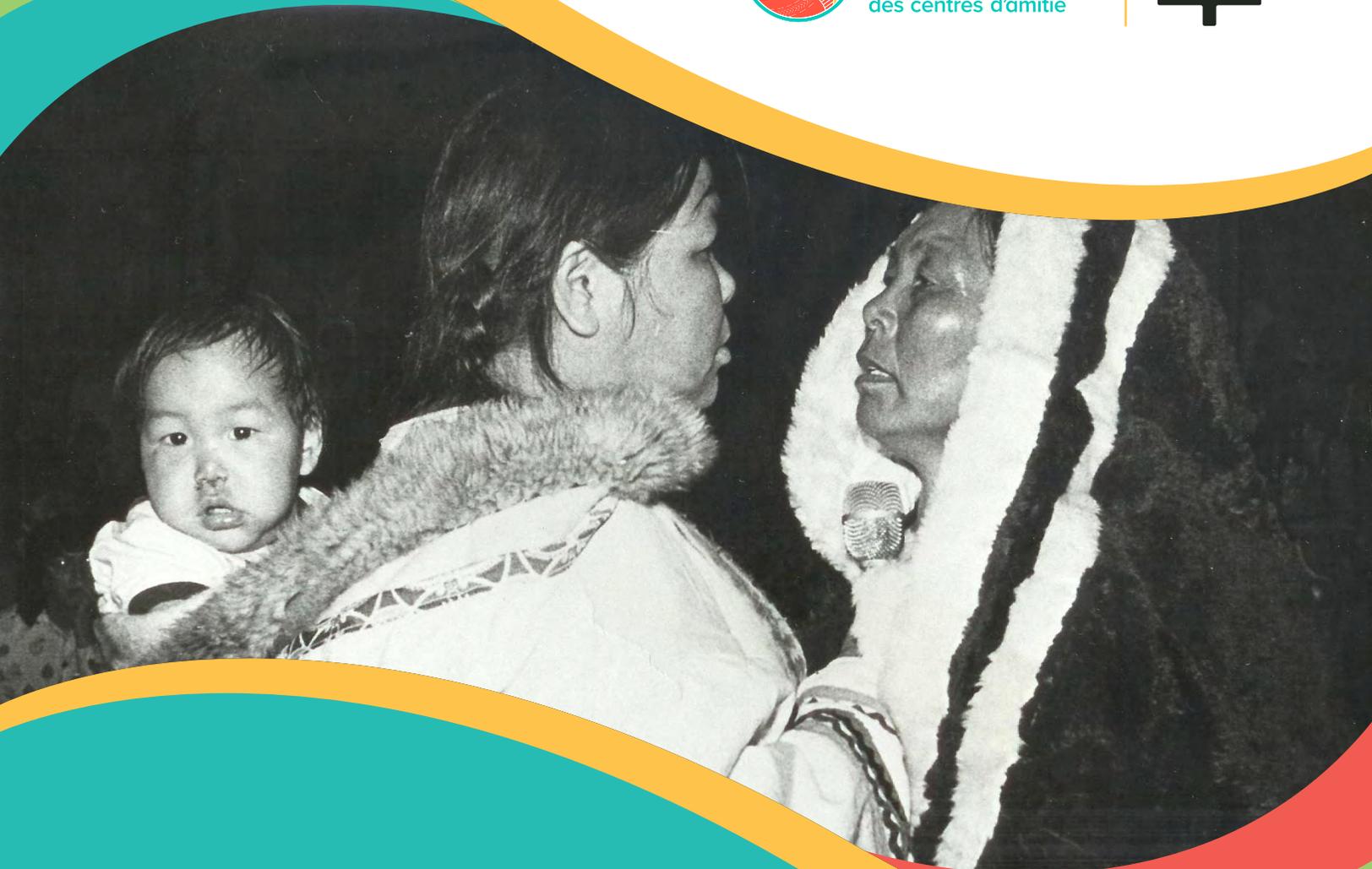




National Association
of Friendship Centres
Association nationale
des centres d'amitié



Honouring Our Ways

*A Just and Sustainable Approach to
Urban Indigenous Wellbeing & Safety*

NOVEMBER 2021

In Friendship.

National Association of Friendship Centres

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Part 1

Laying the Groundwork

Welcome by NAFC Executive Director, Jocelyn Formsma

Friendship Centres are a structural testament to the resiliency of the urban Indigenous community. Since the 1950's, Friendship Centres have been community hubs providing space for urban Indigenous community members to gather through culture, family, trust, and friendship.

Indigenous peoples know when they walk through the doors of their local Friendship Centre it is their space, and they are seen and welcome. Friendship Centres support all ages and demographics, including youth, Elders, 2SLGBTQQIA people, women, men, young children, and families. Our strength as a network are the people who work, volunteer, and visit Friendship Centres, and in this understanding, we find commonality in our shared urban identity and desire for belonging.

Prior to the Government of Canada's launching of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in 2016, front-line advocates at Friendship Centres across the country already knew well what their communities needed to address the epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people. Friendship Centres have been responding to these community needs, with precarious funding, through delivering critical wraparound services that integrate culture, tradition, and ceremony. We have always understood violence against MMIWG and 2SLGBTQQIA people cannot be addressed in a siloed way.

The national MMIWG inquiry report, *Reclaiming Power and Place*, clarifies that the situation facing our communities is part of a larger problem of genocide, colonialism, racism, and dispossession of Indigenous peoples. In the end, Canada's colonialism problem needs to be addressed. Recognition and implementation of both collective and individual rights is required.

The economic, social, and cultural rights of Indigenous peoples are indivisible from their right to be free from violence and discrimination. This interrelation requires a new, holistic approach to fulfilling the rights of Indigenous peoples; for our rights to be fully realized and implemented in Canada, we cannot just look at each right, or category of rights, in isolation.

The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* states within Article 35 that, "Indigenous peoples have the right to determine the responsibilities of individuals to their communities." In the traditional view, there were no such thing as "rights." There is no word in the Maliseet language that means "rights." There are only words that imply one's obligations or responsibilities to others. In the Indigenous view, all of creation is a circle in which there are only responsibilities inherent in the nature of each being, human, and non-human, born and unborn, living and not living. Since all things are related and part of creation, they all have a responsibility to maintain the harmonious relations that were established in the beginning.

Honouring Our Ways, our national Friendship Centre-led action plan to end violence against, and within our communities, aims to continue our work to break the cycle of violence. This action plan is inspired by our obligations and responsibilities to each other and our communities, and affirms the ways in which our work will continue to secure wellbeing and safety for our communities.

We acknowledge those that came before us in the work that we do and are thankful for their sacrifices, dedication, and commitment to our future.



J. Formsma

What is the National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC)?

The National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC) is the national body of the Friendship Centre Movement. The Friendship Centre Movement is the country's most significant Urban Indigenous service delivery infrastructure. For over half a century, Friendship Centres have facilitated the transition of Indigenous peoples from rural, remote, and reserve life to an urban environment, and helped individuals access the vital services they need to succeed in urban settings across Canada.

