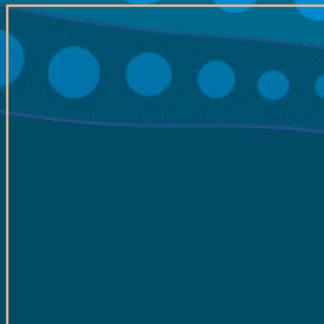


Home Remedies:

Addressing Domestic Violence, Racism
and Sexism in the Context of COVID-19

July 28, 2020



**Elder Roberta
Oshkawbewisens**

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of Canada

Dr. Carrie Bourassa

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UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN
College of Medicine
MEDICINE.USASK.CA



National Collaborating Centre
for Indigenous Health

A landscape photograph of a sunset over rolling hills. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright orange and yellow glow that spreads across the sky and illuminates the grassy fields. The hills are silhouetted against the bright sky. The text "Opening Prayer" is centered in the middle of the image in a white, sans-serif font.

Opening Prayer

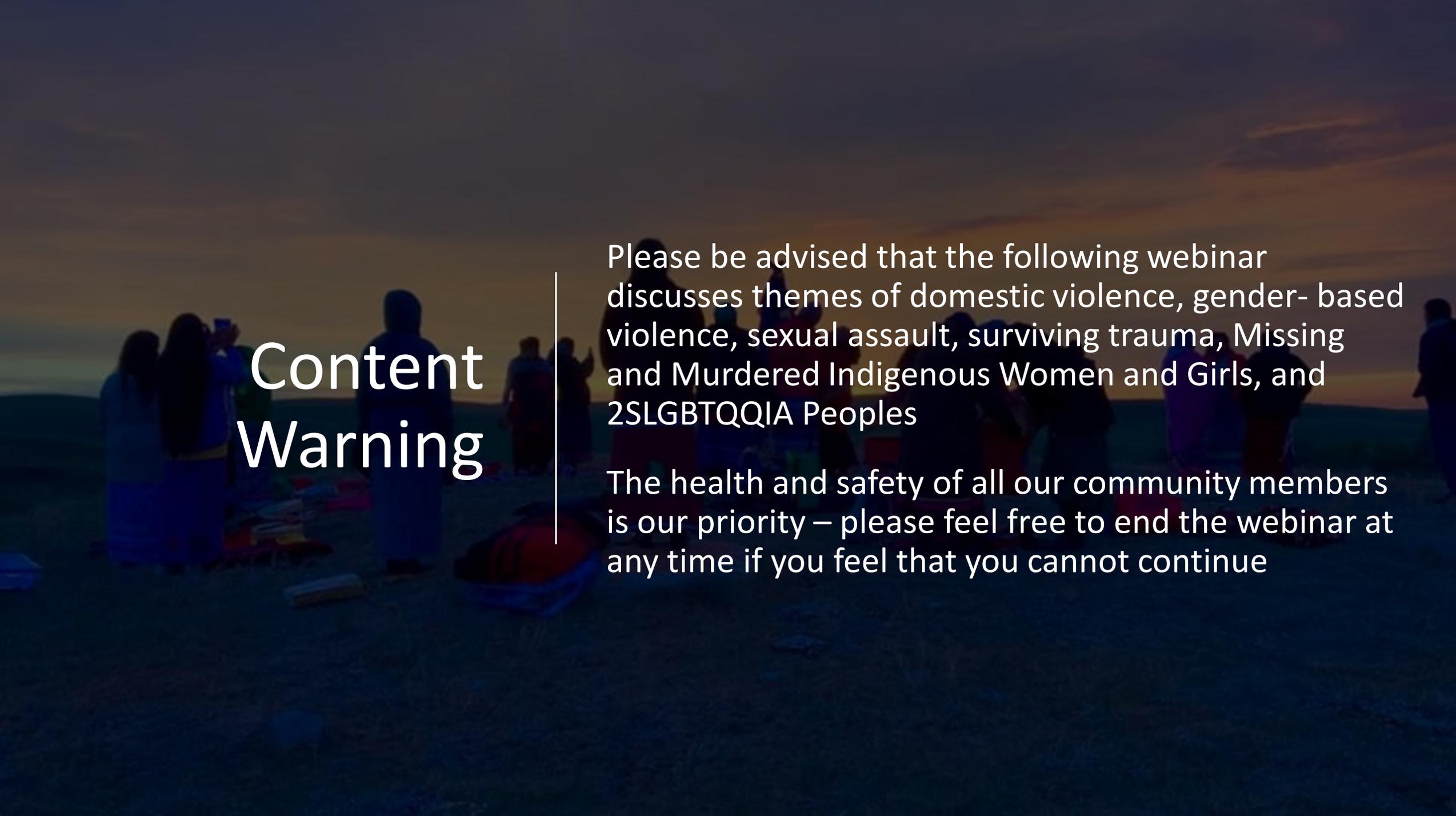
**Elder Roberta
Oshkawbewisens
&
Dr. Carrie Bourassa**





