and a facilitated one-day course offered in both in-person and virtual formats, was launched in June 2019. As of January 2021, 4,915 participants have registered in the online course and over 440 participants have registered in the facilitated course. After completing the TIP curriculum, participants will be able to:

- Recognize and understand trauma and its possible effects on victims and witnesses, and have a clear understanding of how violence and abuse may shape victim responses;
- Assess their own practices and processes with a trauma-informed lens; and,
- Incorporate trauma-informed learnings to reduce potential re-traumatization experienced by victims and witnesses participating in the justice system.

The curriculum is available free of charge to personnel in the following areas: police, corrections, Crown, lawyers, and victim service/anti-violence programs. A companion webinar series that builds off of the foundational online and facilitated courses launched in December 2019, and a series of sector-specific expert videos are currently in development.

Police Training

In November 2019, the Justice Institute of BC Curriculum Improvements Steering Committee was struck to work in collaboration with stakeholders to assess, prioritize, and support the JIBC in implementing recommendations stemming from the JIBC Police Academy (JIBC PA) Recruit Curriculum Evaluation. As a result of the prioritization exercises, the JIBC PA has implemented Indigenous cultural competency training and is in the process of incorporating additional content in the curriculum on the history and status of Indigenous peoples, including the history and legacy of police relations with Indigenous peoples in British Columbia. The JIBC PA will also be implementing recommendations that focus on enhancing concepts of fair and impartial policing, trauma-informed practice, and ethical decision-making. All improvements are scheduled to be completed by the end of 2021.

Measures to Prevent Violence Against Indigenous and Rural Women

SAFETY FOR MARGINALIZED WOMEN (UM#1, REC. 6.3, 6.4)

Transportation Along Highway 16

The Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, through the Highway 16 Five-Point Transportation Action Plan, has implemented enhanced public transportation systems in over 35 communities along the Highway 16 corridor from Prince Rupert to Prince George. Through over \$10.2M in investments and commitments through 2022/23, the action plan is helping provide safer and more reliable transportation options for First Nations and remote communities along the corridor.

Three local governments and a number of First Nation communities financially support the BC Transit Highway 16 inter-community bus service. Each route is designed to allow a person to travel to their nearest large community and return home the same day. Collectively all four routes cover over 575 kilometres. Due to COVID-19, which caused a drop in ridership and lost fare revenue, the Province and Canada provided the local governments with Safe Restart funding to ensure maintenance of essential transit service. The two Regional Districts and Town of Smithers collectively received over \$68,000 to ensure the service remains operational and no service disruptions occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic. Fares are \$5 per person one-way on all routes with the exception of the commuter service between Witset and Smithers where the fare is \$2.75 per person one-way. Depending upon the route, children 4 or 5 years of age and younger, accompanied by an adult,

ride free. Total ridership for all the Highway 16 inter-community transit routes was over 14,000 in 2020. The service has carried over 51,000 passengers since it began in 2017.

In 2020, a number of initiatives were implemented or continued through the action plan, including the following:

- Enhanced BC Transit inter-community services continue to be provided on four routes connecting Terrace with the Hazeltons, Witset with Smithers, Smithers with Burns Lake, and Burns Lake with Prince George;
- 12 community vehicle services extended through March 2022 were serving nearly 3,000 passengers monthly pre-COVID, but have been largely adapted to support self-isolation (e.g., through grocery and medicine deliveries and direct to doctor travel) during the pandemic;
- Indigenous driver education initiative being delivered through programs at the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction;
- Infrastructure investments totalling \$1.5M were completed for shelters, pull-outs and web-cams, with this type of funding now included within the authority of Ministry District offices for minor improvements even outside of the Ministry rights-of-way (e.g., shelter for a community bus stop was built on the Lake Babine property near Burns Lake); and
- Continued ongoing collaboration between the Ministry and the Northern and First Nations Health Authorities, BC Transit, the community vehicle grant recipients, and other service providers on effective policies and scheduling to support cross-utilization of existing services.

Women's Transition Housing Fund and Rapid Response to Homelessness

RAPID RESPONSE TO HOMELESSNESS PROGRAM

The Province is investing \$291 million to build over 2,000 modular supportive housing units across B.C. for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. This initiative will deliver a mix of permanent and temporary units and is a response to the growing issue of homelessness in communities throughout B.C. People living on the street and those in shelters will get priority for this initiative.