Across the country, Friendship Centres provide culturally appropriate services for Indigenous peoples living in urban centres and have become a place for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to come together, to share traditions, and to learn from one another. For many Indigenous peoples, Friendship Centres are the first point of contact to access culturally-based socioeconomic programs and services.

The NAFC represents over 100 Friendship Centres and Provincial/Territorial Associations (PTAs) from coast-to-coast-to-coast. We are democratically governed, status-inclusive, and accountable to our membership. Our core mission is to support Friendship Centres and PTAs in achieving their diverse missions and visions within their urban Indigenous communities. Ultimately, the NAFC envisions a future that remembers the past and is rooted in our cultures to improve the wellbeing of Indigenous peoples living in urban environments.

Today, the Friendship Centre Movement has expanded and continues to offer essential programs and services to urban Indigenous peoples across Canada.



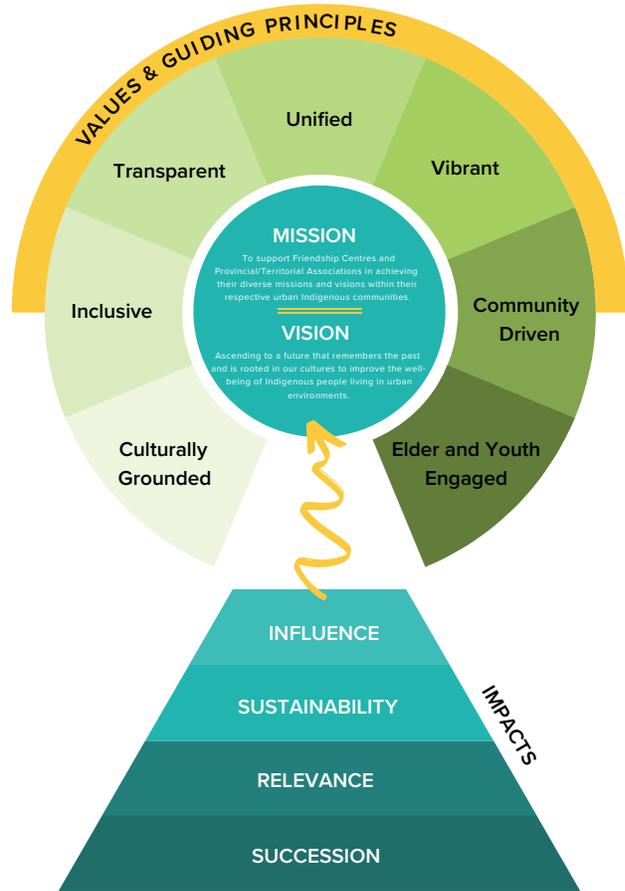
The NAFC represents over 100 Friendship Centres and Provincial/Territorial Associations from coast-to-coast-to-coast.

Guiding Principles

The NAFC’s work is informed by the following guiding principles:

- + **Culturally Grounded:** We will use our collective and diverse teachings for guidance.
- + **Inclusive:** We will use a holistic approach and ensure all Indigenous peoples feel like they belong with us, regardless of their Canadian legal status.
- + **Transparent:** We will be open and honest in our undertakings.
- + **Unified:** We will build a strong and unified Friendship Centre Movement.
- + **Vibrant:** We will advance a movement that is welcoming and progressive.
- + **Community Driven:** We will look to our communities for direction based on their knowledge, experience, and impact.
- + **Elder and Youth Engaged:** We will look to our Young People and our Elders for advice.

Our commitment to these values, bolstered by our collective lived experiences and belief in shared dialogue, drives us to mobilize around Friendship Centre’s work addressing violence.



Executive Summary

Purpose & Outcomes

Friendship Centres work tirelessly to enable healthy, thriving urban Indigenous communities in the face of systemic racism, exclusion, and violence. The realities and barriers facing urban Indigenous peoples are captured in the *Final Report on the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* (MMIWG), the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (TRC), and the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (RCAP).

As of 2016, there are almost 900,000 Indigenous peoples living in urban settings, amounting to half of the total population of Indigenous peoples in Canada. Friendship Centres offer front-line resources accessible to those in urban areas, and yet Friendship Centre-led programming that combats systemic violence is under-resourced for a number of Indigenous peoples in urban areas.

To respond to the MMIWG Calls for Justice and previous reports, the NAFC convened members of the Friendship Centre Movement that are engaged in violence prevention work to accomplish the following:

- + highlight and amplify the critical work that Friendship Centres are already doing to address violence,
- + identify opportunities for governments, policy-makers, and funders to effectively augment their support, and
- + establish tangible next steps to resource Friendship Centres' ability to foster healthy, safe communities in a just and sustainable way.

Methodology

To develop this path forward, the NAFC partnered with Coeuraj, a collaborative design firm that facilitates multi-interest alignment toward shared outcomes, to design a three-session collaborative design (co-design) process through which we engaged a total of 50 Friendship Centre staff. A variety of participants joined us from the West Coast, the Territories, Central Canada, and the East Coast.

Key Findings

Throughout the co-design process, three dominant themes emerged that highlight Friendship Centres' unique strengths and capabilities to support the wellbeing and safety of urban Indigenous peoples in their communities.

To support urban Indigenous communities, Friendship Centres:

- + **Theme 1:** Deliver Critical Wraparound Programs and Services
- + **Theme 2:** Integrate Culture, Tradition, Ceremony Within Programs and Services
- + **Theme 3:** Mobilize Advocacy & Collaboration Through a National Network

In recognizing Friendship Centres' capability to support the holistic wellbeing and safety of urban Indigenous communities, there are also necessary next steps governments, policy-makers, and funders must pursue to enable them to sustainably deliver these services with dignity and amplified success. These steps include:

- + Providing resources for capacity building and program design, delivery, data collection, and evaluation,
- + Recognizing diversity within urban Indigenous communities, urban Indigenous contexts, and the portability of Indigenous peoples' rights, and
- + Acting to effectively address systemic causes of violence.

Introduction

Friendship Centres are a key hub for urban Indigenous peoples. They deliver critical programs and services that directly contribute to community wellbeing and safety. Their work helps urban Indigenous communities prevent, intervene in, and heal from acts of violence. Programming takes an inclusive, wraparound approach. Friendship Centres do work integral to the continuum of anti-violence, even when this programming is not typically recognized as addressing violence. Examples of such programming includes: women's employment programs, men's peace circles, play-based programs for youth, and seniors' advocacy groups.

Friendship Centres work tirelessly to meet the needs of urban Indigenous peoples, including women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people, and help ensure responsive outcomes for those who seek their services. Nonetheless, Friendship Centres have faced systemic barriers to accessing funding to support their programming. The largest source of federal programming comes from the federal government through the Urban Programming for Indigenous Peoples (UPIP) program, which allocates \$53 million per year for up to 5 years to Indigenous organizations serving urban Indigenous communities. UPIP was fully subscribed in the year it was launched and funding levels have not been adjusted since. Other critical funding to support anti-violence is often allocated on a distinctions-basis, which Friendship Centres cannot access because their services are distinctions- and status-inclusive.