Land Acknowledgement

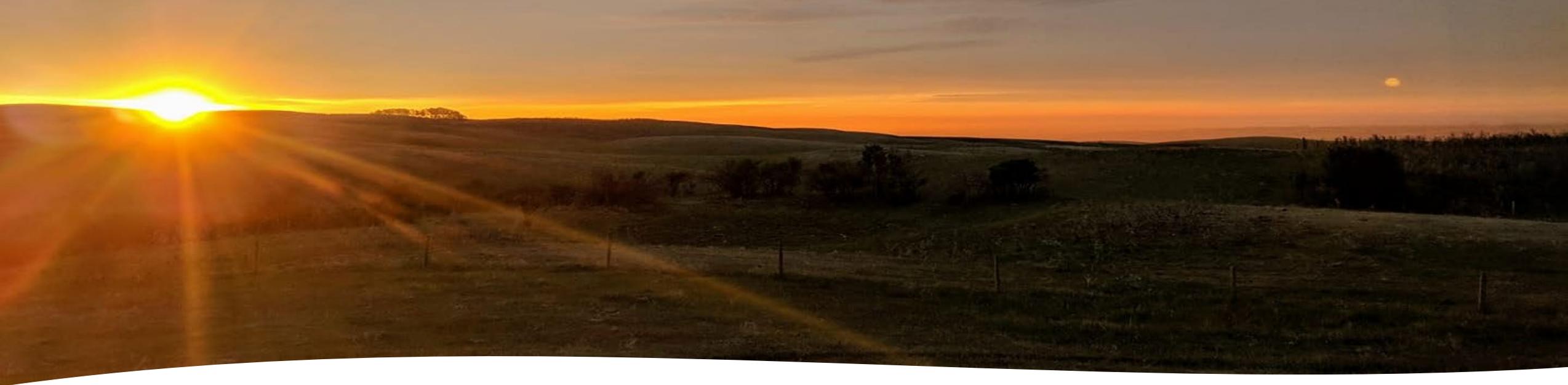
The land on which we are facilitating
this webinar is on Treaty 6 territory
and the Traditional Territory of the
Cree, Dene, Nakoda, Lakota, Dakota,
Saulteaux and Homeland of the
Métis Nation



Content Warning

Please be advised that the following webinar discusses themes of domestic violence, gender-based violence, sexual assault, surviving trauma, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA Peoples

The health and safety of all our community members is our priority – please feel free to end the webinar at any time if you feel that you cannot continue



Outline

- Domestic Violence During COVID-19
- Culture as Healing
- Native Women's Association of Canada COVID-19 Survey Findings
- The Intersection of Poverty, Sexism and Racism
- Violence Against Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA Peoples
- Recommendations for Action
- Keeping the Community Safe

Domestic Violence During COVID-19

- Domestic violence happens when someone controls you or attempts to control you by using physical violence, threats of violence or harassment (Native Women's Association of Canada, 2018)
- Domestic violence can include physical, sexual, emotional, verbal, psychological, spiritual and financial abuse, threats of violence, harassment and stalking (Native Women's Association of Canada, 2018)
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, domestic violence rates and intensity have increased (Psychology Today, 2020; The New York Times, 2020; Council on Foreign Relations, 2020)
- For those who are surviving abuse, isolation with their abuser(s) is a dangerous situation, especially with the additional stressors of financial hardship, stigma, lack of social supports and other barriers

Domestic Violence During COVID-19

- The options to go to school, work, or access social supports to get away from or alleviate the abuse is a much less viable solution during COVID-19 restrictions and for some time was not an option at all (UN Women, World Health Organization, 2020)
- Being isolated at home also prevents family, teachers, and community members from seeing signs of abuse and “red flags” in order to respond adequately (Winnipeg Free Press, 2020)
- Due to COVID-19 restrictions, many 2SLGBTQQIA youth are confined in hostile environments with unsupportive family members - this increases the risk of violence or mental illness (United Nations Human Rights, 2020)





Domestic Violence Within Communities

- Domestic violence exists in all demographics in Canada
- Isolation, financial hardship and other circumstances experienced during the pandemic has exacerbated the frequency and intensity of domestic violence (UN Women, World Health Organization, 2020)
- Due to colonization and hetero-patriarchal views on gender ideologies, domestic violence has become normalized, particularly within Indigenous communities and 2SLGBTQQIA Peoples
- Lateral violence present in post-contact Indigenous communities is “commonplace for many, and for some, even routine” (Methot, 2019, p. 38)

