


Ontario Native Women's Association

# Journey to Safe SPACES



INDIGENOUS ANTI- HUMAN TRAFFICKING  
ENGAGEMENT REPORT 2017-2018





We would like to acknowledge the Indigenous Survivors of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation who trusted us with their stories, their time, and who provided valuable recommendations to help us end Human Trafficking in Indigenous communities. Without your voices, we would not have this vision to move forward.

We would also like to thank the women, youth, Elders, Two-Spirit individuals, and community members who shared time with us to learn about Indigenous Human Trafficking and to provide valuable insights.

We thank Joan Riggs and Lynne Tyler for their assistance to compose this report.

Finally, a deep thank-you to Maya Chacaby and the Regional Liaisons for dedicating your time and energy to this project

Miigwetch. Nia:wen. Merci.

The terms “victim” and “survivor” are used to describe those who experienced human trafficking. ONWA generally prefers the term “survivor” because it conveys the strength and resilience of those who survive this experience; it accords survivors the place of knowledge and expertise they earned; and it’s the term most survivors we work with have requested we use. However, we respect the voices of women who describe themselves as victims.

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# Executive Summary

Indigenous women and girls comprise a disproportionate number of those sexually exploited in Canada through human trafficking. Violence and fear are a constant part of their lives. They are vulnerable to violence at the hands of their clients and yet are afraid to report sexual assaults to the police and health care professionals. In their previous experiences, they were not believed or felt blamed for the assault. They can't turn to their pimps for protection as they are likely to be beaten, abused, and mistreated by them. They live a fragile economic existence often in poverty. Their housing is precarious as landlords evict women when they discover how they earn income. When women do find the courage to go to services in the community, they are often treated with disdain or disbelief.

The violence and racism these women face are the legacy of colonization in which strong and stable Indigenous societies and communities were disrupted. Their culture, governance, lands, and economic base were consistently attacked, appropriated or outlawed over centuries. The intergenerational trauma imposed on Indigenous people means that many families and communities struggle with poverty, substance abuse, and violence while the non-Indigenous community around them fails to understand why this happens. All of these factors combine to create an environment where Indigenous human trafficking can flourish.

In March 2017, ONWA was selected as the recipient to deliver the Indigenous Anti-Human Trafficking Liaisons (IAHTL) Project under Ontario's Strategy to End Human Trafficking. The

IAHTL project intended to support Indigenous communities by providing survivor-focused and localized responses to human trafficking. The objectives were to:

- Build survivor, community, and agency capacity.
- Support proposal and program development.
- Support Indigenous-specific prevention and awareness.

IAHTL positions were established at six key partnership sites across the province:

- Métis Nation of Ontario (Ottawa Region)
- Nishnawbe Aski Nation (Northern Ontario)
- Native Women's Resource Centre of Toronto (urban GTA)
- Fort Frances Tribal Area Health Services (Treaty 3)
- Chiefs of Ontario (Golden Horseshoe, Windsor, London)
- Ontario Native Women's Association (Thunder Bay Region)

IAHTL accomplished a wide range of specific activities and results across the six sites including:

- Survivor engagement sessions and ongoing one-to-one engagement with survivors.
- Supports to survivors including workshops, culture camp, and a 12-week beading program.
- Community education and engagement sessions.



- d) Development of Indigenous women-specific programming.
- e) Inter-agency outreach, collaboration, and the establishment or expansion of inter-agency tables to address Indigenous human trafficking.
- f) Creation of interagency action plans and strategies.
- g) Training activities and educational material delivered to local agencies, businesses, and the public.

With input from over 3,360 community members including over 250 self-identified Indigenous Human Trafficking Survivors, the IAHTL project developed a model to comprehensively address the needs of Indigenous women and girls who are survivors or are at risk. The model encompasses a wide range of services, programs, and initiatives that move through prevention, immediate safety, ongoing supports, and the transition to a new life based on Indigenous culture, a gender analysis, and trauma-informed care.

Fundamental to the work is the building of relationships with survivors to ensure that their experiences, their needs, and their goals inform every action, program, service, and policy.

Due to what we heard from survivors, service providers, and community members, a set of 14 recommendations were developed which have been grouped under the model's elements:

- a) Culturally-based gender-based trauma-informed approaches including the central importance of building relationships with survivors to ensure their voices shape services.
- b) Prevention including education in schools, parenting programs, public awareness

- c) Safety of survivors including creating safe places, using outreach workers, providing information on where to get help, and creating simplified access to services.
- d) Supports for survivors including counseling, mentorship, peer support, safety planning, support groups for survivors and mothers of survivors, and advocates/navigators who support survivors to access services.
- e) Transition to a different life including long-term counseling, support programs, emergency travel funds, relocation and name changes, transitional housing, and culturally safe trauma-informed employment programs.
- f) Agency training and collaboration including cultural safety training, development of a promising practices portal, relationship-building, development of collaboration tables and joint action—particularly among police, health services and Indigenous front-line providers.
- g) Policy and system reforms including changes where needed in policing, courts, and health care, and conducting more research to determine the extent and nature of Indigenous human trafficking in mining and other resource industries.

# A. Project Overview

Ontario's Strategy to End Human Trafficking launched in 2016. It aims to increase awareness and coordination efforts, improve survivors' access to services, and enhance justice sector initiatives. The strategy reflects the diverse views of survivors, front-line community agencies, public safety representatives, and Indigenous organizations. Supporting survivors and providing safeguards for those at risk of trafficking is a part of Ontario's vision to ensure that everyone in the province can live in safety free from the threat, fear, or experience of exploitation and violence.

In March 2017, ONWA was selected as the recipient to deliver the Indigenous Anti-Human Trafficking Liaisons Project under Ontario's Strategy to End Human Trafficking. The Liaison project intended to support Indigenous communities by providing survivor-focused localized responses to human trafficking.

The overall objectives of the Indigenous Anti-Human Trafficking Liaison Initiative were to:

- a) Build agency, community, and survivor capacity.
- b) Support proposal and program development.
- c) Support Indigenous-specific prevention and awareness.

By May 2017, the Indigenous Anti-Human Trafficking Liaison positions were established at six key partnership sites across the province:

- Métis Nation of Ontario (Ottawa Region)
- Nishnawbe Aski Nation (Northern Ontario)
- Native Women's Resource Centre of Toronto (GTA)

- Fort Frances Tribal Area Health Services (Treaty 3)
- Chiefs of Ontario (Golden Horseshoe, Windsor, London)
- Ontario Native Women's Association (Thunder Bay Region)

The Liaison project's locations were selected based on known hubs of high human trafficking activity. After the initial stages, ONWA recognized the need for expanding beyond the regions of the original focus. For example, although ONWA's Liaison was based in Thunder Bay, the work of the Liaison went beyond Thunder Bay to other communities including Kenora, Sault Ste. Marie, Toronto, and Ottawa. The engagements largely revealed the need for targeted supports throughout Ontario including small towns and rural areas that were not the focus in Year One.

ONWA secured a project lead, an Indigenous Human Trafficking Survivor, involved in supporting the project by training, education, and ensuring Indigenous survivors' voices were central to the work.

While each Liaison project shared the same objectives and collaborated on broader themes and issues, IAHTL supported community-driven activities that reflected local needs and priorities. All sites approached the work through a culture-based trauma-informed lens that included gender-based analysis and prioritized Indigenous women with lived experiences of human trafficking and sexual exploitation. There was an additional emphasis on youth engagement.

*"We need healing services. We need food services. We need peer support mentors that will help us understand what has happened."*

## STAGE ONE

The initial stage established community-specific priority areas and broad provincial themes related to Indigenous Anti-Human Trafficking policy and program areas. Dedicated Indigenous Anti-Human Trafficking Liaisons were established at all six sites. Prior to their engagement sessions, Liaisons completed intensive training about human trafficking and trauma-informed practices to ensure a safe and supportive engagement process for people with lived experiences of human trafficking.

