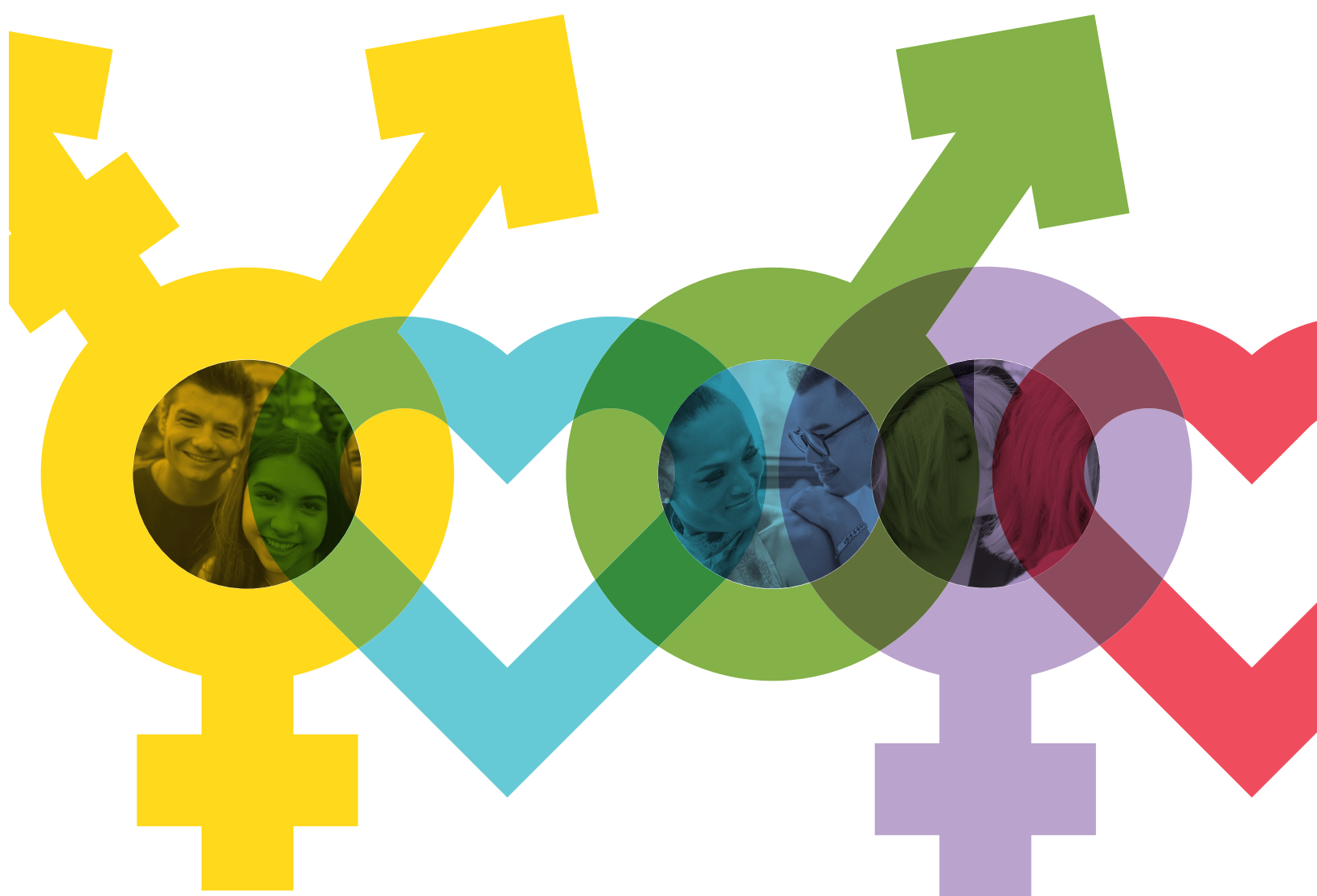


Building the Field on Indigenous Youth Healthy Relationships

INITIAL MEETING REPORT



Written by Gabrielle Fayant and Madeleine Kelly





CONTENTS

Background	1
Context	1
How we got here	5
Teen Healthy Relationships programming at the Canadian Women's Foundation	5
Teen Healthy Relationships programming through the National Learning Strategy (2013)	5
Building the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships (2015–2018)	6
First Nations, Métis and Inuit national hub formation (2020)	9
Summary and themes of first meeting	10
Summary	10
Recap of agenda	11
Themes	12
Contributing to healthy relationships	12
Representation and accessibility	12
Indigenous identities and cultures	12
Youth engagement	13
Capacity development	13
Colonial effects	13
The needs and asks of each sector	14
Grassroots Indigenous youth groups/collectives	14
Indigenous non-profit organizations and programs (national, provincial and local)	15
Non-Indigenous stakeholders	16
Fundors	17
Challenges and struggles	18
Next steps and recommendations	20
Recommendations to move the work forward	20
Values and principles of the field	21
Resources and best practices	21
Indigenous youth-led organizations	22
Reports and resources	23
References	25





BACKGROUND

CONTEXT

Gender-based violence affects Indigenous youth in a multitude of ways including interpersonal violence, such as sexual, domestic and/or intimate partner violence, as well as institutional and systemic violence, such as colonization and racism expressed through existing policies that disproportionately impact Indigenous peoples. To address gender-based violence in the context of the experiences and realities of Indigenous youth, we must acknowledge hard truths about Canada's violent past and continued systemic racism towards Indigenous peoples.