COVID-19, Domestic Violence, Racism and Sexism

- Pandemics like COVID-19 can exacerbate domestic violence and other forms of violence against women and girls (UN Women, World Health Organization, 2020)
- Not only have domestic cases of violence against women and girls increased during the pandemic but other complex factors have come to the forefront such as an increase in xenophobia-related violence, the risk of sexual exploitation and abuse in exchange for health care services and social safety net benefits, and violence against women in public spaces and online are more prevalent (UN Women, World Health Organization, 2020)
- “Some groups of women may experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination making them even more vulnerable to violence,” doubling or even tripling the burden experienced (UN Women, World Health Organization, 2020, p. 1)

Culture as Healing: Indigenous Resilience Against Domestic Violence

- Survivors are resilient and are advocating to end domestic violence
- Change is happening - under the guidance of Elders, Knowledge Keepers, community leaders, and survivors of domestic violence
- Community intervention teams are being trained in recognizing abuse and taking appropriate steps
- Communities are designing comprehensive response plans, and community based-healing and reconciliation programs
- “Healing is not just an individual process: it is also a social one. Indigenous peoples must regain identity, repair their self-concept, and reconnect their minds, bodies, spirits and emotions...” (Methot, 2019, p. 52)

Culture as Healing:

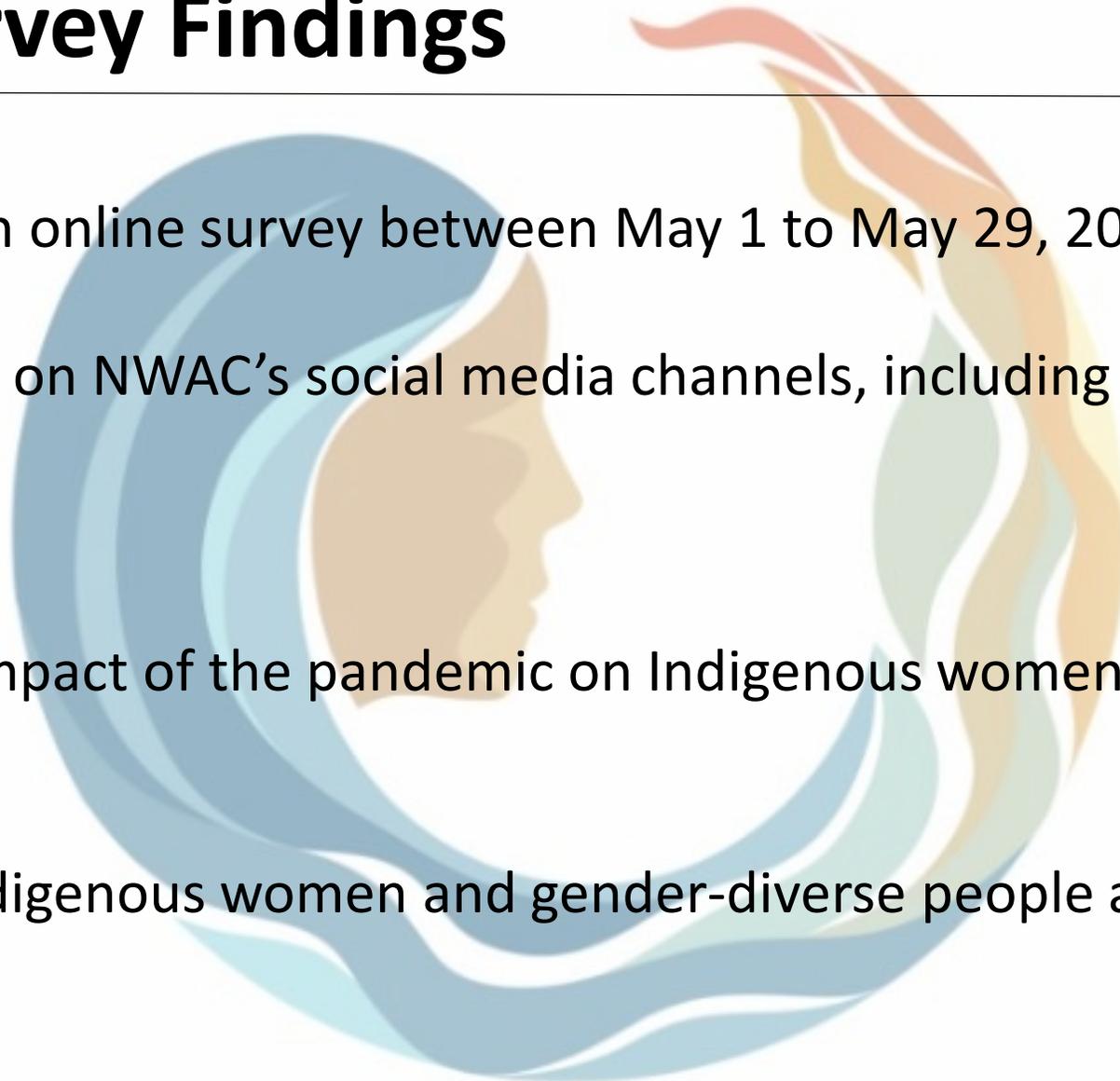
Importance of Cultural Inclusion

- Traditional teachings and ceremony strengthen spiritual identity and connectedness, and gives meaning and power to the healing process - there is a direct correlation between the strength of a community's spiritual and traditional teachings and its capacity to effectively address domestic violence (AHF, 2003)