Governments have received consistent advice to support Indigenous-led initiatives as a means to ending violence against urban Indigenous peoples. For example, the 2019 *Final Report of the National Inquiry on MMIWG* proposed 231 Calls for Justice (CFJs), a set of imperatives rooted in international and domestic Indigenous and human rights law. These imperatives provide a clear and accountable pathway "to end the genocide and to transform systemic and societal values that have worked to maintain colonial violence." CFJs also pose a broader, pressing call on the Canadian government to establish a National Action Plan to end violence against women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people.

As of yet, the National Action Plan outlined in *Final Report of the National Inquiry on MMIWG* is still in development. Its absence, and a lack of systemic action at the highest levels combined with failing to acknowledge urban Indigenous populations as their own distinction, continues to leave a critical gap in service delivery. Meanwhile, pressure on programming has grown without correlating funding increases.

Intended Outcomes

Recognizing Friendship Centres play a unique and vital role in addressing violence, the NAFC has convened Friendship Centre members to co-create an action plan to:

- + highlight and amplify the critical work that Friendship Centres are already doing to address violence,
- + identify opportunities for governments, policy-makers, and funders to effectively augment their support, and
- + establish tangible next steps to resource Friendship Centres' ability to foster healthy, safe communities in a just and sustainable way.



Acknowledgements

In 2020, the NAFC partnered with Coeuraj to produce a report titled [Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Inquiry: Summary of Findings for Urban Indigenous Peoples](#) to unpack how the National Inquiry's CFJs align with the urban Indigenous experience(s) and pursuit for self-determination. As discussed and synthesized in the *Summary of Findings*, health, security, access to housing, cultural training, and specific support for 2SLGBTQQIA people lay the foundation for the CFJs.

Honouring Our Ways builds on this particular report, in addition to critical documents, research, and advocacy efforts that have provided the NAFC with the opportunity to carry this work forward.

Such work includes the [Report on the Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples](#) (RCAP), which continues to be a critical set of documents outlining Canada's colonial history with Indigenous peoples, the ramifications of settler colonialism, and proposed policies and paths to move forward. RCAP validates the responsibility of the federal government to support Indigenous education, health, and young people. In fact, RCAP directly cites the importance of Friendship Centres and how they contribute to the "wide range of positive achievements for Aboriginal people, including increased pride and self-esteem, and improved access to services, employment, training, housing, and other benefits."

The 2015 [Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#) report brings residential school survivors' stories to the forefront, and lays bare the generational impact the residential school system had, and continues to have, on Indigenous families and communities. The TRC's Calls to Action compel the government, and broader Canadian society, to acknowledge this violent past, and ensure a better future through reparative action. Recommendations include: addressing inequitable gaps in education and employment, revitalizing Indigenous languages, improving Indigenous peoples' health outcomes, dismantling unjust "justice" systems, and providing support and clear pathways of success for young people.

The 2019 [Final Report of the National Inquiry for Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls](#) exposes intersecting systems of violence that continue to oppress and harm Indigenous women, girls, and members of the 2SLGBTQQIA community. The CFJs centre language, safety, health, and security of the person, all of which are underpinned in Friendship Centres' work.

These domestic documents exist within an international body of conventions and declarations that recognize and advance the unique rights of Indigenous peoples. The [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) (UNDRIP) provides an international framework to recognize the self-determination of Indigenous peoples. UNDRIP is anticipated to be adopted into domestic law in Canada, and some provinces and territories have already begun to consider the declaration's role in Canadian society.

Friendship Centres have also produced strong research and contributions that the NAFC acknowledges and supports. This work includes the [BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres' Urban Indigenous Wellness Report](#) (2020), the [Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres' Ganohonyokh Report](#) (2019), [Honouring Her Spark](#) (2020), the Aboriginal Friendship Centres of Saskatchewan's participation in the [2019 Saskatoon Aboriginal Community Action Plan](#), and more.

Honouring Our Ways leverages the insights and knowledge captured within these initiatives and reports, and seeks to be another resource that moves us all forward on the road to truth and reconciliation.

Methodology

The NAFC engaged Coeuraj, a collaborative design firm that facilitates multi-interest alignment toward shared outcomes, to deliver a collaborative design (co-design) process to engage national Friendship Centre staff in dialogue on their work addressing violence and building healthy, safe communities.

Co-Design Journey Map

From February to March 2021, Coeuraj facilitated a co-design journey that included two steering committee meetings, wherein participants explored the broad topic of anti-violence programming in Friendship Centres, and informed the content of one larger capstone session that followed. These sessions were all facilitated using co-design principles and practices.

The capstone session culminated the co-design process and brought together participants for a three-hour forum. They were welcomed to share Friendship Centre principles, priorities, best practices, needs, and opportunities, from the lens of their unique lived experiences and delivery expertise in the areas of anti-violence and community wellbeing.

Participant Information

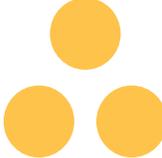
To capture a breadth of voices and experiences, each convening was attended by different groups of Friendship Centre leadership and staff. The NAFC invited members from Friendship Centres from coast-to-coast-to-coast, including Elders and youth, and allowed participants to select when and where they participated to increase the diversity in each session and deter from over-engineering conversation.

Given the sensitive and potentially triggering nature of the topics discussed, each of the three convenings followed the Chatham House Rule. Using the Chatham House Rule ensures that the ideas and insights captured in the sessions and relayed in the action plan are not attributed to any one individual who attended. This also means the specific affiliations of each participant were not shared with anyone outside of those who directly attended the sessions.

Supplementary Research

To supplement the participant insights shared during the co-design journey, Coeuraj, with the support of the NAFC, pulled insights from supporting resources and documents referenced in this action plan.

Co-Design Journey Map

	What	When	Objectives
Steering Committee	<p>The steering committee meetings included representatives from NAFC stakeholder groups including the Board, Aboriginal Youth Council and Senate, PTAs, and Friendship Centres without PTAs and Executive Directors.</p> <p>Individuals were invited to participate in one of three meetings. The questions used were the same across all three meetings, and the insights formed the content inputs for the capstone session. These meeting were 90 minutes long.</p>	 <p>STEERING COMMITTEE MEETINGS</p> <p>Three meetings held on February 5, 8, and 9, and attended by 10 participants each</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Understand why the NAFC needs an action plan to address violence + Explore what anti-violence means for urban Indigenous peoples + Create the parameters for the capstone session
Capstone Session	<p>The participants who joined the capstone session included members of the steering committee, and additional Friendship Centre front-line staff.</p> <p>The capstone session was a custom designed gathering, using information obtained during the steering committee meetings. This meeting was 150 minutes long and participants broke into two working groups for discussion.</p>	 <p>CAPSTONE SESSION</p> <p>Session held on February 26 and attended by 20 participants</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Understand why the NAFC needs an action plan to address violence + Explore what “safe” looks and feels like for the NAFC and local Friendship Centres + Validate key sections of the action plan and start co-creating content
Planning Team	<p>Throughout the co-design journey, the planning team comprised of members of the NAFC and Coeuraj worked together to confirm the objectives of each part of the journey, finalize participant lists, invite participants to each of the described meetings, and engage in research and data gathering.</p>	 <p>KICKOFF MEETINGS</p> <p>Late January</p> <p>Ongoing communications leading up to the development of the action plan</p>	<p>FINAL REPORT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Co-create <i>Honouring Our Ways</i>, a Friendship Centre-led action plan + Delivered April 1st, 2021



Part 2

Sharing Insights and Next
Steps for Change

Violence, Anti-Violence, and the Work of Friendship Centres

Honouring Our Ways defines “violence” and “anti-violence” from the perspectives of those who live and breathe the Friendship Centre Movement. The content below comes from insights shared throughout the co-design journey and, where appropriate, has been expanded on through supplementary research.