Liaisons reached out to local organizations to assess the programs and responses of these agencies to meet the needs of Indigenous trafficking survivors. Liaisons then organized community engagement and educational sessions. Liaisons worked with survivors including youth, TwoSpirit individuals, and those who had recently exited. They focused on their strengths and resiliencies to advise on the development of best practice models for service delivery. Liaisons were tasked with developing a list of services that survivors felt best addressed their needs along a continuum of healing and wellness. All recommendations and service model designs were led and directed by Indigenous survivors of human trafficking and/or sexual exploitation.



## STAGE TWO

The second stage of the project involved the Anti-Human Trafficking Liaisons' development of local service delivery models based on priorities and gaps identified by survivors. Liaisons continued to work with stakeholders so that survivors established key priorities. At this stage, the work focused on the development of plans to meet Indigenous survivors' needs. Liaisons identified measures of success meaningful to Indigenous communities and developed education and awareness projects in their communities. Community consultations and engagement activities focused on community buy-in for proposed service delivery models.

In the project's final stage, the Indigenous Anti-Human Trafficking Liaisons came together for a final three-day collaboration session about the overall strategy development, an evaluation action plan, continued community engagement, and sustainability. The Indigenous Anti-Human Trafficking Provincial Service Delivery Framework was developed to support the unique local models created by and for Indigenous people who experienced human trafficking/sexual exploitation.





*"I had no feeling of  
SELF-WORTH and  
SELF-CONFIDENCE  
and NEVER FELT  
LIKE I BELONGED.  
So you go where  
you feel you  
belong?"*

## B. The Situation

Indigenous women, girls, and young men form a disproportionate number of those sexually exploited in Canada through human trafficking. Violence and fear are a constant part of their lives. They are vulnerable to violence at the hands of their clients and yet are afraid to report sexual assaults to the police because their experiences are they will not be believed or will be blamed for the assault.

*"There's no safety for the girls on the street. Every day is life or death."*

As if the danger from clients was not enough, they can't turn to their pimps for protection as they will often be beaten for not earning money from the assault or they will be blamed for the attack. The money they earn goes to their pimps

leaving them with a fragile economic existence. Often they live in poverty. Their housing is precarious as landlords evict women once they discover how they earn income or will refuse to rent to them in the first place because of their appearance and presumed occupation.

Physical, emotional, psychological violence, and financial vulnerability create an environment of constant fear. When women do find the courage to go to services in the community, they are often met with disdain or disbelief. They encounter barriers of judgmental attitudes and presumptions that they are not worthy of services or equal treatment before the law. Even services that would like to be supportive find themselves hampered by rigid mandates, complex procedures or long wait times. A woman



who seeks help takes a risk simply by approaching the agency. To be told to come back in four months essentially offers her no help at all.

*“Hospital didn’t take me seriously and treated me like I was just going to die anyway so why bother help me?”*

*“How can you charge a john who raped you? They will say you put yourself there.”*

Many in this work were groomed young and were more easily influenced by skilled recruiters. Recruiters can be very patient, gradually manipulating young people into “choosing” this life; perhaps persuading the young woman that he is her boyfriend. Sadly, recruiters may not only be strangers but friends or family members. Not only men are traffickers. Women are traffickers, too.

Each community is affected in different ways. Communities located in the western part of the province have seen a major increase of trafficked young women due to mining and forestry camps. Women in low wage jobs (cleaners, cooks, etc.) in the camps are lured into sexual exploitation with promises of more money in one night than they would make in a month if only they stayed after their shifts and “partied” with the men.

Traffickers use money, drugs, and alcohol as a form of luring or coercion. Some women are kidnapped, raped, and many are propositioned for sex. Women and girls are found in snow banks—barely clothed with no shoes—near mining camps. Some girls disappear.

In response to the prevalence of sexual exploitation of Indigenous women near industry camps, many companies set up security measures (wire fences, security cameras, etc.). Men in the camps find ways around these measures. Some workers report that managers are involved in the trafficking or tolerate it.

Communities located in the East see a different form of trafficking. They point out that women of all ages are sexual exploited due to basic needs not being met. For example, sexual services are traded in exchange for a ride to town for a medical appointment.

Many Indigenous girls are lured to Southern cities from their Northern communities. For example, Ottawa is a hub for Inuit women to rebuild their lives while escaping poverty and other barriers from the North. Whether they are lured or come to Ottawa on their own, Inuit women are at high risk of being trafficked due to the language barrier and lack of community.

Violence against Indigenous women and girls contributes to the normalization of violence and teaches young women to accept this as part of their lives. Systemic racism and discrimination against Indigenous people mean that mainstream institutions ignore violence or see it as somehow acceptable. Services are not designed to include Indigenous people and so Indigenous survivors of human trafficking are understandably reluctant to access services.

Devastating impacts of European contact through violence and racism disrupted strong and stable Indigenous communities. Effects of intergenerational trauma are seen in modern society by high rates of poverty, substance misuse, violence, and overrepresentation in the justice system and child welfare agencies. These complex intersections build and compound the cycle of Indigenous human trafficking.

*“Human trafficking is like being caught in a spider web that you can’t escape.”*



## C. Key Accomplishments of the Project

The IAHTL initiative focused on three key objectives:

- 1) Build agency, community, and survivor capacity.
- 2) Support proposal and program development.
- 3) Support Indigenous-specific prevention and awareness.

All three objectives were addressed in an integrated way through a wide range of activities that accomplished significant achievements across the province. Some of the main accomplishments are highlighted below.

### 1. SURVIVOR ENGAGEMENT

Survivor engagement sessions and ongoing one-to-one engagements with survivors were key. Building relationships with Indigenous women survivors of human trafficking ensured discussions with agencies and community members were grounded in the women's reality.

Survivor engagement sessions were an opportunity for survivors to speak in a safe non-judgmental environment. Individual support and outreach were also provided.

Survivors' engagement included the following actions:

- In Thunder Bay, IAHTL completed two engagements: one with survivors and one with service providers. IAHTL engaged at the grassroots level with street outreach.



3,360

Total participants in the project across the province

- ONWA developed an outreach kit called Safer Sex Kits for people with lived experiences.
- FFTAHS engagement sessions entitled *Nenaana Go Denaamoog Aabinochiig: Speak We are Listening* focused on bringing survivors and their families together to talk, to begin the healing process, and to bring awareness to the issue. FFTAHS focused on the hopes that these women have for their future and not as being defined by their trauma.
- NWRCT hosted a number of one-on-one sessions with survivors, youth, and LGBTQ2S individuals. They hosted three large-scale community engagement sessions. NWRCT participated in two large-scale agency engagement sessions.
- There were a number of culturally-based programs and workshops for survivors as outlined in the next section. These were opportunities to gather input from survivors, hear their stories, and understand what supportive services look like from their perspectives.

## 2. SURVIVOR SUPPORTS

*“All I wanted was someone to take me far far away to someone who cared.”*

*“We need more advocates for us women. It has to come from survivors. Walk a day in my shoes. We don’t want others to tell us. We need peer support.”*

Survivor engagement sessions were an opportunity for survivors to speak in a safe non-judgmental environment. Individual support

and outreach were provided while supportive programming for survivors expanded.

- FFTAHS provided a 12-week beading program for survivors, victims, and families. Aimed at building strengths and resiliencies, the program created a safe space for survivors to share stories. As a culture-based approach to survivor engagement, one of FFTAHS’s community Elders gave a teaching. “Each bead is a spirit and each bead will help you along your journey. Your finished creation will be your story of human trafficking and the healing journey the participants are on.”
- The project encouraged survivors to have a voice and not feel shame or doubt in their journey but to be proud of who they are. Participants pointed out that using their voice to help in this movement against human trafficking was an important part of their journey to become strong individuals.
- In the first weeks, women and girls were in crisis and wanted to give up. Once the programming began, participants shared, offered peer support, and began to open up about their traumas. One woman expressed that she used many supports but never felt “right.” She expressed that she felt safe to share her story. She liked that FFTAHS staff listened with no judgment.
- FFTAHS hosted a cultural retreat for those who took part in the 12-week program and those who came forward with lived experiences of trafficking during the educational campaign. The session was a critical component of the project and ensured all survivors were transitioned into stable and supportive environments using cultural teachings.