- Cultural practices are ways for Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA Peoples to improve their social determinants of health - including community inclusion (NWAC, 2017)
- Most Indigenous women and girls living with domestic violence have inadequate access to appropriate cultural services and support mechanisms to respond to their needs; increasing access to cultural practices increases their social inclusion and thus their support networks (Klingspohn, 2018)
- Indigenous women and girls fleeing domestic violence experience forced displacement from their traditional territories yet the land is an important cornerstone for cultural practices (NWAC, 2017)



Native Women's Association of Canada: COVID-19 Survey Findings

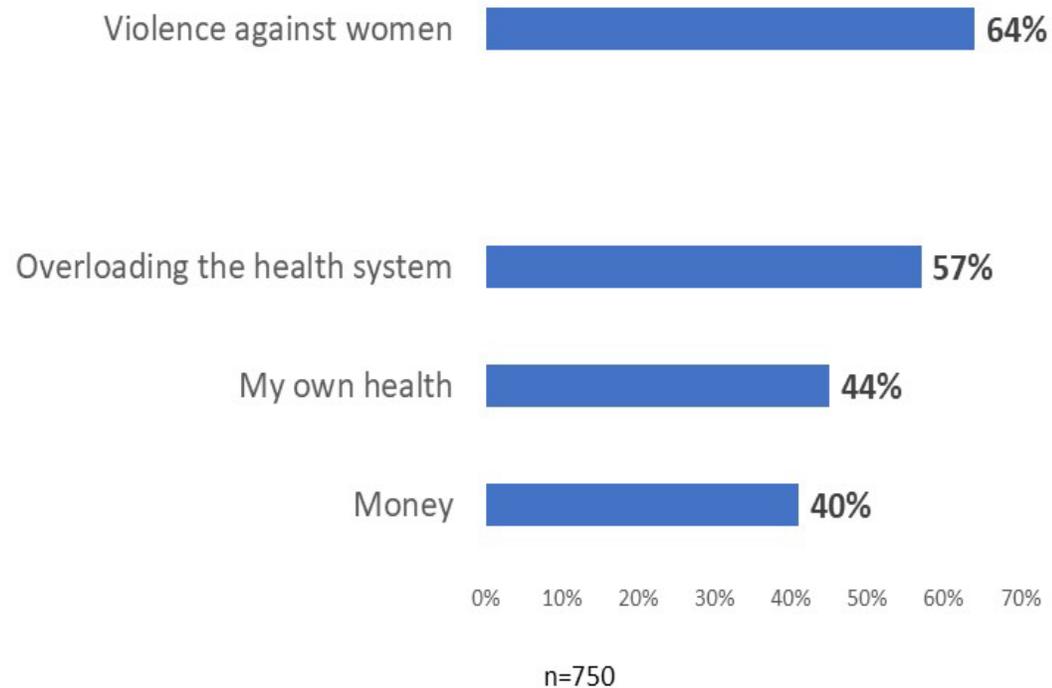
- NWAC launched an online survey between May 1 to May 29, 2020
- Survey was posted on NWAC's social media channels, including Facebook, Twitter, and Google Ads
- Purpose:
 - Measure the impact of the pandemic on Indigenous women in Canada
- Sample:
 - Total of 750 Indigenous women and gender-diverse people aged 18+



Native Women's Association of Canada: COVID-19 Survey Findings

Indigenous Women* are more Worried about Domestic Violence than they are about most COVID-19 issues

Percentage of people who are very worried or extremely worried



*Throughout this report, "Indigenous women" includes Two Spirit and Gender Diverse people



Native Women's Association of Canada: COVID-19 Survey Key Findings

1. Indigenous women are more worried about domestic violence than they are about most COVID-19 issues
2. Many more Indigenous women are experiencing violence during this pandemic than usual
3. Indigenous women most vulnerable to violence in the past three months are in the North, under 35, and have been financially impacted by COVID-19
4. Romantic partners are overwhelmingly seen as the biggest source of violence
5. The financial impact of COVID19 is strongly correlated to violence against Indigenous women