In the view of co-design participants, “violence” is the ability of specific individuals or groups to influence or control the decisions that should be freely made by others, individually or collectively, about their own personhood and livelihood, and their ability to create and access economic, social, and cultural opportunities. The “control” of the enacting group is exercised through the use or the threat of using physical force or power. As an action, violence is done by an individual, group, or a system. As an outcome, violence violates the safety of individuals, families, communities, or groups of people through disempowerment; mental, physical, reputational, or financial harm; and through other injuries including “death, maldevelopment or deprivation” as captured in the World Health Organization’s definition of violence.

Participants shared a broad consensus that violence can be initiated by any person, institution, or system has the ability to disempower, harm, or oppress another person or group of people. The causing of harm to an individual or group can be done through intentional choice. However, violence can also be done by “default” to individuals, such as in systems designed to perpetuate violence. Systemic violence can exist through physical structures, like the built environment, or through immaterial structures such as policy, funding decisions, governance, hiring practices, or other institutions that wield power. Violence can be “top-down,” as in the case of governments and/or settler-colonialism, or laterally between members of the same community.

Violence is perpetuated through systems of oppression, including racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, and ageism.

The impacts of violence can be profoundly personal, with direct impacts on survivors and their families. Violence can cause feelings of violation, guilt, and shame in victims. More so, violence can impact multiple generations and feed into violent systems that continue to perpetuate harmful impacts for multiple generations.

On a societal level, not all people experience or are impacted by violence the same way. As noted by the MMIWG National Inquiry, it is helpful to take an intersectional approach to understand how systemic violence impacts different people in unique ways. Because people experience violence differently, there is no one societal solution and no “one-sized-fits-all” programming or approach that can end violence and address its impacts.

All of the aspects of violence are interrelated and interconnected, and thus, cannot be addressed in isolation. That means programming, support, intervention, training and capacity building is required to disrupt cycles and systems of violence.

Through the process of defining “violence” in tangible words, co-design participants looked to clearly define what “anti-violence” means in their own contexts. In their view, anti-violence is more than the lack of violence—it is active work to advance a positive, productive commitment to safety and an environment that enables communities to thrive. Anti-violence requires wraparound supports and, as a set of practices, embraces the culture of Indigenous peoples. Anti-violence is a restorative force that confronts and overcomes colonial violence that has erased culture and disrupted community ties.

Anti-violence requires ongoing and continued support. Support may come in the form of programs, resources, services, or community connections that exist at local, regional, and national levels. Anti-violence work is also directive and preventative—it is a positive force that when enabled, provides pathways and opportunities to channel energy, intention, and potential into healthy endeavours that better individuals and communities.

After exploring concepts of violence and anti-violence, participants reflected on the following question:

What is the value in anchoring Friendship Centres’ critical work supporting healthy community development through the lens of anti-violence? More so, are there other perspectives that initiate similar, deep conversations but through a different, more generative lens?

In the view of participants, the work that Friendship Centres do to address violence, and empower health and safety, is more robust than the term “anti-violence” can convey. The work of Friendship Centres supports the action plan’s framing around wellbeing, safety, and justice. This allows us to move from a focus on reactivity and harm to a focus on the proactive nature of Friendship Centres’ work that supports holistic health, and asserts the human rights, of urban Indigenous peoples.

The Friendship Centre Movement’s Unique Approaches

Throughout the co-design journey, participants shared what they saw as elements of Friendship Centres’ approaches that are unique to the Friendship Centre Movement and essential to their success. These key elements speak to Friendship Centres’ special capability: delivering critical wraparound programs and services; integrating cultures, traditions and ceremonies within services; and mobilizing advocacy and collaboration through a national network.

1 – Delivering Critical Wraparound Programs and Services

Friendship Centres enable healthy, thriving urban Indigenous communities by providing wraparound programs and services that meet people’s evolving needs, from when they are born to when they grow old, and every stage in-between.

Throughout the co-design process, participants clearly articulated that Friendship Centres deliver holistic wellness programs and services through a strengths-based approach. These holistic programs and services exist along a continuum that supports the whole needs of a person across their life cycle.

Friendship Centres wield an advantage over non-Indigenous urban service providers because they recognize the whole of a person alongside broader kinship and community needs. Furthermore, they contextualize care from the vantage point of a shared history and understanding. Friendship Centres are born from community and kinship lines; they know what it feels like to be excluded and in turn, have created inclusive spaces to share, learn, and support urban Indigenous peoples.



Everyone is included in wraparound programming, regardless of age, gender identity, income, housing status, and more. And just as critically: no one is turned away. At their core, wraparound services are important because they:

- + Provide direct and indirect entry points to service support; someone may come looking for support in one area and discover that Friendship Centres' broad programming can meet their other needs.
- + Establish shared context and space that foster relationships between community members and Friendship Centres, be it with the same person across multiple touch-points or various members of the same family or network in different settings; Friendship Centres are places of trust and solidarity, and trust cannot be enabled without relationships.
- + Nurture community outside boundaries of stigma and punitive measures; addressing violence as something that only involves perpetrators and victims is reductive, and inhibits opportunities to build full communities, and pre-empt and heal from acts of violence across people and generations.
- + Allow for the inclusive collaboration of people across demographics; for example, some Friendship Centre programs intentionally bring youth and Elders together and break the silos imposed by colonial approaches to health and wellbeing.
- + Provide safe spaces, literally and figuratively, for those experiencing violence to engage in skill-building, socializing, and/or other forms of community-based care without direct pressures of disclosure (but the unrestricted opportunities to do so).

During one co-design session, a participant shared the success story of a program held at their local Friendship Centre that provided former street-involved young women with the opportunity to receive formal training as Early Childhood Educators. Through this program, young women were able to establish their careers to financially support themselves and their families, and develop a sense of belonging and community.



Situating the Need for Wraparound Programs to Support Community Wellbeing & Safety

Urban Indigenous peoples often rely on the wraparound programs and services found in Friendship Centres. The work and programming of Friendship Centres is supported by articles and recommendations found in the MMIWG National Inquiry, the TRC's Final Report, and UNDRIP.