- ONWA connected survivors with their culture in their communities through ceremony and cultural supports. For example, women participated in sweat lodges, naming ceremonies, and by obtaining their clan and colours.
- In response to requests for flexible protocol-driven harm-reduction ceremonies for human trafficking survivors, NWRCT presented a traditional workshop series that supported participants to work through grief and loss, to prepare and use sacred medicines, to use individual skills and talents, and to learn about Creation stories, naming ceremonies, and shake tent ceremonies. NWRCT plans to provide these services for survivors and community members on an annual basis.

### 3. COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT

*“Young people need to be given the awareness and education about these issues and concerns/risks.”*

*“We are mothers. We are daughters. We are grandmothers. We are women who had children too young. There has got to be accountability and there has to be police accountability. Let’s recreate, re-establish these relationships.”*

Community engagement sessions were held in cities across the province and in First Nations communities in participating partners’ jurisdictions. The sessions brought awareness to many local support service providers igniting conversations around human trafficking and how

it affects community members of all ages. Many community members came forward with human trafficking stories. The sessions brought important insights into the realities of Indigenous-specific human trafficking.

- ONWA’s Liaison co-facilitated MMIWG & Human Trafficking Community Engagements and Family Gatherings in 5 cities across the province including: Sault Ste. Marie, Timmins, Kenora, Ottawa and Mississauga. The Liaison recognizes the linkage between Human Trafficking and MMIWG in Thunder Bay and across the province. When building relationships with survivors, the subject of MMIWG is often discussed as it is common for women involved in Human Trafficking to be directly impacted by MMIWG. This also includes unresolved grief and trauma related to multiple losses. In Community Awareness sessions, Human Trafficking, MMIWG, and the interconnections between the two are central to conversations about safety and Indigenous women.
- Education was critical in the Treaty 3 region as many communities had limited understanding of the issue, or the prevalence of trafficking in their communities. Fort Frances Tribal Area Health Services (FFTAHS) created a two-hour presentation on *“What Human Trafficking looks like in our Communities.”* This presentation was designed to inform community members and service providers on what exactly is going on in communities and how to identify HT. The Liaison delivered the presentation in every community, also facilitating an opportunity for questions and discussion. Prior to the awareness campaign, many community members either did not know what human trafficking was, or were

scared to talk about what was happening to them.


- FFTAHS hosted a youth specific engagement session entitled “*Nenaana Go Denaamoog Aabinochiig: Speak We are Listening*”. These sessions brought survivors and their families together to create dialogue, begin the healing process, and to bring awareness to this issue. *Nenaana Go Denaamoog Aabinochiig* focused on the future hopes of these women and not being defined by their trauma. Throughout the sessions, use of cultural practices ensured they maintain a positive space for the three days. The third day included partners and service providers and a presentation of the strategic plan.
- The final engagement session held by FFTAHS was a three-day Women’s Empowerment Camp for survivors, families of survivors and young women. This event included keynote speakers, cultural based healing services, cultural based teachings (Full Moon, Berry teachings, Water teachings), hand drum making, beading class and sharing circles. Drum teachings accompanied the opportunity for each participant to make a drum, along with an opportunity to participate further in the hand drumming program.
- The Native Women’s Resource Centre of Toronto (NWRCT) hosted three large scale Community Engagement Sessions, as well as a number of one-on-one sessions with survivors, family members of survivors, youth and LGBTQ2S individuals. .
- NWRCT hosted a focus group led by Trans/ Two Spirited peers to identify needs and to support individual programming development processes.

- For Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN), the IAHTL provided Anti-Human Trafficking training to Shelter Directors in NAN communities.
- The Chiefs of Ontario (COO) First Nation Women’s Caucus and the Independent First Nations (IFN) EVAIW staff developed presentations for community capacity building on Anti-Human Trafficking Awareness and to develop a First Nation Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy that is responsive to COO communities.
- COO also collaborated with NWRCT to host a youth specific engagement session.
- Through the collaboration between COO and IFN, IFN also hired a Liaison to engage with IFN communities and provide feedback on viable service models.

## 4. INDIGENOUS WOMEN-SPECIFIC PROGRAMMING

Several new program ideas were piloted during the IAHTL project.

- ONWA developed a survivor-focused direct service program called Aakode’ewin which translates as Courage for Change. Aakode’ewin addresses the unique needs of disproportionate numbers of Indigenous women, youth, and girls affected by human trafficking and the sex trade. Services are provided in trauma-informed and culture-based practices. Models ensure a seamless integration of cultural and mainstream supports.
- FFTAHS developed a 12-week beading class to give an opportunity for Human Trafficking Survivors, victims, and families to share their stories in a safe place. FFTAHS believes that this was a successful program and will continue on-going



programming for these individuals in Treaty 3.

- A logo campaign was launched through FFTAHS in which trafficked/sexually exploited survivors created a symbol that would identify a safe house.
- NWRCT plans to provide traditional workshops for survivors and community members on an annual basis.
- NWRCT recognizes the need and value to incorporate peer survivors. They began to research the policy, training, and structures that need to be in place to support peers. NWRCT will work with other community agencies to develop best practices and an Indigenous specific framework for working with and supporting peers.

## 5. INTERAGENCY OUTREACH

### AND COLLABORATION

Interagency collaboration is essential to provide wraparound services for Human Trafficking Survivors. The IAHTL initiative made significant progress in this area.

- ONWA established working relationships with multiple Indigenous and non-Indigenous agencies in each community. ONWA established a rapport with Thunder Bay Police Service to begin developing a working relationship in response to human trafficking.
- NWRCT developed relationships with surrounding Indigenous and mainstream agencies in the GTA and Golden Horseshoe Region for two large-scale agency engagement sessions.
- MNO made great strides in developing relationships through community engagement sessions which helped populate cross-jurisdictional plans and strengthened multi-stakeholder relationships.
- To build accountability measures, FFTAHS facilitated committee member agencies



taking part in monthly meetings hosted and led by FFTAHS.

## 6. IAHTL INTERAGENCY TABLE


*“We need to develop protocols for non-Indigenous service providers when servicing Indigenous survivors to make sure they are not making things worse for us.”*

One way the IAHTL initiative achieved progress was by creating a wraparound network of services for survivors and establishing an interagency committee or expanding existing ones to include Indigenous representation. Tables are important places to address systemic barriers for survivors by working with community agencies in the development of new policy, programming, and partnership relations.

- ONWA worked with CMHA to further clarify the expectations and roles regarding possible participation at the Thunder Bay Situation Table. The table brings together more than 30

representatives from a variety of sectors to help those at acutely elevated risk of imminent harm or victimization.

- ONWA began the process of forming an IAHTL specific table in Thunder Bay with the intent of creating a multi-service integration plan in the district.
- ONWA created a Human Trafficking Situation Table inside ONWA which allows for cross-departmental communication and collaboration on human trafficking issues using community service, community development, and policy. The table allows for seamless integration of services and wraparound supports for women.
- Arising from the first ever youth-led Anti-Human Trafficking strategy in the region, FFTAHS created a human trafficking committee that includes the majority of regional service providers and one member from each First Nation community that they service. The committee distinguishes who provides what services and what provisions have helped connect the trafficked individual



to the right care to give them a chance to start their healing journey.

- NWRCT was invited to join several agency committees dedicated to sharing best practices for working with survivors of human trafficking and sexual violence and/or exploitation and to providing Indigenous-specific representation.

and after-care; and connect victims and survivors to proper supports.

- FFTAHS engagement sessions entitled *Nenaana Go Denaamoog Aabinochiig* worked with survivors to develop a strategic action plan. FFTAHS delegated responsibilities and identified an operational roll out of the plan.
- Through FFTAHS youth engagement, youngsters designed the first Indigenous youth-led Anti-Human Trafficking strategy in the region. FFTAHS hosted engagement sessions to promote and implement the strategy. Youth leaders involved in the strategy continue to advocate for their recommendations with the support and encouragement of FFTAHS.

## 7. INTERAGENCY STRATEGIES AND ACTION PLANS

One way to help ensure collaborative action among multiple agencies is to agree on joint strategies or plans.