Overall, this survey suggests that actions from government at all levels are needed to address the issue of systemic violence against Indigenous women and gender-diverse people

The Intersection of Poverty, Sexism and Racism

- Canadian legislation has a history of implementing racist and sexist policies, this is evident in the *Indian Act, 1876* that saw status Indian women who married non-status men lose their Indian status and band membership. “Once a woman left the reserve to marry she could not return to her reserve so lost all property rights.” (Bourassa, McKay-McNabb, & Hampton, 2004, p. 24)
- Indigenous women are more impacted by poverty because of societal, political and economic discrimination based on class and culture (NWAC, 2017)
- “A poverty reduction strategy should seek to alleviate poverty by addressing the true causes and effects of poverty including unaffordable housing, food insecurity, social exclusion, income inequality, unemployment and discrimination against Indigenous women and other marginalized groups” (Native Women’s Association of Canada, 2017, p. 20)



The Intersection of Poverty, Sexism and Racism

- Domestic violence is present through the cycle of poverty
- Indigenous women often stay in abusive relationships because of economic dependency created by poverty
- Racism and sexism operate via external power structures to contribute to poor health in certain disadvantaged groups (Bourassa, McKay-McNabb, & Hampton, 2004)
- “Poverty is much more than lacking a steady or sufficient source of income. Poverty, especially for Indigenous women, means being vulnerable to violence, to a lack of autonomy and access to services.” (NWAC, 2017)
- Higher rates of domestic violence toward Indigenous women lead to higher rates of suicide, addiction and further victimization, such as involvement in the sex trade (Kubik, Bourassa, and Hampton, 2009)

The Intersection of Poverty, Sexism and Racism

- Indigenous women experience more barriers to accessing social services compared to non-Indigenous women (NWAC, 2017)
- Services with the least reliable access are adult day centres, emergency shelters for homelessness, affordable child care, breakfast programs for school-aged children
- Some Indigenous women are reluctant or unable to use services outside Indigenous services because of fear of stigma, lack of experience, or past traumas
- The cycle of poverty for Indigenous women who face multiple layers of marginalization includes food insecurity, homelessness, lack of reliable health care, presence of fear in accessing services, low wages, and social exclusion





The Intersection of Poverty, Sexism and Racism

- Within Indigenous communities, there is a clear correlation between the prevalence of poverty and adequate and safe housing
- “The over-incarceration of Indigenous women is both a symptom and cause of poverty. Indigenous women comprise approximately 5% of the female population in Canada, yet 39% of the female prison population.” (NWAC, 2017, p. 17)
- Increased participation for Indigenous women in the labour market is imperative to fostering growth, especially for those who face additional barriers such as those who live with disabilities or are a part of the 2SLGBTQQIA community

The Intersection of Poverty, Sexism and Racism

- Communities have experienced historical trauma and struggle with addictions, family violence (including physical and sexual abuse), youth in crisis, suicide, chronic poverty and welfare dependency – many communities are responding with community-based healing programs and facilities (AHF, 2003)
- Food security and sustainability projects in communities such as gardening, access to affordable healthy foods and traditional food gathering creates connection to community, sense of independence, self-esteem, and can assist in gaining/regaining connection to Traditional teachings and practises
- Programs need a holistic and women-centered focus