"We believe that in order to redress the legacy of residential schools and to move towards more respectful and healthy relationships, the Government of Canada, in meaningful consultation with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities, must recognize and address the broader context of the child-welfare crisis. This includes matters of child poverty, housing, water, sanitation, food security, family violence, addictions, and educational inequities."

— Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada¹

For Indigenous peoples, relationships are the lifelines of communities and Nations. For many Indigenous people, the relationship to the land and waters is a priority and is critical to the well-being of self, community and Nation. When that relationship is broken due to environmental impacts or destruction, and Indigenous communities are removed or relocated away from their homelands, all relationships may be negatively impacted.

We cannot diminish the intergenerational effects that the forced removal of Indigenous children from their families throughout the residential school era, the Sixties Scoop era and today's millennial scoop have on how Indigenous youth see and value relationships. The relationship Indigenous peoples have with Canada is often one of distrust, fear and hesitation. Many grandparents and parents of youth today experienced sexual, physical and emotional violence at the hands of Canadian-run boarding schools resulting in traumas that have yet to be truly healed. Systemic racism continues today and breaks relationships with Indigenous youth and their families through discrimination such as not providing basic human rights to which most Canadians have full access. This discrimination therefore creates an uneven playing field when addressing healthy relationships and gender-based violence.

1

Canadian Women's Foundation

¹ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015), p. 143



“Payment disputes within and between federal and provincial governments over services for First Nations children are not uncommon. First Nations children are frequently left waiting for services they desperately need or are denied services that are available to other children. This includes services in education, health, childcare, recreation, and culture and language.”

— Jordan’s Principle²

Gender-based discrimination has impacted Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, trans and gender non-conforming people at such an alarming rate that Indigenous families were forced to rally the Federal Government to hold a national inquiry for the missing and murdered. An RCMP National Overview reported in 2014 that over 1200 Indigenous women had gone missing or been murdered between 1980 to 2012, while many grassroots advocates cautioned this number was much higher at over 4000.

“The truths shared in these National Inquiry hearings tell the story – or, more accurately, thousands of stories – of acts of genocide against First Nations, Inuit, and Métis women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people. This violence amounts to a race-based genocide of Indigenous Peoples, including First Nations, Inuit, and Métis, which especially targets women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people. This genocide has been empowered by colonial structures, evidenced notably by the Indian Act, the Sixties Scoop, residential schools, and breaches of human and Inuit, Métis, and First Nations rights, leading directly to the current increased rates of violence, death, and suicide in Indigenous populations.”

— Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls³

To begin to imagine what a healthy relationship can be or feel like, the basic needs and safety of Indigenous youth must be met. Many non-Indigenous Canadians have the privilege to imagine what a healthy relationship looks like to them, without having to worry about the violation of their basic human rights.

This report is situated within the context of many other initiatives working to address this violence and support building healthier relationships; however, there remain many challenges. Through the work of Indigenous Youth Voices, summarized in the report “A Roadmap to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call to Action #66”⁴ and based on hearing from over 500 Indigenous youth in Canada, Indigenous youth reported their challenges and solutions, and how they felt about reconciliation. The challenges they listed were categorized into the following themes:

² Government of Canada (2020)

³ National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (2019), pp. 1–2

⁴ Indigenous Youth Voices: A Way Forward in Conducting Research With and by Indigenous Youth (2018)



1. Addictions (drugs and alcohol)
2. Lateral violence and intergenerational trauma
3. Mental health and suicide
4. Lack of housing
5. Lack of employment and opportunities
6. Environmental concerns
7. Education concerns
8. Poverty and food security
9. Colonialism and racism
10. Violence and sexual abuse
11. Loss of culture, identity and land

While this list of challenges may seem overwhelming and unbearable, Indigenous youth also offered solutions. The need for healthy relationships in the lives of Indigenous youth is intertwined with all the challenges listed. **Healthy relationships must reflect the relationships Indigenous youth have with themselves, their families, their communities and their Nations, as well as the relationship they have with Canada.** There is a strong need for Canadians to work with and in support of solutions already created by Indigenous youth.

“Overwhelmingly, Indigenous youth primarily see learning opportunities and youth programming as key to address the challenges faced by their communities. Many suggested workshops and presentations on topics ranging from Indigenous language training, skill building, culture, and workplace violence, to mental health support, parenting, and supporting the transition from reserve to urban cities. Youth noted that having these programs, especially ones offered after school hours, will keep youth busy and hopefully support youth to heal and motivate them to connect more deeply to their culture and identity.”

— A Roadmap to the Truth and Reconciliation
Commission Call to Action #66⁵

5 Indigenous Youth Voices: A Roadmap to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call to Action #66 (2018), p. 35



In this 2018 *Roadmap*, Indigenous youth also laid out five requirements for Reconciliation to be meaningful and impactful for Indigenous youth:

1. Acknowledging the past
2. Healing
3. Improving relations
4. Treaty and land rights
5. Equity

Similar requirements can be found in the 2019 report from the first-ever Youth in Care Canada Gathering of First Nations Youth Advisors.⁶ At this gathering, youth said that for Indigenous youth in care to feel safe and to thrive in their lives, the following three requirements must be met:

1. Justice and accountability
2. Equity
3. Cultural revitalization and restitution

“The legacy from the schools and the political and legal policies and mechanisms surrounding their history continue to this day. ... It is reflected in the intense racism some people harbour against Aboriginal people and in the systemic and other forms of discrimination Aboriginal people regularly experience in this country.”

— Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada⁷

To end gender-based violence and foster healthy teen relationships in the context of Indigenous youth, large systemic barriers must shift and change. **Indigenous youth need to be able to define what a healthy relationship means to them and have the space and opportunity to vocalize what challenges they have to healthy relationships in their lives.** Due to such dramatic differences in the experiences of Indigenous youth and non-Indigenous youth, it can be very challenging to create a strategy for non-Indigenous youth and hope that it relates to Indigenous youth as well.

⁶ Youth in Care Canada (2019)

⁷ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015), p. 183

HOW WE GOT HERE

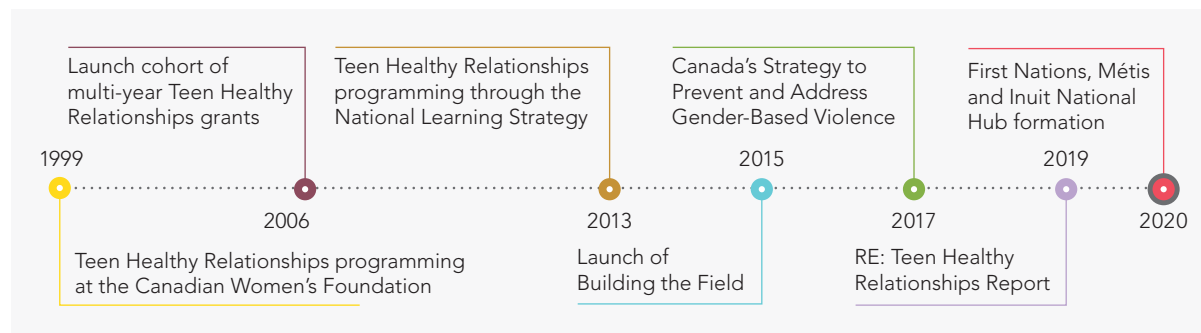


Figure 1. Timeline of CWF work on gender-based violence

Teen Healthy Relationships programming at the Canadian Women's Foundation

Since 1999 the Canadian Women's Foundation has been funding and working with violence-prevention organizations toward the goal of every teen knowing how to recognize and prevent relationship violence. Research shows that the teen years are a critical time to teach healthy relationship skills to prevent relationship violence long term. As such, teen healthy relationship programming is a proven means to reduce and prevent gender-based violence amongst youth.

Over 20 years of funding and working in the field of violence-prevention programming with youth, there has often been expressed a need for more coordinated efforts to bring about systemic, sustainable change. Ending gender-based violence requires a critical mass of organizations and individuals aligned in purpose and working effectively.

Teen Healthy Relationships programming through the National Learning Strategy (2013)

The National Learning Strategy (2011–2013)⁸ was an 18-month project funded by Status of Women Canada (now the Department of Women and Gender Equality) whose objective was to advance and support the field of teen healthy relationships programming. From the work on this project the following set of strategies and challenges were identified to prioritize moving forward:

1. Youth perspective and youth engagement
2. Network, partnership and collaboration

8 Canadian Women's Foundation (2013)



3. Intersectionality, gender and diversity
4. Knowledge transfer through social media and e-learning
5. Systemic context
6. Internal organizational change

Building the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships (2015–2018)

Guided by the 2013 National Learning Strategy, in 2015, with funding from Status of Women Canada, the Canadian Women's Foundation launched a three-year project called Building the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships. This project brought together stakeholders across the field to define priorities of the field, define challenges and solutions, and to enhance work already being done. The Building the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships final report was released in January of 2019.

"In our final report on [the Teen Healthy Relationships Programming 2013 Learning Strategy] we concluded: 'The field [of teen healthy relationships] practice is hungry for more coordinated responses, long-term strategies, and policy/advocacy frameworks to help coordinate and strengthen the reach and impact of their collective work.' We recognize our own limitations as a funding organization, and even though we support several well designed, creative, and effective programs in the Teen Healthy Relationships sector, we realize that systemic change requires a greater coordination of efforts."

— Building the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships
2015–2018 Report to Field⁹

From this project, eight priorities were identified for strengthening and enhancing the field of teen healthy relationships including:

1. Supporting the work of teen healthy relationships program providers
2. Involving parents, caregivers and other support systems
3. Building a national leadership and network
4. First Nations, Métis and Inuit programming
5. Community program settings
6. Access and engagement for youth not in school
7. Online and digital programming
8. Youth voices and gender-diverse youth

⁹ Canadian Women's Foundation (2019), p. 3

Four working groups were established to move forward the identified action areas and offer recommendations to the field:

1. First Nations, Métis and Inuit programming
2. Equipping and engaging adults
3. Community program settings and hard-to-reach youth
4. National leadership



Figure 2. Working groups from Building the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships

The First Nations, Métis and Inuit programming working group was formed in 2017. The working group included the National Association of Friendship Centres, Wii Chiiwaakanak Learning Centre/University of Winnipeg, Partners for Youth, Cowichan Women Against Violence Society and Canadian Women's Foundation.



