

Status report

The following topics are covered in relation to the most relevant SDGs:

1. Poverty
2. Health and Wellbeing
3. Housing and Infrastructure
4. Education
5. Justice, Corrections, and Child Welfare
6. Indigenous Women – Violence and Gender Equity
7. Self-Determination
8. Reconciliation
9. Data Collection

The relevant UN Sustainable Development Goal (or goals) is listed under each heading, followed by the related recommendation(s) from the NCCAH in 2018. Progress and ongoing challenges are then summarized, followed by the 2023 recommendations from the NCCIH.

It is important to note that many of the SDGs are inter-related, with the achievement of one facilitating the achievement of another. Recommendations may therefore apply to more than one goal. Further, the NCCIH focused on the SDGs considered most applicable to the well-being of Indigenous people in Canada, so not all of the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals are discussed. Additionally, the topics of self-determination, reconciliation, and data collection cut across all SDGs and so are not discussed in relation to any specific SDG.



1. Poverty

SDG NO. 1 | END POVERTY IN ALL ITS FORMS EVERYWHERE



2018 Recommendations:

- Make federal government spending for poverty eradication more holistic to encompass the wide range of determinants that affect Indigenous people's health, including housing, child welfare, education, employment, transportation and food security.
- Integrate the national anti-poverty framework into what already exists within the provinces or territories and complement existing strategies.
- Redefine poverty alleviation among Indigenous Peoples from the narrow, income-based, individualistic perspective framed in the SDG document to reflect community poverty; frame it as a human rights issue.
- Increase social assistance to northern and remote Indigenous communities.
- Increase federal spending to address food insecurity for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples.

Progress:

- The federal government has implemented a national poverty reduction strategy, framed as a human rights issue and developed through consultation with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis individuals and communities. The strategy adopts a strengths-based, distinctions-based, and holistic approach that encompasses the multi-dimensional nature of poverty and emphasizes working in partnership with provincial and territorial governments and communities.
- All provinces and territories have now implemented their own strategies. The federal government's anti-poverty framework complements their approaches.

Ongoing challenges:

- The national and official measure of poverty continues to be based solely on income. It may not fully capture how poverty is experienced by Indigenous Peoples across Canada.

New recommendations:

- Utilize multi-dimensional measures of poverty more consistently, such as the:
 - community well-being index,
 - human development index, or
 - multi-dimensional poverty index.
- Apply measures across First Nations, Inuit, Métis, and non-Indigenous populations to allow for comparisons across and between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations, nationally and internationally.



2. Health and wellbeing

SDG NO. 2 | END HUNGER, ACHIEVE FOOD SECURITY AND IMPROVED NUTRITION, AND PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

SDG NO. 3 | ENSURE HEALTHY LIVES AND PROMOTE WELL-BEING FOR ALL AGES



2018 Recommendations:

- Implement all of the Calls to Action identified by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. These include: establishing measurable goals to identify and close the gaps in health outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities; recognizing the distinct health needs of First Nations, Inuit, and off-reserve Indigenous peoples; providing sustainable funding for Indigenous healing centres; promoting the training, recruitment, and retention of Indigenous healthcare providers; and providing cultural competency training, among others.
- Make federal government spending for poverty eradication more holistic to encompass the wide range of determinants that affect Indigenous Peoples' health, including housing, child welfare, education, employment, transportation, and food security.
- Increase federal spending to address food insecurity for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples.

Progress report:

- Considerable progress has been made across Canada in cultural safety training and the recruitment and retention of Indigenous Peoples in the healthcare workforce. While results are mixed, some evaluations suggest this training has contributed to significant and relevant learning outcomes, including enhanced student knowledge of Indigenous health and traditional knowledges, greater acceptance of traditional healing practices and their contribution to health and well-being, increased student confidence, decreased negative attitudes, recognition of power structures, and increased cultural humility.
- Indigenous Services Canada has implemented a Nursing Retention and Recruitment Strategy to assist national recruitment efforts.