The MMIWG National Inquiry is filled with recommendations that overlap with Friendship Centres mandate for providing services to urban Indigenous peoples in Canada. In particular, CFJ 1.8 recommends the creation of “specific and long-term funding...available to Indigenous organizations...related to violence prevention and combating lateral violence.” CFJ 1.8 also calls for less emphasis on short-term “program funding” as a way to meaningfully create wraparound support to end violence against Indigenous peoples. Furthermore, CFJ 3.2 focuses on the need for community-based “health and wellness services that are accessible and culturally appropriate” and also “meet the needs of ... women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people.”

The TRC Final Report touches on the work of Friendship Centres' wraparound programming in multiple Calls to Action (CTA). CTA 37 and 40 both address the need for more funding dedicated to programming in halfway houses, parole services, and victim services. CTA 66 advocates for “multi-year funding for community-based youth organizations,” CTA 12 argues for “culturally appropriate early childhood education programs” for Indigenous families. There are many more CTAs that indirectly support and affirm ongoing programming and services. If government interests seek to answer these CTAs around inclusive, well-funded programming, they have to uplift the many ongoing initiatives in Friendship Centres across the country who execute this work as part of their mandates and missions.

UNDRIP expands on language focused on needs and responsibilities, and explicitly outlines Indigenous peoples' enshrined *right* to safety and protection from violence. Article 22.2 states “States shall take measures ... to ensure Indigenous women and children enjoy the full protection and guarantees against all forms of violence and discrimination.” With the current legislative tabling of Bill C-15, and the future implementation of UNDRIP, there must be acknowledgement that it is the current work and objectives of Friendship Centres to uphold the “security of person” principle found in Article 22.2. To support UNDRIP, Friendship Centres' work must be elevated and amplified across the country.



2 — Integrating Culture, Tradition, Ceremony Within Services

Friendship Centres enable healthy, thriving urban Indigenous communities by privileging the role that diverse First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures, traditions, and ceremonies play in nurturing safety, building connections, healing spirits, and looking ahead to generations to come.

Throughout the co-design process, participants discussed the necessity of embedding culture, tradition, and ceremony in service design and delivery. Friendship Centres are Indigenous-led and community-driven at all levels of leadership and implementation. Friendship Centre leadership and staff have firsthand experience dealing with colonial violence that has divorced Indigenous peoples from their families, land, and dynamic ways of knowing and being. To remedy these histories, and the systemic barriers that continue to keep urban Indigenous peoples separate from their cultures and traditions, Friendship Centres deliver culturally-informed programs and services.

Unpacking and reaffirming the roles of culture, tradition, and ceremony are critical to magnifying Friendship Centres' impact because they:

- + Establish safe spaces for people to be openly and proudly Indigenous, free from judgement, and outside of the settler colonial gaze.
- + Respect and support for 2SLGBTQQIA people and their return to respected roles and place within Indigenous cultures and communities.
- + Revitalize the power and use of Indigenous languages as tools for establishing healthy interpersonal connections, belonging, and purpose.
- + Provide access points for learning, reclamation, and application of Indigenous values, education, and traditional ways of healing.
- + Build healthier relationships across communities, enabling strangers to become friends to become community, and moving from a lack of personal agency to shared community ownership and self-determination.
- + Mobilize collective action through intergenerational bonds and multi-generational thinking.
- + Provide a roadmap for the future, wherein culture, tradition, and ceremony do not just provide a means to connect to the past, but a means to look towards and forge brighter futures.

During one co-design session, a participant highlighted “Honouring the Bonds” an Elder-led parenting program held at a local Friendship Centre that teaches traditional parenting practices to families of all kinds. This program leverages culture, tradition, and intergenerational learning to nurture early childhood and full family development, positive mental health, and healthy conflict resolution practices.



Situating the Need to Practice Culture, Tradition, and Ceremony for Wellbeing and Safety

Practicing culture, tradition, and ceremony is an act of self-determination, and is enshrined within Indigenous rights that are recognized in domestic and international law. Both UNDRIP and the MMIWG National Inquiry support the need for culture and ceremony within Indigenous communities, and call for greater acknowledgement of this work—and in doing so, the greater acknowledgement of the Friendship Centre Movement across Canada leading this work in urban Indigenous



contexts.

There are two articles within UNDRIP with precise mention of the role of culture, tradition, custom, and ceremony. Article 11 states, “Indigenous peoples have the right to practice and revitalize their cultural traditions ... [and] this includes the right to maintain, protect, and develop the past, present, and future manifestations of their culture.” Friendship Centres are dynamic centres of support and programming, and government agencies need to look to these on-the-ground institutions to see how Indigenous culture can be both protected and stewarded into the future. Additionally, Article 12 says “Indigenous peoples have the right to manifest, practice, develop and teach their spiritual and religious traditions, customs, and ceremonies.” Friendship Centres are often the only place in many urban and rural settings where Indigenous peoples can access and practice their cultures and customs openly and honestly without the magnified risk of settler violence. Ultimately, supporting Friendship Centre programming around culture is in turn, affirming and upholding the articles in UNDRIP.

The MMIWG National Inquiry also addresses the need for cultural knowledge for Indigenous peoples. CFJ 2.5 calls on all levels of governments to “create a permanent fund devoted to supporting Indigenous-led initiatives for Indigenous [peoples] to access cultural knowledge and strength-based ways to support cultural rights and to uphold self-determined services.” Friendship Centres have already recognized how culture and tradition are pathways to healing, wellness, and positive social development. Their work aligns with the CFJ 2.5, and the government must financially support this programming and services to honour the CFJs.

3 — Mobilizing Advocacy & Collaboration Through A National Network

Friendship Centres enable healthy, thriving urban Indigenous communities by building and leveraging a national network of service providers with a shared purpose and a commitment to learning, action, and advocacy.

Throughout the co-design process, participants discussed both the strengths and opportunities that Friendship Centres' national network brings, with a specific focus on a strong shared capacity to advocate for community members.

While funding guidelines create territorial boundaries around communities, Indigenous advocates and organizers are not limited to operating within pre-established borders. Widespread communication and national convening can highlight the similarities between the lived experiences of various communities regardless of geography.

Thus, the capacity to collaborate and advocate locally, regionally, and nationally is critical because it:

- + Facilitates learning and collaboration in opposition to bureaucratic silos of silence.
- + Enables national knowledge and resource sharing; program templates, needs assessments, success stories, and collective pain points can be established, shared, and contextualized to support any and all Friendship Centres.
- + Helps community members navigate inaccessible systems with Friendship Centre staff by their side; Friendship Centre staff have their own lived experience as guidance alongside supplementary training to navigate complex systems, be it childcare, housing, or justice systems, and will know who to call and where to triage support.
- + Provides space for diversity and distinctions within the fold of a unified movement.
- + Connects local advocacy, the type that begins right when someone walks through the door and speaks with administration, to regional and national advocacy through PTAs and bodies like the NAFC.

During a co-design session, a participant discussed a peacebuilding program focused on supporting men's relationship to anti-violence, that recently engaged a female Elder as a co-facilitator. The Elder changed the dynamic in the room, so that the program, and its teachings, became more about families and not just about violence. Other co-design participants were immediately interested in this program and began asking questions to learn more about its execution and impact, to adapt for their own communities.