The key objectives of the working group included:

- strengthen teen healthy relationships programming within First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities, on and off reserves, as well as in rural and urban areas;
- inform and integrate First Nations, Métis and Inuit histories and perspectives into all teen healthy relationships programming; and
- mentor First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth.

For more information about the activities of the First Nations, Métis and Inuit working group please see *Building the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships 2015–2018 Report to Field*.

The working group created the following recommendations to the field:¹⁰

1. Integrate Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action within the field of teen healthy relationships, especially Actions 10, 38 and 66.

Highlighting the importance of acknowledging how residential schools, the Sixties Scoop and ongoing separation of Indigenous youth from their families and culture, as well as ongoing effects of colonization on individual and systemic levels, affect relationships and lives, the working group recommended that all stakeholders adopt Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action related to their work, and identified Calls to Action relevant to the field overall.

Important to note: The report on the inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) had not yet been released at the end of this project; however, the working group believed that the Calls to Justice in the report would also have relevant actions for the field.

2. Involve, engage and mentor First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth within the field.

The working group recommended that youth should be working alongside all stakeholders in the field for mutual learning and shared leadership, and that young people should be offered opportunities for professional development. In addition, youth should be compensated fairly for their expertise and time while engaging with networks of professionals. The working group developed a terms of reference for working with youth, including the basic principles and goals of participation that they offer, as one means of engaging and centring young Indigenous people's participation in the field.

3. Create a national network (hub) for sharing knowledge, resources and support.

The working group recommended the development of a knowledge centre for resources for integrating First Nations, Métis and Inuit perspectives

10 Canadian Women's Foundation (2019), pp. 34–35



in teen healthy relationships programming and began the initial gathering of resources to aid in centring the history, context and perspectives of Indigenous young people. These resources include toolkits, programs and other resources; research, recommendations and other resources for integrating Indigenous history and awareness within all teen healthy relationships programs; and a list of key Indigenous organizations, networks and advocacy groups that offer teen healthy relationships programs and support services.

In addition, the working group recommended continuing the work through the creation of a national hub on First Nations, Métis and Inuit teen healthy relationships programming that would work to address broad national issues and seek transformative social change. Suggested activities included developing a national strategy and knowledge centre, awareness-raising with service providers on the importance of healthy relationships work with Indigenous youth, and working toward enhancing child-care standards for Indigenous children and youth – especially strengthening the field’s commitment to Jordan’s Principle.

First Nations, Métis and Inuit national hub formation (2020)

From the recommendations of the First Nations, Métis and Inuit programming working group, the Canadian Women’s Foundation in partnership with the National Association of Friendship Centres launched the First Nations, Métis and Inuit national hub with funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada as part of *It’s Time: Canada’s Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence*.

The first national hub gathering was in January 2020. The following is a reflection and recap from the meeting. First Nations, Métis and Inuit Teen Healthy Relationships National Hub includes a breakdown of the meeting itself, themes from the meeting, a breakdown of the different sectors that attended, best practices and recommendations on moving forward.



SUMMARY AND THEMES OF FIRST MEETING

SUMMARY

Nearly 30 Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations participated in the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Teen Healthy Relationships National Hub Meeting in Ottawa, Ontario, January 30–31, 2020. Many of the participants represented non-profit organizations, service providers, researchers, non-Indigenous stakeholders, grassroots Indigenous youth groups and government. This diversity of participants is especially important as the barriers and solutions to achieving healthy relationships for teens is cross-sectoral. Participating organizations included:

- National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC)
- Sacred Wolf Friendship Centre
- First Light St. John's Native Friendship Centre
- People of the Dawn Indigenous Friendship Centre
- Slave Lake Native Friendship Centre
- Aboriginal Friendship Centres of Saskatchewan (AFCS)
- Assembly of Seven Generations (A7G)
- Ontario Indigenous Youth Partnership Program (OIYPP)
- Fishing Lake Métis Settlement Administration
- Prairie Research Associates
- Community Education Development Association
- Girl Guides of Canada
- Public Health Agency of Canada
- Canadian Women's Foundation
- Students Commission of Canada
- Boys and Girls Club of Canada
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)

While there was an attempt to be more inclusive and engage Indigenous youth who are the key stakeholders in this issue, the meeting still had a dominant non-youth presence. Of the 29 participants, eight identified as Indigenous youth.



The objectives of the first meeting were the following:

1. Build relationships for further collaboration across sectors and regions.
2. Share learnings and identify areas for further action.
3. Form a national hub framework on healthy relationships skill-development with First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth.
4. Begin to develop national strategy recommendations, including on TRC Calls to Action and MMIWG2S Calls to Justice, and support and mentor Indigenous youth.

RECAP OF AGENDA

During the two-day gathering, participants engaged in the following activities:

- learning about the background and context of the Building the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships project;
- learning about youth-led initiatives such as the National Association of Friendship Centres' Aboriginal Youth Council and the Ontario Indigenous Partnership Program;
- brainstorming furthering work and supporting First Nations, Métis and Inuit people;
- hearing from Elders Eugene Arcand and Irene Lindsay;
- learning about the Aboriginal Friendship Centres of Saskatchewan's Re-Igniting Sacred Fires and Indigenous Women's Economic Framework Projects; and
- listing out the needs/asks and offers from each organization and sector.