All new modular housing buildings in the province are being provided with around-the-clock staffing to help young people, people with disabilities, seniors, and others in critical housing need.

The Province is investing \$170 million over three years to help those with the highest housing needs to build new beginnings. Experienced non-profit housing providers will provide support to tenants based on their assessed needs.

The safety and security of women, with or without children, fleeing violence is a high priority for the Province. Announced through Budget 2018, work on the Women's Transition Housing Fund is underway. The program will provide \$734 million over 10 years to build and operate 1,500 new supportive homes for women and children fleeing violence, including transition houses, safe homes, second-stage and long-term housing.

The Women's Transition Housing Fund program provides women and their children who are at risk of violence and/or who have experienced violence with access to safe, secure and confidential services. Those services include information and support for decision-making, short-term shelter or housing, referrals to other services, and links to safe, affordable housing. As of December 31, 2020, 699 units are in various stages of development.

In addition, BC Housing is working with partner organizations to support women and children who would otherwise be trapped at home in dangerous situations during COVID-19. Nearly 300 additional spaces in communities throughout B.C. have been secured during the pandemic for women and children leaving violent or unstable situations.

Some examples of housing being developed through the *Building BC: Women's Transition Housing Fund* include:

- **LOWER POST:** 6 units for Indigenous women and children in need of a safe home, managed and operated by the Lower Post First Nation Housing Society. Support services will include daily meals, wellness supports and referrals to health services. This project also includes 10 units of supportive housing for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness through the Supportive Housing Fund. In addition, residents will have access to teachings from Elders and programming that focuses on physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being.
- **DUNCAN:** 6-room house for 10 women and children in an effort to reduce the number of children going into care, managed and operated by Hiiye'yu Lelum (House of Friendship) Society.
- **NEW HAZELTON:** 6-bedroom (11 bed) transition house and 7 units of second stage housing for Indigenous women and families fleeing violence, operated by Northern Society for Domestic Peace.

BC Housing is also developing projects through different funding programs, an example developed through the *Rapid Response to Homelessness* program includes:

- **VICTORIA:** 21 units of supportive homes for Indigenous women who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness operated by the Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness Society. Spaken House provides culturally appropriate supports for Indigenous women, as well as access to teachings from Elders, traditional foods, cultural crafts and land-based healing, including programming that focuses on physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being. In addition, an Elder and an “Aunty” will be onsite two days per week to provide additional one-on-one support

WISH DROP-IN CENTRE

In 2020/2021, the WISH Drop-in Centre Society received \$283,835 from the Province as annual funding to support the Mobile Access Project (MAP) Van. The MAP Van trains and employs former sex workers to deliver services across Vancouver to women working in the street-based sex trade. It provides a safe place of respite with referrals, support and supplies for women who are vulnerable to violence and sexual exploitation.

DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE WOMEN’S CENTRE

The Downtown Eastside Women’s Centre provides services and supports for women and children in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside, including a range of programs, a drop-in center, and emergency shelter services. In 2020/2021, the Province provided \$200,867 in annual funding to the Downtown Eastside Women’s Centre. In December 2020, the Province provided the Downtown Eastside Women’s Centre an additional \$91,938 in one-time grant funding under the COVID-19 Victim Service and Violence Against Women Support Fund to contribute towards some of the incremental costs incurred as a direct result of the pandemic.

Building BC: Indigenous Housing Fund

In 2020, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing continued its budget commitments to create new social and supportive housing for vulnerable women and their children. Through its \$550 million investment in the Building BC: Indigenous Housing Fund, the Province, over ten years, will build and operate 1,750 units of social housing, both on- and off-nation. The first 1,100 new housing units in 30 projects were announced in November 2018, and this included almost 780 off-nation units and close to 370 on-nation units. These projects will be located in 26 communities across the province. As of December 31, 2020, there were 1,093 units initiated, in development or under construction through the Indigenous Housing Fund:

- **378** units under construction;
- **117** units in development; and
- **549** units initiated.

COMMUNITY HOUSING FUND

The Province recognizes there is an urgent need to create more options for those struggling to find suitable, adequate, and reasonably priced accommodation. Together with housing partners, BC is developing affordable rental homes for middle and low-income families, independent seniors and individuals.