Situating the Need for Advocacy and National Collaboration for Wellbeing and Safety

The right to self-determination is connected to the practice of self-governance and recognition of collective interests to allow individuals and communities to chart their own course. Many of the reports cited in this action plan call for the funding of individual national plans—around victim services, child welfare, education, healthcare, and so on. However, there is rarely focus on a fundamental call for broader unity and mobilizing national alignment. TRC CTA 43 asks for the implementation of UNDRIP that recognizes articles in defense of Indigenous peoples' rights.

Mobilizing Friendship Centres nationally, sharing best practices, and creating broader support systems are all elements that advance and uphold the principles of self-determination. Success requires cooperation and collaboration across many Friendship Centres. Teamwork, mutual learning, and strategizing all uphold Article 23 of UNDRIP, which states that “Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development,” and more fundamentally, reifies the freedom to “pursue their economic, social and cultural developments” that Article 3 puts forward. Friendship Centres must be able to exercise their own ideas of self-determination, and governments must directly acknowledge how Friendship Centres are positioned to help guide their communities along this path.



Next Steps of Action



Thus far, we have outlined Friendship Centres' collective strengths and leadership in providing programs and services that support urban Indigenous wellbeing and safety. The holistic, life-affirming work that Friendship Centres deliver is critical in preventing, intervening in, and healing from violence. While Friendship Centres provide meaningful support and continue to do the work without being asked, the stark reality is that a lack of systemic support, be it through funding or the institutional inability to upend systemic violence, is neither sustainable nor just.

Co-design participants shared the following necessary next steps that if acted upon, will enable Friendship Centres to do impactful work with dignity, and ultimately, support urban Indigenous peoples to be healthy, thriving, and safe.

Resources, Recognition, and Systemic Action

Programs that are holistic in scope and have a positive, generational impact on communities require holistic, sustainable, and nimble forms of funding that evolve alongside the people they're intended to serve. Currently, funding systems restrict, rather than wholly enable, Friendship Centres' abilities to serve urban Indigenous peoples across demographics and needs. Funding is fragmented across age brackets and must be applied for each year, through highly bureaucratic, restrictive, and exclusive application processes, in accordance with the fiscal calendar. Ultimately, the funding intended to support programs that address violence is administered through processes and systems that are violent themselves, and this needs to change.

Moving forward, funders must shift from mandating age-based funding to support the lifecycle of a person and community. People should never "age out" of wellbeing and safety-enabling support, they should only be further welcomed, included, and supported irrespective of demographic markers. Simultaneously, funders must move away from funding cycles that align with the fiscal calendar. The value that wraparound programs create cannot be fully realized in a mere 12-month cycle. Friendship Centres need consistent, year-over-year funding to support people's continued growth and wellbeing. Discontinuing program funding is unproductive, harmful, and counters the long-term work needed to challenge the manifestation of violence. Additionally, funders need to move away from bureaucratic, time-intensive application processes that inhibit urban Indigenous organizations' ability to secure funding, and add more work to capacity-strapped Friendship Centre staff.

On average, non-Indigenous organizations doing similar, life-affirming work receive more funding, and this leads to further questions around the types of additional, inequitable barriers that Indigenous organizations must navigate when it comes to funding access. And these barriers are amplified for urban Indigenous organizations that are made less visible given their lack of recognition as a distinct group by non-Indigenous systems. Governments, policy-makers, and funders must create adequate space for all organizations that support Indigenous people and rectify divisions created by inconsistent resourcing across distinctions. The stakeholders, and other non-Indigenous entities, must simultaneously recognize that urban First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples are not a monolith, and there can be no one-size-fits-all approach to investing in and supporting these communities.

With an increase in funding will come an increase in Friendship Centre capacity to strengthen the frontline work already being delivered and address growing needs. These needs include gaining access to further funding that will support Friendship Centre's capacity to engage in cross-centre "communities of practice" and share knowledge and best practices from coast-to-coast-to-coast. More so, funders should also support Friendship Centre's capacity to collect disaggregated, national data on wellness and safety programming impact to better inform decision-making and advocate for community members.

Last but certainly not least, funders should acknowledge that Friendship Centres are under-capacity and overworked by investing in more people and resources, and ensuring that staff are adequately paid. The health of Friendship Centre staff is intrinsically tied to the health of entire urban Indigenous communities, and should no longer be ignored.

Alongside allocating greater resources to Friendship Centres and greater recognition for urban Indigenous peoples, Government, policy-makers, and funders must recognize that the root cause to various forms of violence are systemic in nature—including but not limited to continued colonialism, poverty, racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism. It is not adequate to address violence without calling out the systems of oppression that enable it.

If we truly wish to combat violence, the government, policy-makers, and funders must be unrelenting in their commitment to uproot systems of oppression, which these stakeholders have a leading hand in designing and administering. Similarly, governments, policy-makers, and funders must establish, in consultation with Friendship Centres and urban Indigenous peoples, firm mechanisms that will hold them accountable to making systemic change.

Ultimately, Friendship Centres need the collaboration, meaningful support, and accountability of government, policy-makers, and funders to ensure that urban Indigenous peoples' rights to living a violence-free, healthy, and thriving life are respected. Friendship Centres cannot fill wide gaps left by governments, policies, and funding systems. Friendship Centres cannot be expected to navigate complex, harmful systems without a commitment from these stakeholders, who play a direct role in enacting violence, to take action to effectively end and rectify systemic violence.

Friendship Centres cannot do this alone, and they should not have to.

Conclusion

Urban Indigenous peoples deserve to be healthy, safe, and thriving. Friendship Centres are integral, Indigenous-led pillars of support that do just that, and more, for their communities and non-Indigenous people alike.

At the start of 2021, the NAFC convened members of Friendship Centres to co-create an action plan to:

- + highlight and amplify the critical work that Friendship Centres are already doing to address violence,
- + identify opportunities for governments, policy-makers, and funders to effectively augment their support, and
- + establish tangible next steps to resource Friendship Centres' ability to foster healthy, safe communities in a just and sustainable way.

As part of this work, NAFC engaged Coeuraj to facilitate a three-part collaborative design process wherein 50 diverse participants from Friendship Centres across the country shared their experiences, ideas, and recommended next steps to advance anti-violence and safety-enabling work in the spirit of reconciliation, sustainability, and justice. *Honouring Our Ways* is a culmination of their valued and valid inputs.

Participants explored how Friendship Centres enable healthy and safe communities and highlighted the strength of the Friendship Centre Movement in: (1) delivering wraparound programs and services; (2) integrating culture, ceremonies and tradition within services; and (3) mobilizing advocacy and collaboration through their national network.