Ongoing challenges:

- Fewer Indigenous people perceive that they have very good or excellent health compared to non-Indigenous people.
- Indigenous people continue to experience disproportionately high levels of some illnesses, including cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and obesity, infectious diseases, respiratory diseases, mental health issues, and cancers.
- Indigenous populations continue to have poorer birth outcomes compared to non-Indigenous people.
- Indigenous people are significantly more likely to die prematurely than non-Indigenous people from injuries or illnesses.
- Instances of Indigenous racism continue to arise, requiring commitments at all levels of the healthcare system to address and eliminate systemic racism.



New recommendations:

- Undertake major systemic and structural reforms to address social and health inequalities in services provision, including:
 - shifting focus from responding to the needs of individuals to encompassing social and community contexts,
 - promoting and enforcing non-discriminatory laws and policies and improving cultural safety for Indigenous people interacting with mainstream systems,
 - implementing Indigenous-led, designed, and delivered services; and
 - creating long-term sustainable funding for health and social services and programs.
- Continue to address jurisdictional issues that have created an inequitable service provision environment for Métis and non-status First Nations people.
- Adapt policies to facilitate local and sustainable food production and remove barriers to engaging in and earning an income from these types of activities. Possible actions include:
 - providing support for hunters to enable the sale of harvested foods in local markets,
 - establishing a regulatory framework that would enable public procurement of country and traditional foods, and
 - recognizing land rights and fully realizing the right to self-determination to facilitate Indigenous community-based food sovereignty initiatives.
- Continue to expand access to Indigenous community-led models of maternity care in locations across Canada.



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3. Housing and infrastructure

SDG NO. 6 | ENSURE AVAILABILITY AND SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF WATER AND SANITATION FOR ALL

SDG NO. 11 | MAKE CITIES AND HUMAN SETTLEMENTS INCLUSIVE, SAFE, RESILIENT, AND SUSTAINABLE

2018 Recommendation:

- Frame the national housing/homelessness strategy³ as a human rights issue with:
 - new measures to address capacity challenges,
 - increased accountability and collaboration,
 - improved shelter standards,
 - continue to invest in water infrastructure in Indigenous communities,
 - increased housing options for the homeless, and
 - improved incorporation of a concerted public health response to alcohol and substance use.

³ Under development at the time of writing.



Progress:

- The first-ever National Housing Strategy was created along with a separate but integrated, Homelessness Strategy. These strategies frame housing as a human rights issue. The National Housing Strategy commits to investing in a wide range of housing and homelessness initiatives across Canada. It also commits to developing distinctions-based Indigenous housing strategies. The new Homelessness Strategy provides funding for a wide range of community-based programs and other measures aimed at preventing and reducing homelessness.
- There have been some innovations that address a major barrier to investment in housing on First Nations reserves. That barrier is the stipulation in the *Indian Act* that land on reserve be held in trust by the Crown. Examples of innovations include insured loans from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation that help on-reserve residents buy, build, or renovate single-family homes and multi-unit rental properties. Similar housing loan and/or renovation programs are now offered by the Bank of Montreal (BMO) Financial Group, and Royal Bank of Canada (RBC).

Ongoing challenges:

- Significant gaps remain in terms of the proportion of Indigenous households living in overcrowded and poor-quality housing compared to the non-Indigenous population.
- Indigenous Services Canada has not yet met its commitment to eliminate long-term drinking water advisories in Indigenous communities.

New recommendations:

- Develop a unique urban, rural, and northern Indigenous housing strategy to address the large service gap for the majority of Indigenous people who are not living on First Nations reserves.
- Revise outdated operations and maintenance funding formulas for First Nations water systems on reserve, fix the salary gap that has contributed to problems in retaining qualified water system operators, and develop and implement a regulatory regime to ensure access to safe drinking water in all First Nations communities.





4. Education

SDG NO.4 | ENSURE INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE QUALITY EDUCATION AND PROMOTE LIFELONG LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

2018 Recommendation:

- Develop effective strategies to address the high school dropout rates among Indigenous youth.
- Make investments to improve educational infrastructure on reserve to levels that are equal to those off reserve.

Progress:

- The federal government has implemented a new funding model to ensure that education in First Nations schools is:
 - sustainable,
 - responds to potential cost changes, and
 - is comparable to that of provincial education systems.