BC Housing works with non-profit organizations, housing co-operatives, and local government to create additional supply through the submission and approval of project proposals.

The Community Housing Fund is part of the Province's 10-year, \$7-billion housing plan. It is an investment of \$1.9 billion to build more than 14,000 mixed-income rental homes for low- and moderate-income families and individuals. In two and a half years, more than 5,700 homes have been completed, are under construction or are in development through the Community Housing Fund program in more than 45 communities.

Violence Against Women Programs

The Province currently provides over \$40 million annually in funding to support over 400 victim service and violence against women programs across B.C. This includes 240 counselling and outreach programs providing assistance to women and children who are impacted by violence:

- **92** Stopping the Violence Counselling programs;
- **53** Outreach programs;
- **11** Multi-cultural outreach services; and,
- **84** Prevention, Education, Advocacy, Counselling and Empowerment (PEACE) programs for children who have witnessed abuse, threats, or violence in the home.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE UNITS

The Province provides stable, annual funding to Domestic Violence Units (DVUs), an evidence-based model of co-located service delivery that pairs dedicated police officers with community-based victim services and, in some communities, a child protection worker to improve case coordination and collaboration in highest risk cases of domestic violence. 9 DVUs operate in Abbotsford, Capital Region, New Westminster, North Shore (North Vancouver and West Vancouver), Surrey, Nanaimo, Kelowna, Vancouver and Prince George and served 430 new clients in 2020.

Civil Forfeiture Crime Prevention and Remediation Grants

These one-time grants from civil forfeiture proceeds also supported 111 projects that address human trafficking, violence and sexual exploitation of marginalized and vulnerable women, totalling just over \$4.7 million in grant funding in 2020/2021. Examples include:

- **\$22,500** to the Comox Valley Transition Society's 'Everything is Related' project. This project was provided funding to address the cultural needs of Indigenous, Metis and Inuit women and their children who have experienced intimate partner violence and sexual assault as well as the development of stronger relationships with local Indigenous, Metis and Inuit communities in order to enhance cultural safety within its services.
- **\$30,000** to Disability Alliance BC's 'Indigenous Women, Disability, and Violence: Giving Voice to Lived Experiences to Address VAW Service Gaps' project. This project was provided funding to address the significant gaps and lack of information related to Indigenous women living with disabilities who experience domestic violence and/or sexual assault and the barriers they experience to accessing appropriate and culturally responsive services.
- **\$30,000** to Central Okanagan Elisabeth Fry Society's 'Indigenous Victim Service/Outreach' project. This project was provided funding to support the organization's ongoing partnership with the Westbank First Nation to provide services to survivors of domestic and sexual violence and to young women at risk of sexual exploitation and to allow for the continued delivery of a dedicated victim service/outreach program to provide services for Indigenous victims of domestic and sexual violence.
- **\$30,000** to Lake Babine Nation's 'Ending Violence Against Lake Babine Nation Women and Girls' project. This project was provided funding to implement anti-violence education and sexual assault prevention programs to protect vulnerable Indigenous women and girls by off-setting some of the social, economic, health and justice impacts that correlate with construction of new industrial projects in the oil and gas and mining sector.

Improved Missing Person Policies and Practices

SUPPORTS FOR FAMILIES OF MISSING PERSONS (REC. 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4, 7.9)

BC Provincial Policing Standards Governing Missing Person Investigations

BC Provincial Policing Standards governing missing person investigations were completed in 2015 and took effect in 2016. The standards were amended in late 2019 to make participation in the Provincial Dental Databank program mandatory for BC police agencies, as recommended by a Coroners Inquest in 2018.

The Provincial Dental Databank is unique to British Columbia. It uses a more precise process for recording dental work compared to other Canadian police information systems, and identifies associations or 'hits' between found remains and missing person cases. These 'hits' provide investigative leads that can help solve cases. At the time of the Coroners Inquest, some B.C. police agencies were not submitting dental records to this program. The standards now require that, if a person remains missing for more than 90 days, any dental records obtained must be submitted for entry into the Provincial Dental Databank.

BC Family Information Liaison Unit

In early 2020, the federal government announced that it would extend funding for Family Information Liaison Units (FILUs) for an additional three years, to provide continued supports for the family members of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls (MMIWG).