The initial agenda was more ambitious than the participants could contribute to. The following are agenda items that the meeting was not able to address:

- **Collaborative action.** What does a national action plan on healthy relationships supporting First Nation, Métis and Inuit young people look like? What can we do to strengthen communities?
- **National hub structure and membership.** What does a national hub look like and who should participate? How are young people involved and directing this work?

Despite not being able to address all of the agenda items, the meeting still covered many in-depth conversations and may have put the spotlight on considerations and gaps in the Building the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships project work to date.



THEMES

During the gathering some key themes emerged from the participant discussions regarding what they indicated were important factors in their work.

Contributing to healthy relationships

Building healthy relationships and networks and making connections were the focal points of the meeting. Interest was expressed in the following subject matter:

- connecting Indigenous and Black-Indigenous youth;
- community building;
- peer-to-peer mentorship; and
- intergenerational relationships.

Representation and accessibility

As part of discussion surrounding Indigenous youth programming, some of the barriers identified included:

- not having sufficient devices and/or internet access to know about programming;
- transportation;
- childcare;
- spaces not designed for Indigenous youth; and
- lack of Indigenous staff.

Considering that 11 participants represented friendship centres from many regions, issues concerning the barriers to accessing the friendship centre movement were topical. Indigenous youth who do not live near friendship centres and therefore are not served by them contributed to the dialogue noting that friendship centres serve urban Indigenous communities, so Indigenous youth living in rural communities cannot access their services and have few other options. The need for increased capacity was expressed by friendship centre representatives. The need for a wider scope of representation at meetings was also expressed by the general group.

Indigenous identities and cultures

Participants discussed the importance of culture and identity in relationship to having healthy relationships in life. Participants also shared how Indigenous youth need Indigenous language and land-based experiences as they are both integral to



overall health and well-being. Some examples of cultural practices that support healthy relationships for Indigenous youth include:

- sweat lodge;
- pow wow;
- Round Dance;
- language;
- beading;
- hide tanning;
- social gatherings; and
- medicine harvesting.

Youth engagement

Many participants indicated interest in engaging Indigenous people with their organizations and programming, while some youth in attendance acknowledged that they have youth already engaged in their work and are open to working with those seeking to engage more youth. Many Indigenous people in attendance contributed data about the status of health and turmoil in rural communities where youth can be found in desperate need of opportunities and basic safety.

Capacity development

A recurring need stated by Indigenous youth participants was awareness and attention for the overlooked Indigenous youth that are not served by existing programming as well as an overall need for multi-year and reliable funding for all Indigenous youth services and/or staffing capacity for Indigenous youth-serving organizations.

Colonial effects

As a matter of course, Indigenous people's family structures have been transformed by the legacy of colonialism in Canada. Today's colonial environment is the source of realities Indigenous youth face regarding their relationships to all individuals and structures in their lives. **It cannot be overstated that colonization is ongoing and it must be examined in its complexities for future generations to thrive.**



THE NEEDS AND ASKS OF EACH SECTOR

Participants at the gathering reflected many diverse perspectives and expertise. The sectors represented at the first meeting can be classified as grassroots Indigenous youth groups/collectives, Indigenous non-profit organizations and programs, non-Indigenous stakeholders and government/funders. Each of these sectors came to the gathering with a diverse set of needs and asks. The following is a breakdown of each sector's needs and asks as well as considerations for moving forward.

Grassroots Indigenous youth groups/collectives

About this sector

This sector is an informal sector and a very important one to include because it represents the Indigenous youth that mobilize and organize in their communities. These are the people who will be using services and programs within the field, and are the experts of their life experiences. **While some organizations may have youth councils or youth representatives, a separate youth voice is also needed to avoid tokenism and bias from any one organization and to represent those not involved in more formal non-profit organizations.** Youth-led groups and collectives that were in attendance for this gathering were Assembly of Seven Generations (A7G) and the Ontario Indigenous Youth Partnership Project (OIYPP); in addition, there were youth in attendance as individuals.

This sector indicated that they need

- support to creatively capture their innovative models of working;
- training opportunities and supports for frontline workers in rural communities to maintain programming and youth-worker continuity over longer periods of time, and to employ local people to run these programs;
- partnerships and resources for starting to work with Métis settlements on any programming;
- support from large organizations to share information about their work;
- funding and resources for running programming, such as food, transportation and space;
- more collaborations and opportunities from all sectors; and
- capacity such as mental health training, administrative training and other supports.



Recommendations offered to address needs

Recommendations for this sector are very different than other sectors because of existing power dynamics. Most of its needs are calling on the support of other sectors. The recommendations of meeting the needs of grassroots Indigenous youth groups/collectives are reflected in the recommendations offered to address the needs of other sectors.

Indigenous non-profit organizations and programs (national, provincial and local)

About this sector

This is a formal sector that involves nationally, provincially/territorially and locally recognized and established Indigenous-led and Indigenous-operated non-profit organizations. **This sector acts as a service provider to urban Indigenous communities and as an advocacy body for Indigenous communities.** The history of Indigenous non-profit organizations dates back to the 1950s in some communities, and many organizations continue to serve as pillars of community for culture, opportunities and a sense of belonging. The majority of those in attendance from this sector represented friendship centres including the National Association of Friendship Centres; provincial/territorial associations including Northwest Territories and Nunavut Council of Friendship Centres, Aboriginal Friendship Centres of Saskatchewan, and Alberta Native Friendship Centre Association; and local friendship centres including First Light St John's Friendship Centre, People of the Dawn Indigenous Friendship Centre and Sacred Wolf Friendship Centre.