Ongoing challenges:

- Educational gaps remain, particularly at the university level.
- The pandemic highlighted inadequate internet connectivity as a significant barrier to improving educational outcomes among Indigenous students in rural and remote areas of Canada.

New recommendations:

- Implement a robust system of supports for First Nation schools, such as:
 - developing research and data systems,
 - including traditional Knowledge Keepers as teachers,
 - developing First Nation education learning resources, and
 - creating highly contextualized teacher training/certification centres.
- Address barriers within the education sector, such as limited school and educational opportunities in rural and remote Indigenous communities, inadequate internet connectivity, and limited integration of Indigenous knowledges, pedagogy, and assessment methods in mainstream education.

5. Justice, corrections, and child welfare

SDG NO. 10 | REDUCE INEQUALITY IN AND AMONG COUNTRIES

SDG NO. 16 | PROMOTE PEACEFUL AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, PROVIDE ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR ALL AND BUILD EFFECTIVE, ACCOUNTABLE, AND INCLUSIVE INSTITUTIONS AT ALL LEVELS

2018 Recommendation:

- Address the fairness of judicial hearings and the over-representation of Indigenous Peoples in prisons by investing in Indigenous judicial systems and correctional services that offer a holistic approach to the reintegration of offenders.
- Address the gender gap in Indigenous women's representation in governments and leadership roles
- Address the deep, structural sources of inequity for Indigenous peoples, including racism and discrimination within economic, social, and political settings
- Decolonize the criminal, judicial and child welfare systems

Progress:

- There have been significant increases in federal spending to address some of the upstream determinants that can lead to incarceration, including poverty, substance abuse, and trauma.
- Efforts are underway to reform the organizational culture of the RCMP to address systemic racism and discrimination. Similar reforms are being undertaken within other regional and municipal police forces, the courts, and provincial and federal jails and prisons.
- There has been a movement towards Indigenous self-determination in child welfare.

Ongoing challenges:

- Indigenous Peoples continue to be over-represented in the child welfare, justice, and correctional systems.
- Upstream determinants (i.e., poverty, substance abuse, trauma, etc.) remain.
- Systemic issues continue to contribute to the unfair treatment of Indigenous people in prison.
- Systemic change is needed to ensure that child welfare, justice, and correctional systems are culturally appropriate and sensitive.

- It is difficult to measure the adequacy and effectiveness of efforts to reform police, justice, and correctional institutions.

New recommendations:

- Continue to utilize more holistic approaches that incorporate Indigenous worldviews and practices and that foster self-determination in the areas of child welfare, policing, and correctional justice. Invest in Indigenous judicial systems and correctional services that offer a holistic approach to the reintegration of offenders.
- Improve cultural safety for Indigenous people interacting with mainstream systems – including child welfare, health, justice, and corrections – through:
 - a review and evaluation across governments to identify and address ongoing discriminatory ideologies, policies, and practices;
 - system-wide implementation of cultural safety training; and
 - use of interpreters and Indigenous legal representatives.
- Monitor differences in treatment between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

6. Indigenous women – violence and gender equity

SDG NO. 5 | ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS



2018 Recommendation:

- Develop an Indigenous-specific strategy to focus on the structural or root causes of violence against Indigenous women and the specific challenges they face in dealing with, or leaving, abusive situations.

Progress:

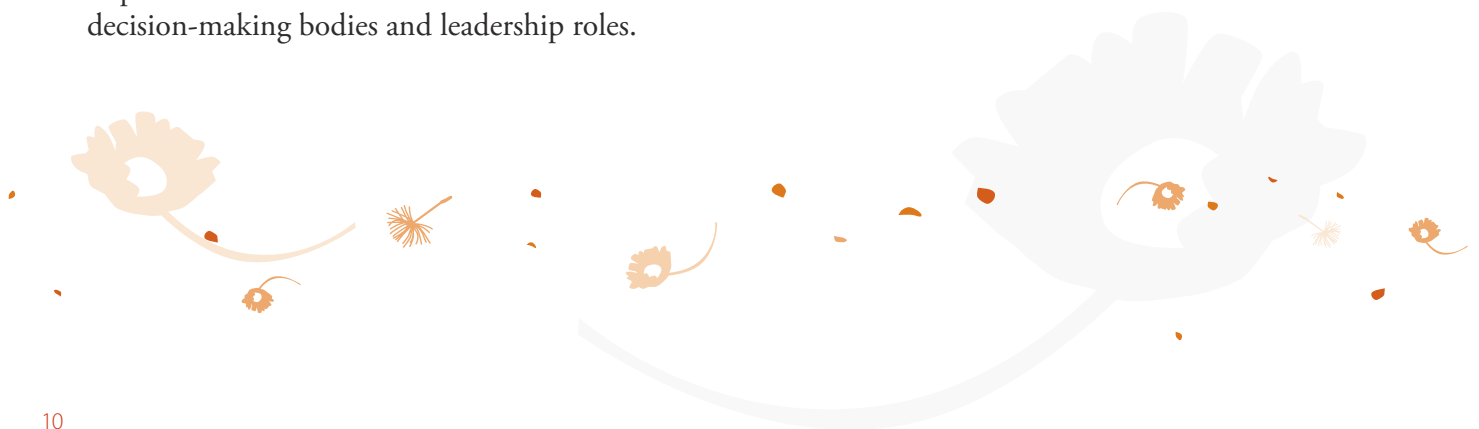
- Action plans are in place to address Indigenous and gender-based violence.
- Some recommendations from the National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls (NIMMIWG) have been implemented.
- Sex-based discrimination in the *Indian Act* has been eliminated.
- Gender representation is now incorporated into many governance structures, policies, and accountability measures within all levels of government.
- Indigenous women's advisory committees and boards have been created.
- Most provincial and territorial governments have cancelled the discriminatory practice of issuing birth alerts in hospitals.
- Indigenous women are achieving greater levels of education, income, and employment.
- Representation of women has increased in decision-making bodies and leadership roles.

Ongoing challenges:

- The federal government's strategy for addressing gender-based violence does not focus specifically on the structural or root causes of violence against Indigenous women or the specific challenges they face in dealing with abusive situations.

New recommendations:

- Develop an Indigenous-specific strategy to target gender-based violence in Indigenous communities.
- Adopt a rights-based approach to protect, respect, and fulfill the rights of Indigenous women and gender-diverse people in decision-making bodies on matters that affect their health and well-being. Ensure that Canada not only meets its fiduciary duty to consult and accommodate Indigenous Peoples but ensures that Indigenous women are not further marginalized.



7. Self-determination

No specific SDG pertains to the topic of self-determination; however, self-determination is considered critical for improving health and well-being among Indigenous populations so the NCCIH included it in its assessment.

2018 Recommendation:

- Ensure the federal government implements the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) as adopted in 2016, especially sections related to Indigenous Peoples' right to self-governance.

Progress:

- Completion of Comprehensive Land Claim Agreements, Self-Government Agreements, and First Nation Land Management Agreements in areas across Canada.
- Adoption of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* by the federal government.
- Numerous agreements reached that emphasize Indigenous self-determination and governance with Indigenous communities as well as First Nations people, Inuit, and Métis people regionally and nationally, across Indigenous governments and within specific sectors such as child welfare, education, health, and land management.
- Federal initiatives that promote self-determination are supported by enhanced efforts to address inequitable gaps in funding for health, education, and social services.

Ongoing challenges:

- Self-governance is not yet included in the measurement of other SDG indicators among Indigenous Peoples.

New recommendations:

- Continue to encourage greater self-determination over lands and resources and develop and monitor indicators to measure progress related to Indigenous land rights and ownership of land.
- Continue to support community-specific and culturally relevant solutions to improving conditions for Indigenous people, ensuring they have the fiscal capacity and legal autonomy to make needed decisions, based on their inherent right to self-determination.



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8. Reconciliation

No specific SDG pertains to the topic of reconciliation; however, reconciliation is considered critical for improving health and well-being among Indigenous populations so the NCCIH included it in its assessment.

2018 Recommendations:

- Implement all of the 94 Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) Calls to Action.
- Harness the beneficial gains of partnership within and between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, governments, education systems, industries, and others to ensure sustainability.