- The committee created through the IAHTL initiative in the Treaty 3 region developed an action plan to move forward as a community: educate our 10 communities; provide links to different services for pre-trauma (prevention), crisis situations,





## 8. TRAINING AND EDUCATION FOR LOCAL AGENCIES, BUSINESSES, AND THE PUBLIC


There exists a great need for Indigenous-specific training about human trafficking for agencies, community services, government bodies, and the general public. Many do not understand the scope or reality of human trafficking and how services can be better delivered in a culturally-sensitive trauma-informed way.

- ONWA developed Indigenous Anti-Human Trafficking presentations for the community and resources so community members will now know how to recognize signs of an exploited woman.
- Community stakeholders requested further training sessions in Thunder Bay. For example, Thunder Bay Police Service officers requested that ONWA provide 10

training sessions to educate their police force in 2018.

- FFTAHS provided numerous training opportunities for community service providers to bring the focus of human trafficking to a community level.
- FFTAHS training sessions brought awareness to businesses as well. The next step is to develop educational tools for local businesses to understand what to look for if there is a person being trafficked, where to access supports, and what to do with someone who is being

*"Some people use drugs and/or alcohol as a coping mechanism and should not be turned away."*



sexually exploited in their business e.g. hotels.

- Based on our efforts to promote awareness of human trafficking, FFTAHS was contacted by the Canadian Border Services Agency to start work on ways to establish a relationship for trafficking prevention.
- ONWA developed an Anti-Human Trafficking culture-based trauma-informed training module. The Indigenous Anti-Human Trafficking training provided participants with a critical analysis of underlying issues that perpetuate trafficking and exploitation while also strengthening culture-based practices for incorporating trauma-informed approaches.
- The training provided technical knowledge of trauma, human trafficking, and strategies to design community-driven approaches that address human trafficking. Upon completion of the three-day training, participants collaborated to develop community-driven approaches and strategies to strengthen a network of support and identity, and to develop effective response models.
- MNO developed a staff-training module for human trafficking. The training introduces key topics, expands knowledge, and aims to improve community responses to human trafficking. The information and activities can be adjusted to meet specific audiences such as community members, peer support

staff or other service providers. A hybrid module will be delivered through the *Walk With Me* toolkit which is designed to be facilitated by MNO's Healing and Wellness Branch coordinators throughout the province with program participants and clients. The module was piloted in November 2017. Numerous agencies requested future training sessions based on the module.

- NWRCT provided awareness training for a number of Indigenous and mainstream agencies in preparation for subsequent agency engagement sessions that ensure participants have a solid foundation of knowledge to contribute proactive recommendations.
- NWRCT is committed to continual provision of Indigenous-specific human trafficking awareness training for agencies, government, businesses, and educational environments. NWRCT plans to create outreach materials aimed at increasing public and community awareness of human trafficking and exploitation following completion of the IAHTL initiative.

## GRANDMOTHER EARTH DRESS

One of the educational resources ONWA created during the initiative was the Grandmother Earth Dress. There are 365 jingles sewn onto the Grandmother Earth Dress that represent violence Indigenous women endure every day of the year. The Grandmother Earth Dress is a symbolic visual representation that brings awareness of the ongoing systemic and structural violence directed at Indigenous women. The idea was to create a Red Dress regalia in the form of a jingle dress—a sacred item of healing and honouring—for families and communities to commemorate their loved ones. Families can visualize their loved ones in beautiful traditional regalia.

Normally, the colour red is not part of the Journey Ceremony. However, this specific dress was born out of vision and ceremony. Elders, Healers, and Knowledge Keepers provided direction on how to feast and conduct ceremony. They also named the Grandmother Earth Dress which came from the Southern direction. The Grandmother Earth Dress honours mothers, daughters, aunts, sisters, grandmothers, nieces, and cousins in a good way.

ONWA would like to offer special acknowledgments to staff members Collin Graham and Lindsay Tyance, and to Rita Tyance for her help with the beadwork.





# D. What We Heard from Survivors

The most pressing issues identified by survivors are safety and discriminatory treatment at the hands of some service providers.

*Girls get hurt and they have nowhere to go.*

*"I just wanted somewhere safe to go where I was not treated like s--t."*

*"My story is not your story to tell."*


- HT Survivor

## SAFETY

Above all, the women need safety—a place to go when they get hurt where they can talk, where they are accepted without judgement, and where people understand and have lived experience. Women need a place where they can stay for a day or two, even a few hours to rest.

It is very hard to get into women’s shelters and sometimes a shelter is not specific to their needs. There is no consistency among shelters with respect to support for Human Trafficking Survivors. Some meet the needs of survivors while others do not. In some cases, women were recruited into human trafficking through shelters; therefore, adequate protections need to be in place.

As well as a place to go, it is important to have a helpline that women can call for these supports and to talk with someone supportive, understanding, and who has information helpful to them.



Women need safety to get away from dangerous or violent customers and from their pimps. Women talked about how if they are raped, the pimp will often get angry or beat them because they did not collect any money.

*“Bad customers you can fight off but there is no getting away from a pimp.”*

*“People don’t understand how scared the women are of their pimps, how scared they are to report rape.”*

Women need basic supports: food, harm reduction supplies (wipes, sanitizer, condoms, gel, needles, crack pipes), safety supports like rape whistles, and personal supplies like water, vitamin C, the morning after pill, and so on.

Information is essential for women’s safety and where to go for help. There needs to be pamphlets at food banks, shelters, and other spaces that women access including Facebook, billboards, bathrooms, street poles, etc.

Women identified the need for harm reduction approaches such as how to safely inject, how to deal with abscesses, and how it is important to save at least one vein in case they need their life saved. These harm reduction approaches comprise one aspect of a broader approach to support women with addictions in a holistic and non-judgmental way.

There has been an increase in the level of sexual violence experienced by Two-Spirit/ Trans survivors after exiting trafficking. Violence is also accompanied by a constant state of discrimination and segregation in the broader LGBTQ2S community.

Elements of safety provide a pathway to exit the work including stable safe housing and transition services to support the process of moving into a different life. This is discussed in later sections.


## PROBLEMS WITH SERVICES

Women shared numerous experiences about services they encountered. Concerns around interactions with front-line workers and first responders like police, paramedics, hospital staff, and social workers were discussed. Survivors often face many barriers when accessing supports. They fear judgment and mistreatment by professional helpers that prevent them from getting supports and responses they need.

Survivors’ experiences vary because there is no consistent service delivery model across the province. While some survivors shared that they received positive supports from police, hospitals, and crisis response workers, these encounters do not reflect experiences across the province. Many survivors shared deeply concerning stories of mistreatment and stigma they experienced.

*“That look—they don’t even have to say anything—you just get that look of judgment from service providers.”*

Women shared that sometimes police have preconceived notions that the women are not to be believed and are not worthy of being treated with the same respect shown to others. Due to poor treatment and not being taken seriously, women are afraid to report sexual assaults to the police. Police need to believe women when they report an assault. We need a way to change how police deal with the women. One woman suggested a hidden camera for police accountability.



*“It would be nice to have a night where the women can get to talk with the police and ask them questions about why they do the things they do.”*

A constructive relationship with police is vital as police are the ones who work at night and on weekends. Police must see survivors as people needing help.

Hospital staff are also problematic. They are often judgmental towards the women and don't treat them as they do other patients. Women mentioned frequently getting “that look” as if to dismiss the women or to suggest they are less important than others seeking health care. Racism also plays a part in how the women are treated.

*“It takes courage to ask for help and your self-worth is blown to crap when people don't believe you. One bad doctor or nurse and that person will never tell again.”*

Women suggested that someone accompany them to services and advocate for them. Advocates need to know the services well and work with the women in a supportive and compassionate way. They need to be strong advocates to help women overcome barriers and misconceptions embedded in the services.

All service providers—particularly police and health care staff—need to show compassion and understanding when working with the women.

*“I need someone with a degree who can advocate for me and make someone else (hospital worker) think twice before they belittle me.”*

## SUPPORT SERVICES

Two main types of support services were mentioned by survivors as important.


First, there is a need to have someone safe to talk with. Several suggestions were put forward such as skilled staff counselors, support groups, peer mentors, etc. It was emphasized that people with lived experience need to be part of providing the services.