White Fragility

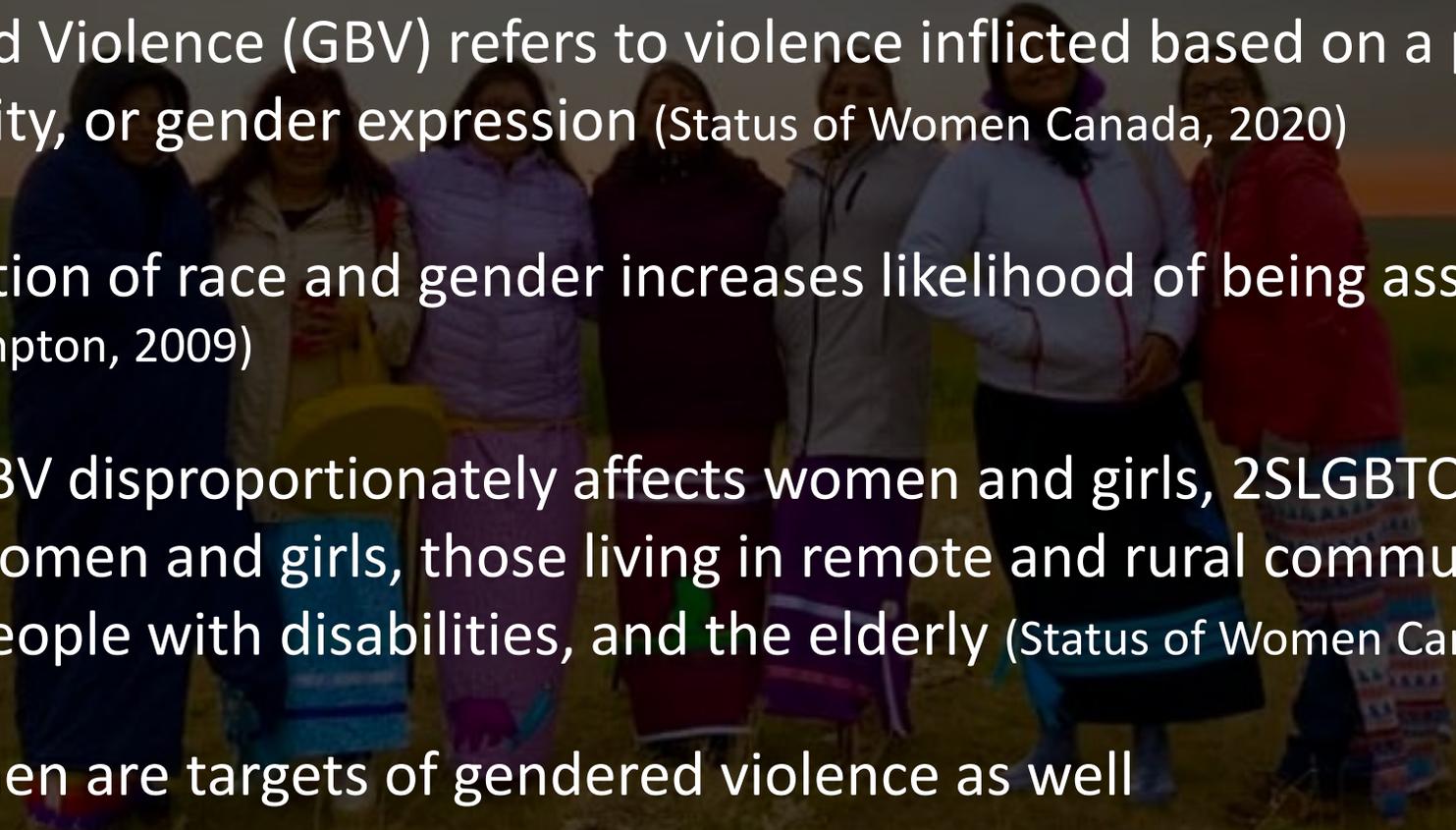
- Systemic racism and discriminatory practices have contributed to limited access of culturally safe resources for Indigenous Peoples - this is exacerbated by a mentality the Canadian population harbours in which Indigenous issues are downplayed or ignored
- This mentality is referred to as white fragility
- White people in Canada live in a social climate that removes them so far from racial stress that they cannot empathize or comprehend it
- Generally, this results in defensive behaviour when confronted on racial issues such as denial, deflection, devaluing of racial issues, and racial arrogance (DiAngelo, 2011)

Homelessness

- Homelessness results in a higher rates of violence, sexual exploitation, sexual assault, and substance abuse (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019a)
- Housing prices make it difficult for Indigenous women/girls fleeing domestic violence to access safe and affordable housing, and subsidized housing is difficult to find (NWAC, 2017)
- The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of housing as a social determinant of health and raises the question of whether current approaches to addressing homelessness should be re-evaluated (Perri, Dosani, & Hwang, 2020)



Violence Against Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA Peoples

- Gender-Based Violence (GBV) refers to violence inflicted based on a person's gender, gender-identity, or gender expression (Status of Women Canada, 2020)
 - The combination of race and gender increases likelihood of being assaulted (Kubik, Bourassa, & Hampton, 2009)
 - In Canada, GBV disproportionately affects women and girls, 2SLGBTQQIA individuals, Indigenous women and girls, those living in remote and rural communities, new Canadians, people with disabilities, and the elderly (Status of Women Canada, 2020)
 - Indigenous men are targets of gendered violence as well
 - GBV is experienced more by women than men and is often linked to misogyny, homophobia, transphobia and/or xenophobia
- 



Violence Against Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA Peoples

- As a result of racist, sexist policies and ideologies due to colonization, Indigenous women and girls have been doubly affected by their race and gender (Kubik, Bourassa, & Hampton, 2009)
- The devaluation and hypersexualization of Indigenous women began in colonial times with the objectification of Indigenous women as “Indian princesses” (Acoose, 2016)
- This sexualization and devaluation persists today in the form of stereotypes about Indigenous women being “sexually subservient” and “unfit mothers”, as well as inaccurate, sexual depictions of culture in costumes and mainstream media (Acoose, 2016)
- Prior to colonization, Indigenous women had influence and were highly valued within their communities for their Knowledge and strength (Kubik, Bourassa, & Hampton, 2009)