Progress:

- The 94 Calls to Action identified by the TRC (2015) continue to be implemented by all levels of government and throughout public and private sectors.
- Progress is most notable in relation to Indigenous engagement and partnerships between settler allies and First Nations people, Inuit, and Métis people, organizations, and communities. There are now well-established norms and expectations regarding the meaningful participation of Indigenous Peoples in decision-making processes on issues that affect them, occurring at all levels and across all sectors.

Ongoing challenges:

- Indigenous voices are still sometimes marginalized due to power imbalances and the structures in place to represent and hear Indigenous people.
- Careful consideration must be given to ensure that Indigenous voices in decision-making processes represent all segments of the population who are affected by decisions, and that Indigenous voices are given equal weight to non-Indigenous voices, regardless of whether the decision-making occurs at the local, regional, provincial or territorial, national, or international levels.
- It is particularly critical that Indigenous voices are represented in decision-making on broader issues such as climate change and natural resource development issues. This is important because these decisions are likely to disproportionately affect Indigenous Peoples.

Note: there are no new recommendations specifically about reconciliation. The 2018 recommendation to implement all of the 94 TRC Calls to Action still stands. These and other recommendations in this report will support reconciliation across the SDG topics.



9. Data collection

2018 Recommendations

- Indigenous-specific SDG targets and indicators should be developed, including targets on community poverty, food security, health and well-being, education, gender equality, water, and sanitation.
- Establish efficient data systems to track the progress made to achieve the SDG goals. This involves building capacity within Indigenous organizations and standardizing data collection to ensure transparency and comparability among Indigenous communities and across Canada. It also entails creating a centralized national system or website to highlight Canada's progress in meeting the SDGs.

Progress:

- Some progress has been made on Indigenous governance over health data and the sharing of Indigenous data across jurisdictions.

Ongoing challenges:

- There continues to be a lack of consistency in the use of Indigenous identifiers in data collection and the standardization of measures to ensure consistent data collection.
- There is no centralized national system to highlight Canada's progress in meeting the SDGs.
- More work is needed to develop Indigenous-specific targets and indicators.

New recommendations:

- Develop Indigenous-specific SDG targets and indicators, including targets for:
 - community poverty,
 - food security,
 - access to traditional foods,
 - health and well-being,
 - education,
 - gender equality,
 - water, sanitation, and
 - access to health and social services.
- Continue to address issues related to data collection and data quality, including:
 - the use of unlinked data,
 - potential misclassification and under-reporting of Indigenous data,
- lack of Indigenous identifiers in data collection,
- lack of disaggregated data across Indigenous populations and demographic variables,
- lack of regular nation-wide surveillance on specific health issues,
- the absence of culturally-appropriate indicators that capture the realities and strengths of Indigenous populations,
- lack of trend monitoring in all regions across Canada, and
- the need for Indigenous data governance.



Conclusion

Much progress has been made regarding socio-economic inequalities and inequitable access to public services for Indigenous populations in Canada. However, considerable gaps remain between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. In addition, much work remains to identify Indigenous-specific targets and monitor progress on indicators to ensure that Indigenous Peoples are not left behind in the sustainability agenda.

A major drawback of the 2030 Agenda is that it does not acknowledge specific Indigenous issues like self-determination, self-governance, land rights, and land ownership. These issues are the foundation for inequality and poverty among Indigenous Peoples. Strategies to alleviate poverty and inequities will only be successful if they address these foundational issues.

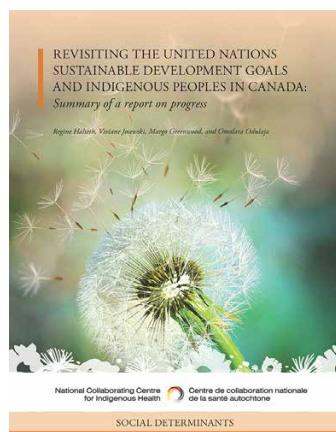
Engagement and partnerships with Indigenous Peoples are now well-established norms in Canada for addressing key issues of joint importance. Maintaining these relationships will be key to ensuring meaningful achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals as they relate to Indigenous Peoples.





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