This sector indicated that they need

- more youth participation and understanding of how to engage with youth;
- supports for Indigenous youth to lead in their communities;
- knowledge exchange across sectors;
- sustainable funding;
- building relationships with all sectors; and
- for non-Indigenous stakeholders and funders to better understand community and Indigenous youth.

Recommendations offered to address needs

- Connect with Indigenous youth and youth collectives to lead youth-engagement training.
- Include Indigenous youth at all levels of decision-making within the organizations.



- Address barriers to Indigenous youth participation that negatively impact their interest and passion about community work, such as homophobic comments, judgement, racialized comments or stigmas around alcohol and/or drugs.
- Meet youth where they are at and offer trauma-based programs to maintain youth engagement.

Non-Indigenous stakeholders

About this sector

This sector includes a variety of agencies and groups that serve or work with youth throughout the country on national, provincial/territorial and local scales, including non-profits, researchers and government bodies. **This sector may serve and employ Indigenous people, but are not often led by Indigenous people.** This gathering included the following organizations: Prairie Research Associates, Students Commission of Canada, Boys and Girls Club of Canada and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

This sector indicated that they need

- Indigenous youth engagement/leadership;
- national partnerships/outreach and building relationships;
- knowledge exchange, specifically exchange of best practices;
- inclusive trainings;
- culturally specific programs;
- evaluation engagement from Indigenous youth and organizations; and
- research assistance.

Recommendations offered to address needs

- Willingness to understand and learn how to work with Indigenous youth and communities is required before engaging in high-level decision-making about Indigenous communities.
- Research and relationship-building with Indigenous youth and organizations as well as training are required to build this understanding.
- Recognition is required that when non-Indigenous stakeholders attend meetings with little-to-no understanding of Indigenous youth or communities, even with the best intentions, this can create additional labour for the Indigenous youth and organizations that are ready and willing to create change.
- Recognition is required that even with the best of intentions, taking up space can impact the urgent work that Indigenous communities have been waiting to do, therefore causing more harm than good.



- Resources and capacity for Indigenous youth programming should remain within Indigenous youth-serving organizations, collectives or groups.
- Consider Indigenous youth and communities in all aspects of their services and programming with, not for, Indigenous youth, which includes compensating and crediting Indigenous youth and communities for their expertise and labour.
- Read and commit to TRC Calls to Actions and the MMIWG Inquiry Calls to Justice that their organizations are responsible for and can contribute to addressing.

Funders

About this sector

This sector includes organizations and individuals that provide funding to Indigenous youth and for work within Indigenous communities on healthy relationships. **This can include public, private and corporate foundations; individual donors; and government funding programs. This sector is predominantly non-Indigenous led.** This gathering included the Public Health Agency of Canada, Ontario Indigenous Youth Partnership Project and the Canadian Women's Foundation.

This sector indicated that they need

- Indigenous and youth experts of the sector to sit on review committees;
- knowledge sharing across sectors; and
- sharing opportunities across sectors.

Recommendations offered to address needs

- Avoid paternalistic and prescriptive funding programs; instead work to be responsive, open and ready to meet Indigenous youth and communities where they are at.
- Address the imbalance between the amount of time and resources used to write an application and ratios of successful applications.
- Be aware of the deep and harmful effects of funding cuts or changes. For grassroots and Indigenous organizations, funding can mean operating life-saving programs for a year or not. Ensure that any decisions related to funding are informed by, in understanding of, and in proper communication with the communities they will impact – without this, trust and relationships can be broken with Indigenous communities left to clean up the aftermath of any cuts.



- Address charitable giving restrictions so that Indigenous- and youth-led organizations without charitable numbers or qualified donee status can access funding.

"A 2017 analysis by the Circle on Philanthropy and Aboriginal Peoples in Canada concluded that approximately 1% of registered charities in Canada are 'Indigenous-focused' – have purposes that include serving Indigenous people (approx. 5% of the population). Meaning that because foundations can only donate to charities only 1% of the entire granting sector is able to receive funds from foundations making the availability of foundation funds being able to reach Indigenous youth or grassroots disproportionate to their needs." – The Circle on Philanthropy and Aboriginal Peoples in Canada¹¹

- Participate in cultural trainings, building long-lasting relationships with Indigenous partners and understanding the real needs and concerns from grassroots and Indigenous youth.
- Read and commit to TRC Calls to Actions and the MMIWG Inquiry Calls to Justice that their organizations are responsible for and can contribute to addressing.
- Foundations specifically may consider signing the philanthropy community's Declaration of Action, which is hosted by the Circle on Philanthropy and Aboriginal Peoples in Canada (the Circle), an Indigenous organization that cultivates better relationships between Indigenous communities and the philanthropic sector.

CHALLENGES AND STRUGGLES

Of the four objectives for the first meeting, objectives one and two were reached and acted on; however, there was not enough time or capacity available to work on objectives three and four. Some reasons for this include that

- more stakeholders are needed, and many are at different stages of learning;
- more work is needed on collective understandings as not everyone has the same understanding or expectations of what a healthy relationship is (for example, determining a collective understanding of healthy relationships as well as a youth-friendly way to discuss mentorship);
- not enough work was done on inclusion and engagement of Indigenous youth – voices such as Inuit, youth, 2SLGBTQ+ and gender non-conforming folks were not well enough represented; and
- more time is needed to build relationships and trust.