When a family member contacts the BC FILU for assistance, frontline family support staff work with them to request and obtain the information they are seeking from system and/or government partners

(e.g. RCMP, BC Coroners Service, Crown Counsel). The BC FILU then works with these partners to coordinate sharing the information with the family in a trauma-informed and culturally appropriate manner. In addition to serving families' information needs, BC FILU frontline staff also coordinate with local services to ensure that family members have access to the healing and wellness supports they need (e.g. counselling, cultural supports).

Since launching in July 2017, BC FILU staff have engaged in over 285 outreach and awareness activities with over 560 community agencies, Indigenous organizations, and band or tribal councils in over 115 communities to support greater awareness of and access to FILU services. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the FILU team pivoted to provide a combination of virtual outreach and in-person meetings (where possible and in compliance with public health measures) to continue the supports to MMIWG families in different parts of BC including rural and remote communities. The FILU family support workers along with the RCMP team met with family members to provide them with information about their loved ones. The FILU team also worked to connect families in need with resources during these challenging times.

In addition to the BC FILU, family members and friends of a missing loved one – including all women and girls – can access supports and services through over 160 provincially-funded victim service programs providing emotional support, information, referrals, and practical assistance to victims of crime. This includes 66 community-based victim service programs that serve victims of sexual violence and their families and operate out of non-profit organizations as well as 91 police-based victim service programs that service victims of all types of crime and trauma and assist police and communities in situations involving multiple injuries or deaths and operate out of RCMP detachments and municipal police departments.

Increase Police Accountability to Communities

POLICE BOARDS (REC. 11.3, 11.4)

Increase Representation on Police Boards

Policing and Security Branch continues to work with the Crown Agency and Board Resourcing Office to increase diversity and Indigenous representation on police boards. Through these efforts, expanded Indigenous representation is found on many police boards and efforts to ensure vulnerable and marginalized community members interests are properly represented.

The Province is also following an open procurement process to secure a 5-year contract with a proponent who will develop and deliver on regular basis a comprehensive and practice-based police board governance training program specific to the BC context.

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON REFORMING THE *POLICE ACT*

On December 9, 2020, the Legislative Assembly reappointed a Special Committee on Reforming the Police Act (the Special Committee) with renewed membership. The scope of the Special Committee is to examine, inquire into, and make recommendations to the Legislative Assembly on reforms related to the modernization and sustainability of policing under the *Police Act*, including funding; the role of police with respect to complex social issues, including mental health and wellness, addictions and harm reduction; the scope of systemic racism within BC'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 Terms of Reference for the reappointed Special Committee also permits it to consider any information or evidence that was before the previous committee before its dissolution in September. The Special Committee will report its findings to the Legislative Assembly by October 8, 2021.

In addition to other presenters across the continuum of policing and public safety and various levels of government, the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, Policing and Security Branch, is engaged with the Special Committee and presented to the Committee on January 29 and February 10, 2021. Specifically, the Policing and Security Branch has provided the Special Committee a technical brief on the complexities of the legislation, governance, and roles and responsibilities of policing and public safety along with the challenges and opportunities for modernization.

Closing Remarks

The past year was one of significant challenge for all British Columbians. The COVID-19 pandemic has stressed communities – economically, socially and physically. This impact is particularly felt by women and children, who were exposed to increased domestic and intimate partner violence at a time when social isolation was heightened and access to resources strained. However, we also know that communities are resilient and that they hold solutions to addressing the systemic causes and impacts of violence. The Province remains committed to collaborating with survivors, families and communities to identify and implement these solutions over the immediate and long term.

We look forward to building on the progress made throughout 2020. In particular, commitments to implementing the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, and developing a Gender Based Violence Strategy, will further inform critical initiatives to end violence throughout 2021.