From these themes, participants shared critical actions that will advance the work of Friendship Centres, including the need to:

- + Continue to leverage Friendship Centres unique and experienced position as important vehicles for culture programming, training, awareness, and education that support urban Indigenous health and safety.
- + Advocate for increased funding that moves past the fiscal calendar or program/age-specific pots of funds, allowing service providers to strengthen, innovate, and address the long-term needs of their communities.
- + Create more space for shared dialogue, national collaboration, and opportunity for Friendship Centres to mobilize in services of urban Indigenous peoples.
- + Move beyond the simple binary of violence and anti-violence to one of wellbeing and safety, anchored by wraparound programming that serves all urban Indigenous peoples in a culturally-aware, strengths-based, and holistic way.
- + Recognize urban Indigenous peoples as a distinct group with vast knowledge, unique lived experiences and evolving needs.

Friendship Centres are key enablers to inclusion, safety, and wellbeing, because ultimately, they are grassroots and embedded in the very communities they serve—they understand the heavy impacts of violence, because the people who lead them have firsthand experience navigating oppressive, inequitable systems.

Across the many voices and people who joined us throughout this process, one thing was clear: across our differences, there are strong threads of unity that connect Friendship Centres and urban Indigenous peoples to a commitment to our shared wellbeing and success. Now is the time for the governments, policy-makers, and funders to also be accountable to this mission and tangibly support Friendships Centres, not through buried words and soft promises, but through real action and systemic change.

To end, we want to sincerely thank each and every co-design participant for sharing their time, their stories, and their labour with the goal of building a better, safer future together and in support of the thousands of urban Indigenous peoples who deserve it—and demand it.



Photo used with permission from Labrador Friendship Centre and Becken Photography.

About the NAFC and Coeuraj



**National Association
of Friendship Centres**
**Association nationale
des centres d'amitié**

NAFC

The National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC) was established in 1972 to represent, nationally, the growing number of Friendship Centres emerging across Canada. The NAFC is a network of over 100 Friendship Centres and Provincial/Territorial Associations (PTAs) from coast-to-coast-to-coast.



Coeuraj

Coeuraj is a transformation practice. We help people address change by finding solutions they hold within themselves.

The best outcomes emerge from taking in the widest range of viewpoints. We get there using tools that leverage the richness and complexity of human interaction, including collaborative design, data science, and strategic foresight.



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Appendix 1 - Key Findings

Resources for Capacity Building and Program, Design, Delivery, Data Collection, and Evaluation:

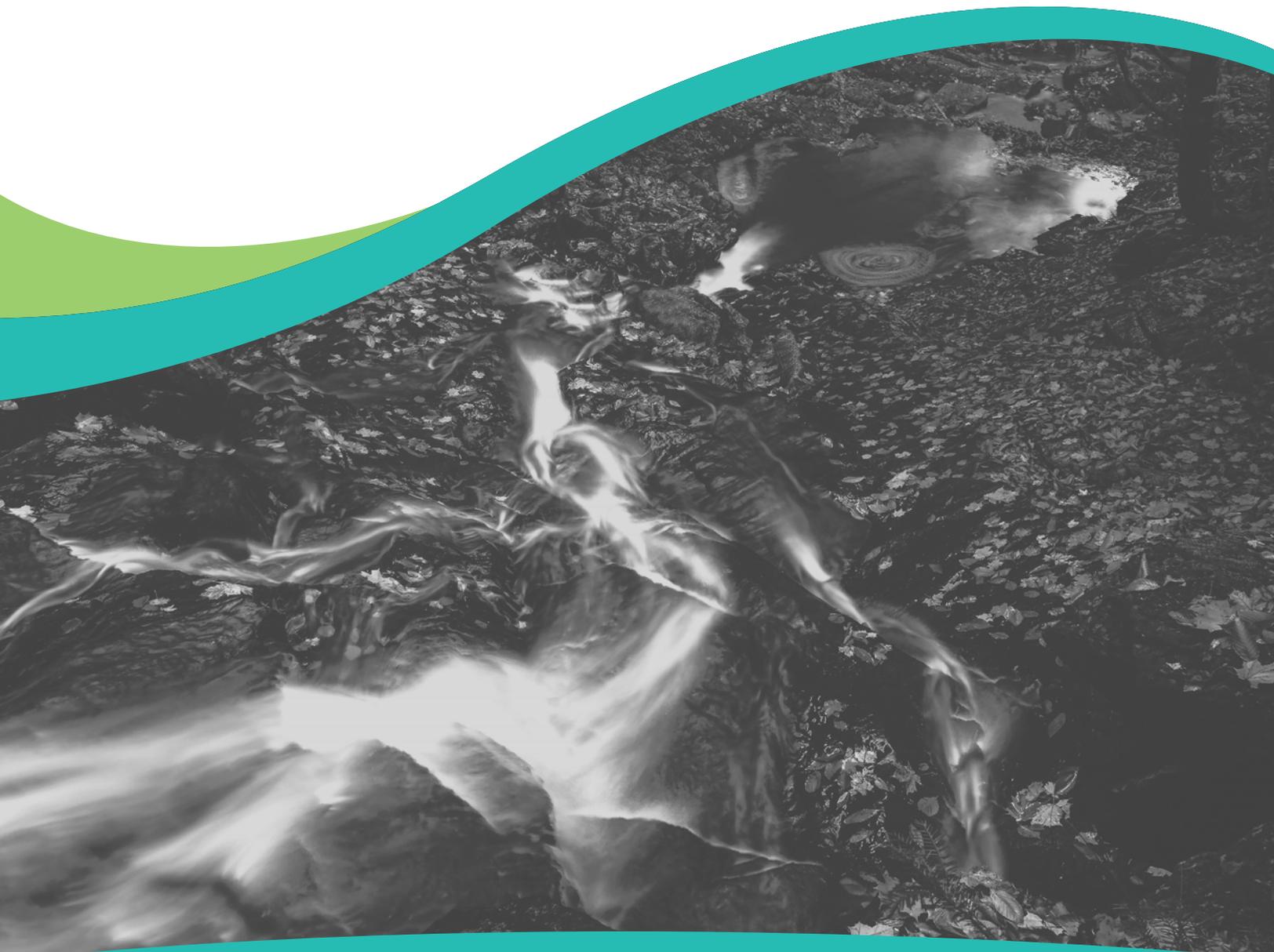
- + Funders must move away from mandating age-based funding to support the lifecycle of a person and community; people should never “age out” of wellbeing and safety-enabling support, they should only be further welcomed, included, and supported irrespective of demographic markers.
- + Funders must move away from funding cycles that align with the fiscal calendar; Friendship Centres need consistent, year-over-year funding to support people’s continued growth and wellbeing, and discontinuing program funding is unproductive, harmful, and counters the long-term work needed to challenge the manifestation of violence.
- + Funders need to move away from bureaucratic, time-intensive application and administrative processes that inhibit urban Indigenous organizations’ ability to secure funding; on average, non-Indigenous organizations doing similar, life-affirming work gain 30 percent more funding, and the inequitable barriers to accessing these funds for urban Indigenous organizations must be dissolved.
- + Funders should acknowledge that Friendship Centres are under-capacity and overworked by investing in more people, resources, and ensuring that staff are adequately paid.
- + Funders should diversify conditions to make room for distinctions- and status-inclusive programs.
- + Funders must support Friendship Centre’s capacity to deliver culturally-grounded, trauma-informed, and holistic services, by investing in staff training at all levels to do this work well.
- + Funders must support Friendship Centre’s capacity to engage in cross-centre “communities of practice” to strengthen national collaboration, and share knowledge and best practices from coast-to-coast.
- + Funders must support Friendship Centre’s capacity to collect disaggregated, national data on wellness and safety programming impact to better inform decision-making and advocate for community members.