It was suggested that it is not only the women who need support. It would be good to provide support groups for mothers of girls working on the streets.

*“When you got problems dealing with trauma, sometimes you need to regularly chat with people, just to call in and say, ‘Hey.’”*

*“If the support groups could start off with trauma so that when a trauma trigger does come up that we know what to do and how to get ourselves grounded quickly. In Toronto, it is so hard because sometimes I can't even get myself out of bed. I literally had to pull myself out of bed yesterday morning because I had a trigger moment, you know what I mean? It's just really hard.”*

Second, it is key to have supports for the transition process out of the work and into a new life. A number of women emphasized that transition is the hardest part. Women need services to help them through what could be a long period. This could be help finding housing or a job, going back to school, going into treatment, etc. A lot is involved when making a new life. People get scared of their new life and may go



back to the streets. The supports need to be long-term as it may take more than one attempt to leave the work. An important part of this is getting their self-worth back.

*“At a traumatic time in my life, I needed someone to talk to and that would be there 24/7. I needed someone to convince me to make the right decisions instead of repeating my mistakes over and over again. I endured a great amount of trauma. I could have grown in healthier ways learning from my aunts and from our culture.”*

*“You need a safe place to think and sort yourself out.”*

*“I was trafficking through organized crime. I needed help getting out of town, changing my ID, and making sure I could not be found or traced to any address. They were planning on killing me. No one could help me disappear so I ended up spending another 10 years on the streets. I had to disappear and that was the only way I knew how. No one should have to go through that kind of hell.”*

At a Thunder Bay session, survivors were asked to name helpful services that provided support to the women. They listed PACE, ONWA, Beendigen, Shelter House, Sexual Assault Centre, Northwestern Ontario Women’s Centre, and Elevate as these agencies have women-centered programming.

## CULTURE

*“What would have helped me would have been cultural ways of healing: sweat lodges, ceremonies, and smudging.”*


*“The thing that saved my life was connecting to my culture: knowing my clan and the responsibilities that come with it and connecting, being welcomed home by my community. I would be dead if that had not happened.”*

Women felt it was important to give them cultural programming options. Many women find this comforting and grounding. Bringing women back to traditional culture is a way to offer them a positive road forward. This might include teachings about the four medicines, the medicine wheel, and other cultural teachings and activities. It would also be good to have traditional people who are inspiring speakers.

*“The oldest living profession is actually motherhood.”*

Many women shared that becoming a mother was a source of strength and sometimes the catalyst to seek healing to begin the journey to exit trafficking. For Indigenous women, there is an inherent cultural responsibility in the role of motherhood. Being a mother is often a grounding force for them to focus on the betterment and healing of self and family.

Fear of children being apprehended by child welfare agencies is a barrier for survivors to seek or access services. Indigenous women need spaces and supports to build upon their cultural foundations. This includes adequate and



compassionate supports to aid them in fulfilling their roles as mothers.

The women stated they want more than just to learn how to make a dreamcatcher. They wanted to learn about teachings to help them connect with their identity as Indigenous women and to live good lives based on those teachings. The women who had exited identified that their experiences on the street provide valid lessons to help other youth from being lured and groomed into a world of exploitation.

Indian Residential School Survivors, their children and grandchildren, do not necessarily know traditional family values and a non-judgmental culture full of love. They also may not understand colonization and assimilation and how this impacts families and communities.

Indigenous people are culture as we come directly from the Spirit World. Survivors asked for comforting grounding spaces to explore their culture. It is the service providers' responsibility to create spaces to build capacity in survivors to recognize stability in themselves and to connect to teachings. This helps so that wherever they are on the healing continuum, they know their voice matters and can change the narrative of how the world views Indigenous people.

There were comments that some cultural programs bar people if they are using substances. This is a coping mechanism for many. There needs to be some places they can go to access culture even if they are using.

## HOUSING

*"It's hard to find a stable place and food when you have no money and you have to give all your money to your pimp."*

Women emphasized how difficult it is to get good housing. Landlords reject them because of how they look or dress. They often ask how they make their income to ensure it is not through soliciting. Rental agreements often have "anti-soliciting" clauses. Barriers mean that women have to lie to get and keep housing. If the landlords find out, they evict them or some of them want to sleep with the women if they let them stay.

Shelters are sometimes difficult to get into. They may ask many questions. They sometimes push the women to charge the perpetrators of violence but the women are too frightened to press charges. Women are typically allowed to stay only a few days at the shelter and then they are back on the streets which does not solve the problem.

Shelters can also be a place of risk for women. Pimps sometimes send recruiters there to find women who are then lured back into being trafficked.


Women need stable safe transitional housing. They need ways to relocate to different communities. It is impossible to start a new life if you go back out in public in the same community.

## ISSUES ON RESERVES

*"I was abused on the reserve. People in the community don't help. No services. No shelters. So I left and ended up in an even more messed-up situation."*

Some women were abused on the reserves. They found that people in the community did not help. There were no services nor shelters so they left. Some of the women had sex to get out of the community. Sometimes customers were community workers or community workers' husbands who were supposed to be the ones that the women go to for help.





Those who speak out about abuse in the community are labelled or discredited. Chiefs and councils say they don't want to get involved in people's personal problems so they do little or nothing to address the problems.

## PREVENTION

*"I wish someone had told me what it was I was going through. Wish they had taught me that it was trafficking. I had to find out by myself."*

Education in schools is essential to prevent human trafficking. Children and youth need to understand how to stop bullying, what consent really means, and what healthy sexuality and relationships look like. Education needs to indicate what human trafficking is, the signs to watch for, and to realize that boyfriends, lovers, and family members can be pimps.

In case they find themselves in this situation, they need to know who to tell, where to go for help, what safety plans are, and so on. Education needs to be age appropriate and start at a young age such as Grades 7 and 8. Some parents don't talk to their children at all about these issues or how to stay safe. There are some good videos that can be used e.g. from the Children's Centre and the "tea cup" consent video. We have to address low self-esteem among teenagers.

To truly prevent Indigenous human trafficking, we need to look at the whole community and its issues—racism, poverty, child welfare and colonization—as all play a role in creating the conditions where human trafficking can occur.




*"We are labeled as  
'HIGH RISK' or  
STIGMATIZED  
due to criminal  
records and  
denied services."*



*"Bring back  
our people  
THROUGH CULTURE,*

*accept them  
WHERE THEY ARE AT,*

*and DO NOT BE  
JUDGMENTAL."*



## E. What We Heard from Community Members and Service Providers

### SERVICES


Community members and service providers emphasized the lack of services—both mainstream and Indigenous—and specifically mentioned the following needed services.

Women need a safe place to go that is available 24/7 and a 24-hour helpline associated with it. This would be a safe place where they can access information, help, rest, food, clothing, personal supplies, and talk with someone who is accepting and non-judgmental. One suggestion was to create pop-up shelters for Human Trafficking Survivors.

Outreach programs are key. ONWA has a long history of community and relationship-building focused on Indigenous women and girls' safety. For years, ONWA provided outreach supplies with a safety focus. Personal alarms and compact mirrors with hidden booklets containing resources for women experiencing violence were handed out.

ONWA's history of connecting and building relationships with street-involved women laid the groundwork to officially begin Anti-Human Trafficking programming locally and provincially. The relationships—meeting women where they are and recognizing Indigenous women's unique needs—helped form the Aakwa'ode'ewin program's foundation.

The STORM model in Ottawa is a good example of an outreach approach that works well. It focuses on getting out to connect with women where they are and providing practical items for them such as harm reduction items (pipes, condoms etc.), food, and clothing. It would be helpful to provide some kind of panic button or safety alert that could be attached to jewelry or clothing



that calls for help or so the person can be tracked and found. Women need access to birth control; especially, those too young to access it themselves.

Accompaniment to hospital and other services is important as women are often treated badly at essential services. Staff can be quite judgmental in places like Emergency. Accompaniment needs to be available on a 24-hour basis.