11 The Circle on Philanthropy and Aboriginal Peoples in Canada. (2017).



Many challenges identified at the meeting reflect ongoing challenges identified in the Building the Field on Teen Healthy Relationships 2015–2018 report:¹²

- Create a shared set of goals, values, language and set of definitions for the field of teen healthy relationships.
- Organize workshops to deepen the knowledge of the TRC Calls to Action, and develop specific, organization-based commitments to implementing and integrating specific actions.
- Design creative and respectful means of engaging with Indigenous youth in program development and take their input seriously.
- Ensure that the national network for teen healthy relationships is intersectional, inclusive, youth-informed and trauma-informed at its core.
- Additional challenges include time and logistics, lack of sufficient youth engagement and a lack of diversity.

“Can’t fix the problems if we can’t name them”

Some youth in attendance mentioned not feeling able to be open and honest about gender-based violence and healthy relationships. For example, one youth mentioned a major concern for healthy Indigenous teen relationships is identifying predators and keeping the community safe, but they also felt the room tense up and avoided the conversation. Some youth felt that the room was not able to handle tough conversations and was also not able to create a safe space due to a lack of trauma-informed training.

¹² Canadian Women's Foundation (2019), pp. 58–61



NEXT STEPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the gathering, there were specific asks from certain organizations (see above) as well as overall and defined recommendations on how to move forward.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO MOVE THE WORK FORWARD

- Define membership, including whether this should be an Indigenous-only membership or an open network.
- Engage Indigenous youth. They are the experts of their own lives and youth voices should be prominent in determining their own solutions.
- Develop a collective understanding of terminology.
- Outreach must be inclusive, including grassroots and youth groups.
- Engage and include Inuit, rural, gender non-conforming, trans and Two-Spirit organizations and youth.
- Continue to build relationships and trust, address internal biases and accountability structures, and build capacity.
- Increase trauma-informed approaches, including addressing power imbalances between youth and other stakeholders (especially police and government officials), offer trigger warnings, and take care and time to get through tough topics.
- Be culturally safe, including making smudge and ceremony available and non-performative, for example by considering the reasons for things happening (is a feature of an event serving Indigenous people well or could the event go without it?), considering and questioning how culturally appropriate the impacts of a decision are (working toward understanding distinctions between Indigenous peoples), and ensuring any programming is authentic and has integrity while being community-based.
- Introduce stronger facilitation and note-taking, including recap of context and values, expectations and difficult conversations.
- Develop a working group/task force, including youth, Inuit and 2SLGBTQ+ peoples, to build more context and links between initial research and reports, provide stronger briefings and work on TRC Calls to Action and MMIWG Inquiry Calls to Justice.
- Continued research based on *A Way Forward in Conducting Research with and by Indigenous Youth*.¹³

13 *Indigenous Youth Voices A Way Forward in Conducting Research With and by Indigenous Youth* (2019)



- Centre and utilize the values and principles of the field from the Building the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships project.

VALUES AND PRINCIPLES OF THE FIELD¹⁴

- Centring youth voices, which involves having youth representation at all steps of the project. This could involve more focus groups with youth or consultations, hiring youth representatives to work in key roles in the national network, involving youth in program development and engaging with youth in advisory committees or youth councils.
- Intersectionality and inclusion, which includes centring marginalized voices and perspectives within the field, as well as ensuring that programs are tailored to specific communities such as 2SLGBTQ+; First Nations, Métis and Inuit identified youth; and those identified as hard to reach.
- Developing a shared framework that is anti-colonial, intersectional, feminist and committed to amplifying the leadership of youth alongside adult stakeholders. This is also related to the need for developing a shared vocabulary across the field with agreement on basic principles for the work of teen healthy relationships programs.
- Applying a wide and holistic lens to healthy relationships, which means maintaining a wide focus of programs to include personal/mental health and romantic and dating relationships, as well as relationships with family, friends, community and the environment.
- Focusing both on prevention and intervention, which means developing programs both to prevent unhealthy relationships and to respond to violence within relationships by providing support and care.

RESOURCES AND BEST PRACTICES

These best-practice organizations are listed here for those seeking to learn more and to work together. It is important that these organizations are credited and compensated for their time and energy and the information here is not to be stolen or replicated without the consent of the authors, coordinators and/or developers who created them.

¹⁴ Canadian Women's Foundation (2019), p. 75



Indigenous youth-led organizations

Many organizations and stakeholders mentioned wanting to better engage Indigenous youth. There are active Indigenous youth groups and collectives that are open to working with partners if they are compensated adequately and treated as equal stakeholders in any work or advice that they provide or contribute to.