Violence Against Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA Peoples

- The combined burden of racism, sexism and colonialism have affected Indigenous women and their health in distinct ways (Kubik, Bourassa, & Hampton, 2009)
- Referred to as “multiple jeopardy, colonialism has created multiple economic, social and political barriers both within Indigenous communities and outside Indigenous communities” (Kubik, Bourassa, & Hampton, 2009, p. 24)
- As a result, Indigenous women have lower incomes, less formal education, poorer housing, lower health status and a greater chance of experiencing violence (Kubik, Bourassa, & Hampton, 2009)
- Rates of violence against Indigenous women are high, however these numbers are thought to be much higher as many Indigenous women do not report the violent acts they have endured





Violence Against Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA Peoples

- 2SLGBTQQIA refers to Two-Spirited, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex and Asexual Peoples and encompass those who self-identify as something other than those listed
- Two-Spirited refers to a person who “is considered to have the power of both male and female spirits, and were therefore seen as having a close relationship with the Creator” (The Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity, 2017)
- The term reflects complex Indigenous understandings of gender roles, spirituality, and the long history of sexual and gender diversity in Indigenous cultures

Violence Against Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA Peoples

- Two-Spirited organizations, individuals, and use of the term itself mark a return to Indigenous cultural traditions that have historically recognized more than two genders
- In many Indigenous communities Two-Spirited Peoples were believed to have spiritual power that gave them insight through dreams and visions - they often filled special spiritual roles as healers, shamans and ceremonial leaders
- Reclaiming the Traditional roles and values of Two-Spirited Peoples' gifts is a part of a larger healing process taking place within Indigenous communities





Violence Against Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA Peoples

- Violence against women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA Peoples persists worldwide
- Violence against 2SLGBTQQIA Peoples results from binary views imposed on gender identity by colonial ideologies
- Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA Peoples experience the highest rates of violence and abuse of any population in Canada and is often ignored and underreported because of stigma (Kubik, Bourassa, & Hampton, 2009)

Violence Against Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA Peoples

- Heteronormative values embedded within the colonization process lead to an attempted erasure of Two-Spirited Peoples
- Two-Spirited Peoples experience homophobia and transphobia within many Indigenous communities
- Despite these challenges, Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA Peoples are resilient
- Recent work has been done by advocates to reclaim Traditional roles and to protect 2SLGBTQQIA Peoples from violence (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019a)





Sexual Assault

- Indigenous women and girls experience higher rates of sexual assault - this is a direct result of colonialism and externally imposed oppressions (Kubik, Bourassa, & Hampton, 2009)
- Sexual assault has become normalized against Indigenous women and 2SLGBTQQIA Peoples and legitimated by racism and sexism
- “Women who bear their ‘otherness’ in more than one way suffer from multiple oppressions, leaving them more vulnerable to assaults” (Bourassa, McKay-McNabb, & Hampton, 2004)
- Indigenous women are also at risk of sexual assault due to systemic racism and sexism

Lack of Funding for Organizations

Working on Indigenous Women's Rights

- Funding opportunities are scarce when it comes to Indigenous women's rights (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019a)
- What exists currently?
 - NWAC
 - Sisters in Spirit
 - Domestic Abuse outreach programming
- Why is there a lack of funding and support?
 - Four pillars maintain power imbalances (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019a)
 1. Historical and intergenerational trauma
 2. Social and economic marginalization
 3. Maintaining the status quo and institutional lack of will
 4. Ignoring Indigenous agency and expertise



Responses to Domestic Violence During COVID-19

- The Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (represents over 70 shelters across Ontario) reports domestic violence calls have doubled during COVID-19 isolation (City News, 2020)
- While shelters have remained opened, overcrowding and limited resources has been an issue to the point where shelters in Saskatchewan have had put families on waitlists or improvise with pop-up shelters (CBC, 2020)
- France, the UK, Saskatchewan, Toronto, Calgary, and other places have been opening empty hotels to shelter domestic abuse survivors
- The Yukon has been providing women in vulnerable situations free access to cellphones with 4-month service plans during the COVID-19 crisis (CBC, 2020)

Recommendations for Action

- The elimination of poverty among Indigenous women and re-valuing Indigenous women and their culture are key areas that influence health (Kubik, Bourassa, & Hampton, 2009)
- The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), Amnesty International and the Sisters in Spirit campaign have made several recommendations for action (Kubik, Bourassa, & Hampton, 2009)
 - Sustainable funding for culturally appropriate services, including Indigenous women's organizations
 - Increased capacity and recruitment of Indigenous Peoples (particularly women) in government, research, law and health institutions
 - Education programs addressing the history of colonialism and Indigenous Peoples
 - Re-align all services to be more responsive to the needs of Indigenous women
 - Upholding international human rights instruments relevant to the prevention of violence against women