Recognition of Diversity within Urban Indigenous Contexts and the Portability of Rights Beyond Reserve, Community, and Local Spaces:

- + Government, policy-makers, and funders must create adequate space for all organizations that support Indigenous people and rectify divisions created by inconsistent resourcing across distinctions.
- + Funders, and other non-Indigenous institutions, must simultaneously recognize that urban First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples are not a monolith, and there can be no one-size-fits-all approach to investing in and supporting these communities.

Undertaking Immediate Systemic Action:

- + Government, policy-makers, and funders must recognize that the root cause to various manifestations of violence are systemic in nature—including but not limited to continued colonialism, poverty, racism, sexism, ableism—and if we truly wish to combat violence, these stakeholders must be unrelenting in their commitment to uproot these systems of oppression.
- + Government, policy-makers, and funders must establish, in consultation with Friendship Centres and urban Indigenous peoples, firm mechanisms that will hold them accountable to making systemic change.
- + Friendship Centres need the collaboration and accountability of government, policy-makers, and funders to ensure that urban Indigenous peoples rights to living a violence-free, healthy, and thriving life are respected.



Appendix 2 - Collaborative Design Questions and Visual Framework

Central Questions: Steering Committee Meeting

- + In considering a national Anti-Violence Action Plan, drawing on your professional experience, what does Anti-Violence programming mean at your Friendship Centre?
- + What needs to be in an Anti-Violence Action Plan that addresses the needs of urban Indigenous peoples?

Central Questions: Capstone Session

- + What's is Violence | What is 'Anti-Violence'
- + Why Do Friendship Centres Do Anti-Violence Work Well?
- + Discussing touch-points of care
 - + How Do Friendship Centres Facilitate Safety?
 - + How Do Friendship Centres Disrupt Violence?
 - + How Do Friendship Centres Support Survivors, Families, and Perpetrators?
 - + How Do Friendship Centres Advocate for Thriving Communities?
- + Moving Forward: What We Need to Do This Work?

Building a Violence-Free Future for MMIWG2S+ People

Violence Against MMIWG2S+ People

In Canada, Indigenous women and girls are

12x

more likely to be murdered or missing than any other women and

16x

more likely than Caucasian women

“Other than murder, statistics also reveal how Indigenous women consistently experience higher rates and more severe forms of physical assault and robbery than other groups of women...”

Violence in urban Indigenous communities shows up in many forms, from domestic violence, to state violence, to racism, misogyny, and homophobia.

The Final Report of the MMIWG National Inquiry establishes **four pathways that must be challenged** to ensure a violence-free future for MMIWG2S+ and all Indigenous peoples:

- 1 Historical, multi-generational, and inter-generational **trauma**;
- 2 Social and economic **marginalization**;
- 3 Maintaining the **status quo** and institutional lack of will;
- 4 Ignoring the **agency and expertise** of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people.

The Friendship Centre Movement

Friendship centers deliver over **1300** programs and serve over **1 million** people per year.

The NAFC represents over **100 Friendship Centres** and Provincial/Territorial Associations (PTAs) from coast-to-coast-to-coast, and supports them in realizing their missions and visions within their communities, and provide culturally appropriate services for Indigenous peoples living in urban centres.



How Friendship Centres Break the Chain of Violence

Offers **no-barrier and status-inclusive** programming addressing employment, housing, education, safety and healthcare

Designs and delivers programs and services to promote the **safety and security** of those in the sex industry

Facilitates community-based programming to improve **social and economic security**

Provides **housing supports**, including transition homes, shelters, safe spaces

Partners and/or collaborates with police services, child welfare services, legal services, and other services that come into direct contact with vulnerable urban Indigenous peoples

Mobilizes its national network of Friendship Centres for advocacy and collaborative program development

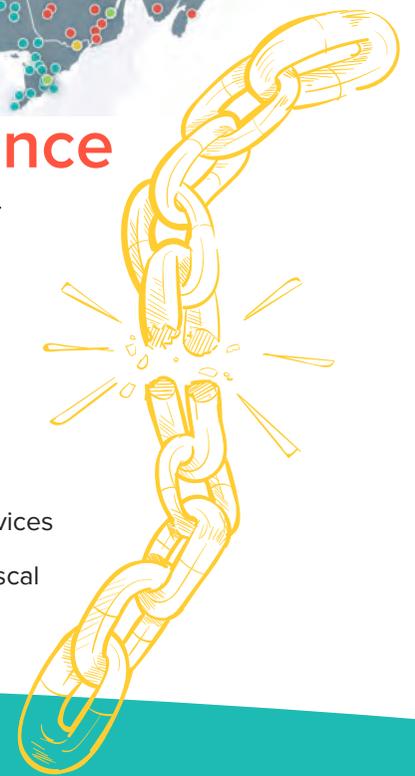
Delivers **social, economic, and cultural programming**, (distinctions and/or nation-specific)

Provides services and programs related to **democratic participation** and inclusion

Delivers programs and campaigns to **prevent violence**

Provides **culturally appropriate** health and wellness services

Advocates for increased funding that moves past the fiscal calendar or program/ age-specific pots of funds



Moving Past Violence: Our Desired Future

Urban Indigenous peoples are **healthy, safe, and thriving** and are given **equitable access** to housing, education, healthcare, and **positive life outcomes** overall

Systems of oppression and colonial violence are uprooted, including, but not limited to, racism, sexism, transphobia, homophobia, classism, and ableism

Urban Indigenous communities are able to **access and practice** their diverse cultures and traditions

Women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people are able to **“reclaim their power and place”**

Urban Indigenous communities are given the **space, tools, and systemic support to heal** from historical, multigenerational, and intergenerational trauma

Currently, the Friendship Centre Movement leads in supporting communities through preventing, intervening in, and healing from acts of violence, and does so while **lacking full systemic support and proper funding** resources to sustain its critical work. A violence-free future for urban Indigenous peoples requires a well-funded, robust, and sustainable Friendship Centre Movement.

Created for the National Association of Friendship Centres, Nov. 2021



National Association of Friendship Centres
Association nationale des centres d'amitié

The Friendship Centre Movement's Network

Nationally

- + Engaging in national policy-making;
- + Procuring resources and funds;
- + Sharing success stories;
- + Amplifying community voices;
- + Forming connections;
- + Developing resources; and
- + Building partnerships

Regionally

- + Engaging in regional policy-making;
- + Procuring resources and funds;
- + Sharing success stories;
- + Amplifying community voices;
- + Forming connections;
- + Developing resources;
- + Building partnerships;
- + Liaising across national and local issues

Locally

- + Providing frontline supports;
- + Allocating resources to communities;
- + Sharing success stories;
- + Identifying challenges for action; and
- + Communicating with regional and national networks





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