Support and counseling programs are needed for survivors who stay working and for those who want to leave as many have PTSD or complex PTSD. This could take many forms such as mental health and addiction services, support groups, trauma counseling, art therapy, peer support, and mentorship. Grandmother and auntie programs are a good way to support and mentor survivors. Women need information in a variety of areas such as safety planning, how to deal with landlords who may discriminate against them or put pressure on them to provide sex. Front-line workers need to know how to conduct safety planning and have the tools and resources to support women in creating safety plans.

Cultural programs are part of the supports offered including Elders and culture camps. For example, Grandmothers in Ottawa give culturally-appropriate sessions to youth.

Some specific programs are needed such as court diversion for youth. They also need assistance in dealing with legal issues, processes, and interrogations. It is not uncommon for exploited women to be victimized by crime but also be charged with criminal offenses. Justice programming needs to take into account women's experiences of exploitation in processes such as sentencing, court diversions, and granting of pardons.

A related support—which could be part of the above services—is to provide a gateway

to other community services like health care, psychotherapy, addictions programs, healing services, and connections to other agencies.


There need to be specific supports for those who want to leave the work. This would include programs where survivors can think about their future, learn new ways of living, and how to have healthy social environments and lifestyles. As part of the transition, survivors need trauma-informed training opportunities and work opportunities.

Ongoing supports—including from other survivors in peer-based networks—is important to assist people through their journey to a new life. Transitional housing and safe long-term housing is needed. Survivors who attempt to leave are often afraid for their lives and almost always choose to leave the community where they worked. It is essential to have funds for relocation to another community or to return home because of this.

Engagement session participants commented that survivors need these services over an extended period, often for several years. Services specific to Human Trafficking Survivors are important because they are often labelled as high risk or they're stigmatized due to their experiences including those with a criminal record. This excludes them from many services. To provide adequate supports, agencies need more staff, long-term funding to provide stability in these positions, and qualified staff which is related to salary levels.

Identifying as an Indigenous person can be a barrier for people seeking help, as well as having or not having status. It is helpful to know if an agency is status-blind and if all Indigenous people are welcome.

Labels can be stigmatizing. We need to be open and inclusive in how we present services so that people have spaces to define themselves and to tell their stories.



Above all, service providers emphasized the need to respect survivors and support them to make decisions about their lives to pursue their journey.

## CHANGES IN MAINSTREAM SERVICES

There were a number of comments about barriers or shortcomings in existing mainstream services.

Children's Aid Societies, as it currently operates, is largely not working. There is a need for closer monitoring of group homes as young women and men are often recruited from group homes. Group homes need to have a "Girls Group" or other formats of regular discussions around consent, trigger signs, and safety.

It is important to check in regularly with youth to ensure they understand the signs of someone trying to groom or recruit them into human trafficking. More Indigenous caregivers are needed in the child welfare system. It was noted that many Crown wards are not under Children's Aid Societies and these require careful attention. Better planning and systemic changes are needed in Children's Aid Societies to address these concerns.

Relationships between police and survivors can be strained. Specialized police services are needed to work with survivors. It is beneficial for police services in human trafficking to have a background and education in social work or a related field and an understanding of trauma. Collaborative approaches between police and front-line services include a streamlined referral process to ensure services are trauma-informed, appropriate, and adequate.

The health care system is an issue. Hospital and public health staff are often judgmental. For

example, they may ask the survivor for the name of their sexual partner and if the survivor says they don't know, they are treated judgmentally. A health care system review and development of clear guidelines are needed to ensure trauma-informed care and cultural safety supports are in place.


Family law support for Indigenous women and families going through the court system needs information and support about family law.

Mandate rigidity is a challenge when agencies' policies or strict interpretations of the mandate prevent staff from helping women in need. Similarly, a client-centered approach means changing agency procedures or forms to make it easier for women to access services. This includes how the intake process is conducted, the forms that women are expected to complete, services wait times, and ensuring that appointments are not necessary to begin accessing services. Women are frightened and vulnerable. It is key that whenever a woman finds the courage to approach a service provider that the agency makes it as welcoming and as simple as possible to access services.

Overall, staff at all agencies should have training about human trafficking and how to adapt their work to address survivors' needs. Service providers need to understand the context of Indigenous human trafficking including colonization and the importance of cultural safety. It is key to have more Indigenous workers in mainstream agencies.

## PROGRAM AND SYSTEM MODELS

While considering specific services and service improvements, we should examine overall models and concepts for program and system design.



Culturally-specific programming and traditional healing and knowledge need to be embedded throughout the program planning and service delivery system. All services need to respect Indigenous traditions in their relationships with the women. Elders can provide essential contributions throughout the service system as consultants, educators, public speakers, and so on.

Building the circle of care is required to reduce silos, build relationships, and create a network of supports for Indigenous Human Trafficking Survivors. To do this, we need to have ongoing dialogue among services to build trust and solid relationships. For example, the Sex Trade Out Reach Mobile (STORM) team in Ottawa meets weekly with the police. There needs to be good system navigation to guide and support survivors through the different services and to advocate for them. We should become aware of partnerships beyond those working directly with survivors, for example, partnering with agencies to work with women at risk of homelessness.

A community-wide strategy to address racism is an important element of meeting the needs of Indigenous survivors of human trafficking.

Collaboration is a key part to design more effective programs and services and to bring change to current systems. Stronger relationships among service providers ensure a wraparound approach to working with survivors. It is essential to establish effective working relationships among police, emergency services, and community services to address concerns raised by survivors.

Program models we create must take into account a range of scenarios about human trafficking so that we consider all aspects of what human trafficking actually looks like in our communities. One component of this is to engage and inform the public so that friends and family know what to do to help someone they know.

The planning tables need more young voices to guide service delivery. We need to include LGBTQ2S voices as they often do not have access to services.

## LEARNING, TRAINING, AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING

Agency staff need training in a range of skills important to working with survivors. Training should be provided through a cultural lens. Some of the most critical elements in this training are:


- a) Cultural safety.
- b) Mental health first aid.
- c) Recognition of human trafficking and exploitation signs.
- d) Working with LGBTQ2S survivors.
- e) Working collaboratively with other service providers.
- f) Trauma-informed care.
- g) The importance of believing survivors.

Training is necessary for all those who work with survivors, especially those who may not be aware that survivors are among the people they work with e.g. teachers.

It would be useful to have a way to share information and practices among agencies across the province and in other parts of Canada through a registry of tools and practices. Regular conferences and other opportunities for making connections with service providers offer opportunities to learn from each other and share knowledge.

## LEGAL AND POLICY ISSUES

There are legal grey areas that need to be clarified for service providers. For example, 17-year-olds have “aged out” of some services



but are not yet legally adults. How do we ensure they receive the supports they need?

From a policy perspective, we need to address choice and consent: When is it survival sex and when is it 100% the woman's choice? When the bodies of Indigenous women and girls are being sold, is it really reasonable to think there is consent involved? We need a better understanding of the link between Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and human trafficking. Better systems are required to ensure policy is informed by the lived experiences of survivors and front-line work.

Government funding models need to be more flexible and adaptable to local circumstances and more stable and constant. The funding needs to recognize that focusing only on results may miss some of the supports needed and that change takes a long time.

Overall, the justice framework and policies need reformation to protect the survivors more effectively, to give them a voice, and to ensure they are believed. The current system sets up innumerable hurdles to women, even criminalizing them, while allowing traffickers to continue unimpeded causing enormous harm to Indigenous women and girls.

*"The laws and policies are actually protecting the perpetrators. They need to be changed."*

## PREVENTION

*"It's about getting into schools. Getting to the children when they're young so that the community is teaching them the true history so that it breaks down this idea that we're just bodies without souls or*

*faces, and it's teaching our young people in our communities what it means to de-stigmatize. De-stigmatizing is decolonizing."*


*"I think it's important to teach our women at a young age what good love is. We need to teach both our sons and our daughters."*

*"Youth who come to a new community need to be aware of services or providers that can help them if they are experiencing issues or have questions."*

Public awareness and education is key to prevention including learning the signs that someone may need help and what to do e.g. noting license plates. We need to address denial in our communities in the sense that people think "that doesn't happen here." There are many ways to share knowledge about this issue such as information nights for community members. One suggestion was for education around home takeovers.