- Assembly of 7 Generations¹⁵ – Ottawa, ON
- AYO! (Aboriginal Youth Opportunities)¹⁶ – Winnipeg, MB
- Beaver Hills Warriors¹⁷ – Edmonton, AB
- The 4Rs Youth Movement¹⁸ – National
- Nimkii Aazhibikong¹⁹ – Cutler, ON
- Eshkiniigjik Naandwechigegamig Aabiish Gaa Binjibaaying (ENAGB) Indigenous Youth Agency²⁰ – Toronto, ON
- Dene Nahjo²¹ – NT
- FOXY (Fostering Open eXpression among Youth)²² – NT, NU, and YT
- Ontario Indigenous Youth Partnership Project (OIYPP)²³ – ON
- IndigenUs Youth²⁴ – Edmonton, AB
- iHuman²⁵ – Edmonton, AB
- Strong Minded Inuit²⁶ – Ottawa, ON
- Young Indigenous Women's Utopia/Chokecherry Studios²⁷ – Saskatoon, SK
- Urban Native Youth Association²⁸ – Vancouver, BC
- Georgian Bay Anishinabek Youth²⁹ – Parry Sound, ON

15 <https://www.a7g.ca>

16 <https://www.ayomovement.com>

17 <https://www.facebook.com/beaverhillswarriors>

18 <http://4rsyouth.ca>

19 <https://nimkiiiaazhibikong.com>

20 <https://enagb-iy.ca>

21 <https://www.denenahjo.com>

22 <https://arcticfoxy.com>

23 <http://www.oiypp.ca>

24 https://www.instagram.com/indigen_usyouth

25 <https://ihuman.org>

26 <https://www.facebook.com/StrongMindedInuit>

27 <https://www.facebook.com/chokecherry.saskatoon>

28 <https://unya.bc.ca>

29 <https://www.gbbr.ca/anishinaabek-youth>



Reports and resources

A Roadmap to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call to Action #66 – A 2018 report by Indigenous Youth Voices providing recommendations on how to implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) Call to Action #66 that directs, “We call upon the federal government to establish multi-year funding for community-based youth organizations to deliver programs on reconciliation and establish a national network to share information and best practices”

A Way Forward in Conducting Research With and by Indigenous Youth – Report by Indigenous Youth Voices and the First Nations Child & Family Caring Society for doing ethical and meaningful research with Indigenous youth

Building the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships 2015–2018 Report to Field – January 2019 Canadian Women’s Foundation report on the first three years of building a network of stakeholders in the teen healthy relationships field

Honouring the Truth, Reconciling the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada – 2015 final report from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, including list of TRC Calls to Action

Jordan’s Principle – On the First Nations Child & Family Caring Society web page, a legal requirement that states any public services ordinarily available to children must be equally available to Indigenous children

Justice, Equity and Culture: The First-Ever Youth in Care Canada Gathering of First Nations Youth Advisors – Report from the October 25, 2019, Youth in Care Canada, the First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada and the Assembly of First Nations gathering of 16 First Nations youth with lived experience in child welfare systems to talk about their experiences in child welfare, how the system needs to improve and their preliminary thoughts about the compensation for First Nations children, youth and their families that was ordered by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal on September 6, 2019

Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls – 2019 final report into the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, including list of MMIWG Calls to Justice

Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Report – 1996 report and recommendations on all government policies related to colonization and Indigenous peoples; five volumes



TAKE 5: Indigenous Youth Voices – Key takeaways on engaging Indigenous youth from a keynote by Gabrielle Fayant for YouthRex in 2018

Teen Healthy Relationships National Learning Strategy – Report from the 2013 Canadian Women’s Foundation project that provides the framework for building the field of teen healthy relationships

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) – 2007 declaration and international instrument on the rights of Indigenous Peoples globally; signed by Canada



REFERENCES

Canadian Women's Foundation. (2013). *Teen Healthy Relationships National Learning Strategy*. https://canadianwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/National-Learning-Strategy_FINAL-March-21.pdf

Canadian Women's Foundation. (2019). *Building the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships 2015-2018 Report to Field*. https://canadianwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Building-the-Field-of-Teen-Healthy-Relationships_Final-Report-2019.pdf

The Circle on Philanthropy and Aboriginal Peoples in Canada. (2017). *Measuring the Circle: Emerging Trends in Philanthropy for First Nations, Métis and Inuit Communities in Canada: A Focus on Manitoba*. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Ymj_qWSXAJdRn46nBeKMqXXql7vd50pD/view

Government of Canada (2020 May 28). *Jordan's Principle*. <https://www.canada.ca/en/indigenous-services-canada/services/jordans-principle.html>

Indigenous Youth Voices. *A Roadmap to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call to Action #66* (2018.) <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/599307a5f5e231b361442225/t/5c675b67e79c705013d3a8ae/1550277485617/FINAL+%282%29+-Indigenous+Youth+Voices+-Roadmap+to+TRC+66+-+Compressed.pdf>

Indigenous Youth Voices A Way Forward in Conducting Research With and by Indigenous Youth. (2019). *Indigenous Youth Voices: A Way Forward in Conducting Research with and by Indigenous Youth*. https://fncaringsociety.com/sites/default/files/indigenous_youth_voices_a_way_forward_in_conducting_research_with_and_by_indigenous_youth.pdf

National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. (2019). *Reclaiming Power and Place: Executive Summary of the Final Report*. https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Executive_Summary.pdf

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. http://www.trc.ca/assets/pdf/Executive_Summary_English_Web.pdf

Youth in Care Canada. (2019). *Justice, Equity and Culture: The First-Ever YICC Gathering of First Nations Youth Advisors*. <https://youthincare.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/YICC-Gathering-of-First-Nation-Youth-Advisors-Final-Report-Nov-22-2019.pdf>