Appendix of Referenced MWCI Recommendations

Urgent Measures	1	To provide funding to existing centres that provide emergency services to women engaged in the sex trade to enable them to remain open 24 hours per day.
	2	To develop and implement an enhanced public transit system to provide a safer travel option connecting the Northern communities, particularly along Highway 16.
Restorative Measures	3.3	That Provincial Government establish a healing fund for families of the missing and murdered women. These funds should be accessed through an application process pursuant to established guidelines.
Equality-Promoting Measures	4.1	That the Minister of Justice direct the Director of Police Services to undertake equality audits of police forces in British Columbia with a focus on police duty to protect marginalized and Aboriginal women from violence. These audits should be carried out by an external agency and with meaningful community involvement.
	4.2	That Provincial Government set a provincial standard establishing that police officers have a general and binding duty to promote equality and to refrain from discriminatory policing.
	4.3	That Provincial Government amend the BC Crown Policy Manual to explicitly include equality as a fundamental principle to guide Crown Counsel in performing their functions.
	4.4	That Provincial Government develop and implement a Crown Vulnerable Women Assault Policy to provide guidance on the prosecution of crimes of violence against vulnerable women, including women engaged in the sex trade.
	4.5	That Provincial Government adopt a policy statement in the BC Crown Policy Manual requiring that a prosecutor's evaluations of how strong the case is likely to be when presented at trial should be made on the assumption that the trier of fact will act impartially and according to the law.
	4.9	That Provincial Government develop guidelines to facilitate and support vulnerable and intimidated witnesses by all actors within the criminal justice system based on the best practices identified by the Commission through its review of protocols and guidelines existing in other jurisdictions.
	4.12	<p>That police officers be required to undergo mandatory and ongoing experiential and interactive training concerning vulnerable community members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Active engagement in overcoming biases, rather than more passive sensitivity training (sometimes called anti-oppression training); ➤ More intensive and ongoing training in the history and current status of Aboriginal peoples in the province and in the specific community, particularly with respect to the ongoing effects of residential schools and the child welfare system; ➤ Training and resources to make prevention of violence against Aboriginal women a genuine priority; ➤ Training to ensure an understanding of violence against women in a range of settings including family violence, child sexual exploitation and violence against women in the sex trade; in particular, the scenarios used in police training should incorporate issues of cultural sensitivity and violence against women; and ➤ Training in recognizing the special needs of vulnerable individuals and how to meet those needs, including recognition of a higher standard of care owed by the police to these individuals.

Measures to Prevent Violence Against Aboriginal and Rural Women	6.1	That Provincial Government fully support the implementation of The Highway of Tears Symposium action plan, updated to the current situation and in a manner that ensures involvement of all affected communities along Highway 16.
	6.3	That Provincial Government provide additional funding to Aboriginal women's organizations to provide more safe houses and counselling programs run for and by Aboriginal women and youth.
	6.4	That Provincial Government provide additional funding to Aboriginal women's organizations to provide more safe houses and counselling programs run for and by Aboriginal women and youth.
Improved Missing Person Policies and Practices	7.1	That the provincial standards be developed by the Director of Police Services with the assistance of a committee consisting of representatives of the BC Association of Municipal Police Chiefs, the RCMP, representatives of community and Aboriginal groups, and representatives of families of the missing and murdered women.
	7.2	That proposed provincial missing persons standards include at least 15 components: Definition of "missing person;" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Criteria for the acceptance of reports; ➤ Jurisdiction; ➤ Missing Person Risk Assessment Tool; ➤ Provincial Missing Person Reporting Form; ➤ Standards related to interaction with family/reportees; ➤ Initial steps – background information; ➤ Supervisory responsibility/quality control; ➤ Forensic evidence standards; ➤ Coroners' Liaison; ➤ Monitoring outstanding missing person cases; ➤ Automatic annual review of unsolved cases; ➤ Closing missing person files; ➤ Prevention and intervention; and ➤ The role and authority of the BCPMPC.
	7.3	That the provincial standards require a proactive missing persons process whereby police must take prevention and intervention measures including "safe and well" checks when an individual is found.
	7.4	That best practice protocols be established for (1) enhanced victimology analysis of missing persons, (2) investigative steps in missing person cases, (3) collaborative missing person investigations collection, (4) storage and analysis of missing persons data, and (5) training specific to missing person investigations.
	7.9	That provincial authorities develop an enhanced, holistic, comprehensive approach for the provision of support to the families and friends of missing persons. This should be based on a needs assessment carried out in consultation with the provincial partnership committee on missing persons.
Increase Police Accountability to Communities	11.3	That additional steps need to be taken to ensure representation of vulnerable and marginalized members and Aboriginal peoples on police boards.
	11.4	That police boards have access to greater resources from the Division of Police Services to gather and analyze information to enable them to better carry out their oversight functions.