People also need a better understanding of consent. Being pressured or coerced is not consent. Doing something out of fear or manipulation is not consent. No one under 18 years of age can be considered to have consented. Trafficking is part of the spectrum of sexual violence. If violence starts when children are young, they do not realize it is not normal or that they have a choice.

Prevention needs to include educating young people and parents about social media. Parents should be aware of what their children do online and know the signs of luring or grooming. Educational work needs to recognize that family members, women, and even young girls can be traffickers.



Schools need to be more active to provide education to staff and students. They need to not be afraid to ask the hard questions. Human trafficking needs to be added to sex education classes including education around consent. Young people need to understand signs of when they are being groomed for human trafficking. Many young girls and young women don't understand that what is happening to them is human trafficking. Instead, they think this is normal behaviour or just something they do for their boyfriend.

Making major changes to Children's Aid Societies would have a significant impact on prevention of Indigenous human trafficking by offering better supports to Indigenous families and better protection for Indigenous girls.

Stronger support for families is important to strengthen love and self-care. Parents need to know how to help their daughters build strong healthy relationships and how to have proper tools to handle unhealthy or violent situations including those that could lead to human trafficking. Families need emotional support, parenting skills-building, healthy practices, self-care e.g. mindfulness, boundaries, and consent. Families need safe spaces for open dialogue and links to community resources. We need to support families to stay together in healthy ways.

*"We have to be strong Anishinaabe women and be those role models for those girls."*

We need to find ways to use social media to support and assist people. For example, when young people go missing for 24

hours, the use of social media can help find out where they went.

Culture has a strong role in prevention. When young Indigenous men and women connect to their culture, they feel the strength, pride, and self-determination that comes with that identity. Cultural programs feed the spirit and strengthen individuals, families, and communities. Speaking with elders, having country food available, offering sage, journaling, gifting, learning traditional teachings and other spiritual activities can provide a cultural lens for each person to use in their life.

Survivors can be wisdom carriers who speak from experience. They can help youth not be drawn into exploitation and instead stay safe.

Prevention work needs to include addressing violence against Indigenous women and girls in urban areas and in First Nation communities. There needs to be education about healthy relationships including traditional teachings and support services for women, girls, and families.

*"We need to take control and start helping ourselves."*

*"It was important for me to help our daughters build strong relationships, healthy relationships—to take control and start helping ourselves."*

*"I brought my husband with me because this is not just an issue for women—it is about our men. They need to hear about this."*



## F. Indigenous Anti-Human Trafficking Service Delivery Framework

As part of the IAHTL initiative, a provincial IAHTL service delivery framework was designed to promote a coherent provincial approach while supporting unique local needs and priorities. Indigenous Human Trafficking Survivors who took part in the IAHTL project called for sustainable wraparound programs that assist them through the healing process. Community members and Indigenous and mainstream service providers contributed to the thinking that led to the comprehensive approach embodied in the framework.

A culture-based gender-based trauma-informed approach is at the core of the framework. The system of policies, programs, and services needs to be designed from an Indigenous perspective and take account of a gendered analysis of human trafficking. It is essential that services be designed and provided through a trauma-informed lens.

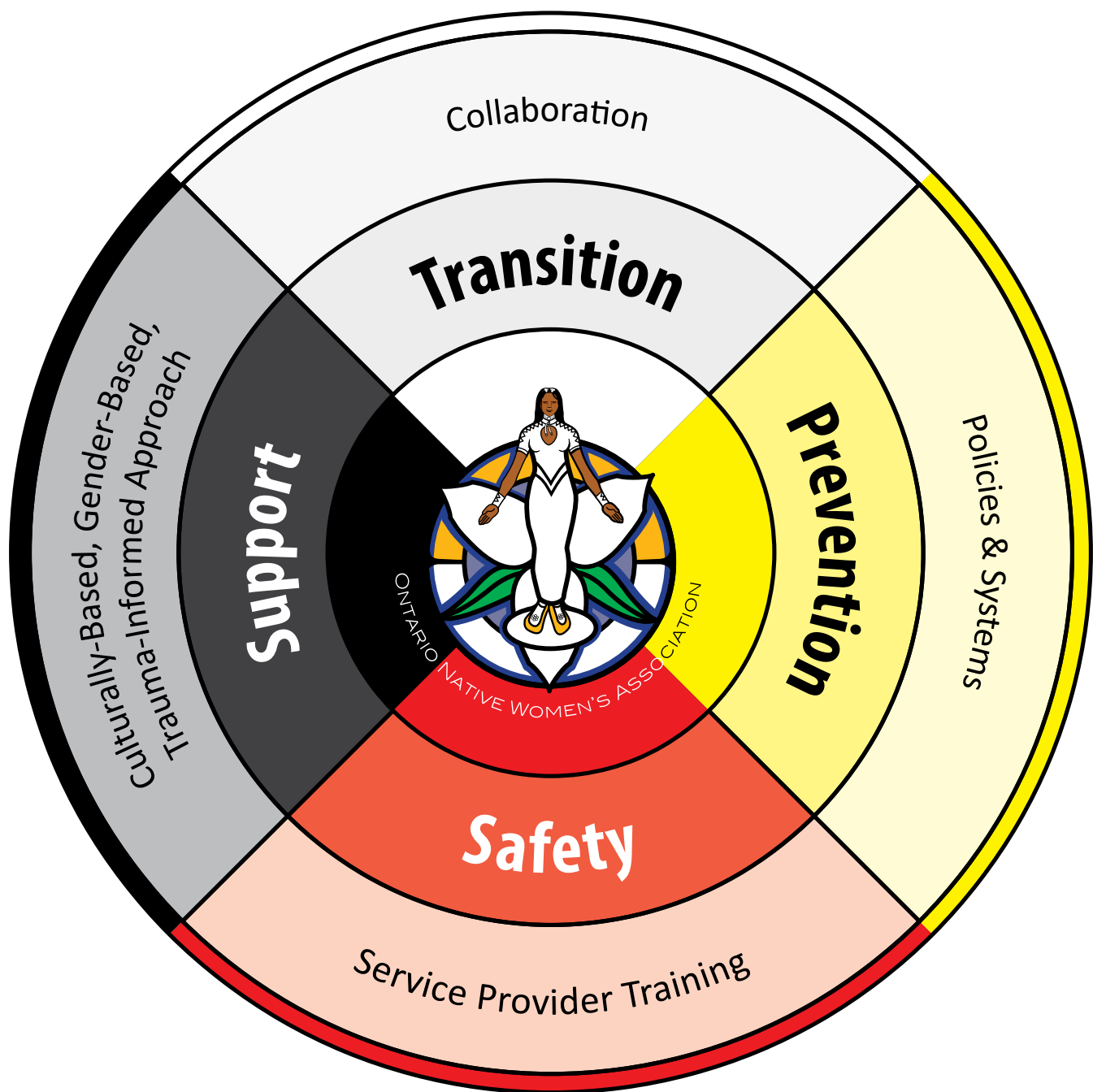
Prevention can take many forms. From education that informs and supports youth to make healthy self-respecting choices and to seek help when needed to the support of parents and families to raise their children to value themselves, to make good choices, and to reach out. Traditional teachings, cultural activities, and ceremony can

be woven into all of this. Communities have a role to play in prevention by supporting open dialogue about difficult issues encouraging survivors and their families to share their experiences and to suggest supports that help avoid trafficking.

For those who are lured into this work, safety is their immediate requirement. They need supports to build on their strengths to heal and, if they choose, to find ways to transition out into a different life. For these three steps, an array of programs and services are necessary. Safe places to stay, food and personal supplies, counseling, support groups, access to Elders and cultural programming, relocation funds, and a range of other supports fit the bill.

To best deliver these in a seamless wraparound approach, it is essential to have collaboration and training among stakeholders to ensure services are provided in a culturally safe trauma-informed collaborative way. Policy context plays a large role. Reforms to the criminal justice system, health system, and other areas help facilitate better prevention and supports to survivors.