MMIWG Calls for Justice: Health and Wellness

We call upon all governments to:

- Ensure that the rights to health and wellness of Indigenous Peoples, and specifically of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA Peoples, are recognized and protected on an equitable basis
- Provide adequate, stable, equitable, and ongoing funding for Indigenous-centred and community-based health and wellness services that are accessible and culturally appropriate, and meet the health and wellness needs of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA Peoples
- Fully support First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities to call on Elders, Grandmothers, and other Knowledge Keepers to establish community-based trauma-informed programs for survivors of trauma and violence
- Ensure that all Indigenous communities receive immediate and necessary resources, including funding and support, for the establishment of sustainable, permanent, no-barrier, preventative, accessible, holistic, wraparound services, including mobile trauma and addictions recovery teams
- Establish culturally competent and responsive crisis response teams in all communities and regions to meet the immediate needs of Indigenous Peoples, families and communities after a traumatic event alongside ongoing support (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019b, p. 180)

Keeping the Community Safe

- Stay vigilant for the signs of domestic violence in your community
- Be discreet and tactful in your approach to confronting domestic violence as an advocate
- Keep in mind that many people stay in abusive relationships out of fear, to protect their children, out of stigma or shame, or it is their only option
- Always be empathetic and non-judgmental when advocating for someone in an abusive relationship
- If you or a loved one are currently in an abusive relationship, follow the guidelines provided by the **Native Women's Association of Canada's Toolkit - You are Not Alone: A Toolkit for Indigenous Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People Escaping Domestic Violence (2018)**

You are Not Alone: A Toolkit for Indigenous Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People Escaping Domestic Violence

Safety Planning Tips

- Build a support network and try to establish check-ins
- Delete the history on your computer and phone
- Keep evidence of the abuse, such as photos - you can email them to a support person and then delete your sent email and photo
- Pack a bag with overnight and essential items and keep it with a trusted friend
- Make sure you have somewhere safe to go
- If you are injured, get medical attention
- When you are ready to leave be sure to leave quickly and when your partner is not home
- Turn off your cell phone if they are tracking you using your phone

(Native Women's Association of Canada, 2018)

You are Not Alone: A Toolkit for Indigenous Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People Escaping Domestic Violence



(Native Women's Association of Canada, 2018)

THE
VIOLENCE
AT HOME
SIGNAL
FOR HELP



1. Palm to camera and tuck thumb



2. Trap thumb

What To Do If You Need Help

- If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, call 911 or your local emergency services (police, fire, ambulance)
- If you are experiencing violence use the following signal on video communication to signal you need help without leaving a trace on the web
- If you see someone use the Signal for Help, check in with the person safely to find out what they need and want you to do (Canadian Women's Foundation, 2020)

Supports Available

Ending Violence Canada

<https://endingviolencecanada.org/getting-help/>

NWAC COVID-19 Support Services

<https://www.nwac.ca/covid19-support/>

NWAC Support Available

- Elder support
- Talk for Healing
- Kids help phone
- MMIW Crisis line
- Suicide prevention
- Transgender lifeline
- Youth service bureau
- SOS Violence Conjugale
- 24 hour sexual assault line
- Assaulted women's helpline
- Battered women support services
- Wellness Helpline **1-855-242-3310** or chat online <https://www.hopeforwellness.ca/>



Elder Support-Line



Elder Roberta Oshkawbewisens

Need someone to talk to during the COVID-19 pandemic?

NWAC's Elder Roberta is only a phone call away, offering support and building resiliency.

**Toll free: 888-664-7808
Monday to Friday
9 – 11 a.m. and 1 – 3 p.m. EST**



Native Women's
Association of Canada

L'Association des
femmes autochtones
du Canada

Resiliency Center



- Resiliency Centre will be a safe place for families of MMIWG to heal together
- Conceptualized in response to MMIWG
- Specifically, in response to Call to Justice #7.1:



“We call upon all governments and health service providers to recognize that Indigenous Peoples – First Nations, Inuit, and Métis, including 2SLGBTQQIA people – are the experts in caring for and healing themselves, and that health and wellness services are most effective when they are designed and delivered by the Indigenous Peoples they are supposed to serve, in a manner consistent with and grounded in the practices, world views, cultures, languages, and values of the diverse Inuit, Métis, and First Nations communities they serve.”



Supports



- The Hope for Wellness Help Line
 - Call 24/7 toll free 1-855-242-3310
 - hopeforwellness.ca
- Phone and chat counselling is available in English and French
- On request, phone counselling is also available in
 - Cree
 - Ojibway
 - Inuktitut



**You Are
Not Alone**



Recommended Readings

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Miigwetch/Thank you!

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