# #safeSPACES

## G. ONWA 6-point strategy

Based on extensive engagement with over 3,360 community members and the ongoing relationship with 250 self-identified human trafficking survivors who have shared their stories, ONWA has developed 14 recommendations, which we propose to implement through a six part strategy that is rooted in relationship and collaboration through SAFE SPACES **#safeSPACES**;

We focus on safety through;

**Survivor- centred** and survivor informed services that are culture and gender based and delivered in a trauma-informed approach

**Prevention through education**, training and public awareness campaigns, both in print and in person, targeting those who are most at risk and those who can respond first to the signs, namely peers, parents and educators

**Access to safe and respectful spaces** at service delivery agencies that offer women only programming so women can speak openly and without fear, about their experiences

**Core supports** for transitioning to a new life, including emergency funding for immediate relocation, which is delivered in an expedient and efficient manner to ensure women and girls have no wait times to safety

**Evidence-based** policy and system reform informed by survivor expertise and the successful extraction of Indigenous women by ONWAs multi-partner collaborative network that works across government, disciplines and professions

**Streamlined supports** offered through a barrier free simplified process.

It is key that when a victim is identified, all barriers are removed to ensure they are survivors **#safeSPACES**.



**S**urvivor-centered

**P**revention through education

**A**ccess to safe & respectful spaces

**C**ore supports

**E**vidence-based

**S**treamlined supports

#safe**SPACES**



## H. Recommendations

With input from over 3,360 participants including over 250 self-identified Indigenous Human Trafficking Survivors and many others who participated but chose not to identify, the IAHTL project generated community-driven recommendations and a provincial framework to support the unique needs of each region.

### A. A CULTURALLY-BASED GENDER-BASED TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH

1. Ensure all initiatives, services, programs and interventions for Indigenous Human Trafficking Survivors are based on an Indigenous cultural gender-based trauma-informed analysis and are available to survivors regardless of age or status, and inclusive of Two-Spirit/Trans individuals.
2. Expand Indigenous women-specific services such as women-only healing programs as requested by survivors as part of a services continuum for women, men, and families.
3. Always offer a cultural component to programs as an option. Survivors want access to ceremonies, medicines, and teachings. Ensure Elders, grandmothers and traditional healers are available. Provide ceremony, traditional healing, and land-based practices.

4. Build relationships with survivors to ensure survivor input always informs design of supports, programs, actions, and policies.

### B. PREVENTION

5. Undertake a range of prevention and education programs for all community members including:
  - a) Integrating education about human trafficking into schools e.g. recognizing human trafficking and signs to watch for, understanding consent, where to go for help, and protecting oneself from online luring.
  - b) Providing education in schools on healthy relationships, healthy sexuality, and online safety.
  - c) Providing parenting programs to support parents in raising strong healthy Indigenous children who respect themselves and understand healthy sexual relationships.
  - d) Undertaking public awareness about signs to recognize possible human trafficking situations, how to help, and how to prevent this.
  - e) Encouraging community conversations and education on colonization, poverty, racism, and other factors contributing to Indigenous human trafficking.



- f) Holding community gatherings to share traditional teachings on healthy relationships and behaviours, e.g. clan, kin, and life cycle responsibilities.

## C. SURVIVORS' SAFETY

6. Meet the immediate safety needs of all Indigenous survivors on a 24/7 basis including:
  - a) Providing safe places for women similar to women's shelters but designed specifically for women in human trafficking. These would be places that women could drop in for a few hours to rest or talk, get information, and have access to food, showers, clothing, personal supplies, etc. This would include help for medical issues.
  - b) Developing protocols for women's shelters to ensure they recognize the unique safety needs of Human Trafficking Survivors and the risk of the recruitment of women into human trafficking inside the shelters.
  - c) Offering a 24-hour crisis line.
  - d) Having Indigenous outreach workers and mobile response teams out on the streets talking with the women and providing mental health, addiction, and harm reductions supplies e.g. wipes, sanitizer, condoms, whistles, lube/gel, toiletries, the morning after pill, needles, swabs, inhalation kits, wound care kits, etc. along with pamphlets or information sheets on how to safely use the supplies, information about where to get help.

- e) Letting women know where they can find help through different methods e.g. pamphlets, billboards, social media, an empty lipstick container that holds a scroll full of numbers to call for help, etc. Having information about common traits that are signs of a boyfriend, lover, or family member that may be trafficking.
- f) Implementing a 24/7 integrated crisis response by police, emergency services, and front-line Indigenous service providers, and Indigenous services aftercare.
- g) Implementing simplified intake procedures that provide immediate support and remove barriers to accessing services quickly.
- h) Providing rotating pop-up shelter beds with appropriate policies and procedures for supporting survivors and with staff trained in high security measures.

## D. SUPPORTS FOR SURVIVORS

7. Provide support and counseling services including a 24-hour crisis line, circles, mentorship programs, peer support, safety planning, and other programs to assist women in transitioning to a different life. Include programs led by women with lived experience along with programs led by grandmothers and traditional people. Programs would include life skills, parenting, building healthy relationships, and understanding historical trauma and its

impacts. These need to include programs and support groups for mothers of survivors and survivors who are parents as part of the healing process and the prevention of human trafficking.

8. Provide advocates and navigators who accompany women to mainstream services to help them find appropriate services, to support them, and to advocate for them to ensure appropriate and respectful services. The advocacy and navigation role is particularly important for dealing with police and health care services and is also needed for Children's Aid, court systems, Ontario Works, Ontario Disability Support Program, and other systems and services.

## E. TRANSITION TO A DIFFERENT LIFE

9. Support women who choose to make the transition to a different life and recognize that this is a process that may take several years. Measures would include:
  - a) Continuation of support and counselling programs referred to above.
  - b) Funding for emergency travel, relocation, ID and name change, tattoo removal, and other safety needs.
  - c) Access to long-term transitional housing.
  - d) Services to support survivors when reconnecting to family and community.
  - e) Access to culturally safe trauma-informed education, employment, and training programs.

## F. AGENCY TRAINING AND COLLABORATION

10. Train staff about Indigenous and mainstream services in key skills: cultural safety, understanding colonization and racism, trauma-informed services, harm reduction, addressing sexual violence disclosure and human trafficking disclosures, etc.

11. Create a promising practices portal (website, app, etc.) with tools, templates, protocols, program descriptions, and other resources to support service providers, survivors, and families.
12. Build collaboration among multiple services and stakeholders to provide culturally safe trauma-informed wraparound care to meet a full range of survivors' needs. It is important to build strong and positive relationships with police, health care providers, and front-line Indigenous providers. This includes:
  - a) Having the difficult conversations and finding creative solutions that lead to better support for survivors.
  - b) Collaborative tables that focus on Indigenous human trafficking.
  - c) Indigenous representation at mainstream human trafficking tables.
  - d) Joint action plans among agencies.
  - e) Flexibility in agency mandates so that staff are empowered to respond to survivors' needs.
  - f) Accountability processes that include survivor feedback and involvement.

## G. POLICY AND SYSTEM REFORM

13. Identify and implement improvements to key policies and systems affecting survivors, notably the criminal justice, policing, and health care systems.
14. Undertake research to identify the extent and characteristics of human trafficking of Indigenous women in mining and other resource industries and identify appropriate responses.

# STOKING THE FIRE

The IAHTL project brought together Indigenous agencies, survivors, and community members to amplify the voices of Indigenous women who experienced exploitation and to help us build capacity among survivors. ONWA recognizes women and survivors as community leaders, especially when it comes to safety. We need to acknowledge and honour their traumas while helping them recognize their inner strengths and resilience. Survivors are community leaders who can address safety issues because they have lived experiences. Survivors' voices and recommendations are integral to the work moving forward.

*"We are isolated by our trauma and then we get isolated when we start our healing."*

*"I needed love, family, and self-care! Proper tools to know how to handle situations like that. To feel safe with family."*

*"I think it's important to teach women at a young age what good love is. We need to teach both our daughters and our sons."*

*"The girl need experiential support. They need us veterans. **THEY NEED US SURVIVORS.**"*

*"It really helps to see other people in that situation, that you don't feel alone anymore. You're not the only one struggling."*

The IAHTL Project was led by ONWA:



In partnership with:



Nishnawbe Aski Nation  
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Fort Frances Tribal Area  
**HEALTH SERVICES**