



July 13, 2022

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New Report Highlights Increased Violence Against Indigenous Women and Indigenous Gender Diverse People During COVID-19 Pandemic

WHO: Indigenous leadership and anti-violence organizations across B.C.:

- BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres
- Battered Women's Support Services
- Prince George Sexual Assault Centre
- Union of BC Indian Chiefs

WHAT: Launch of [research report](#) "The Road to Safety: Indigenous Survivors in BC Speak Out against Intimate Partner Violence during the COVID-19 Pandemic" by BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres and Battered Women's Support Services

WHEN: Wednesday July 13, 2022, at 8:30 am PST

WHERE: In person at 312 Main Street, Vancouver, B.C. X^wməθk^wəy'əm (Musqueam), S^kwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səlilwətał (Tsleil Waututh), or remote log-in info below.

The BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres and Battered Women's Support Services, joined by the Union of BC Indian Chiefs and the Prince George Sexual Assault Centre, are releasing "[The Road to Safety: Indigenous Survivors in BC Speak Out against Intimate Partner Violence during the COVID-19 Pandemic.](#)" In partnership with the University of Victoria, these leading Indigenous and anti-violence organizations undertook a year-long research project involving surveys and first-hand interviews with Indigenous women and gender diverse survivors across the province to understand their experiences of intimate partner violence during the pandemic.

Some of the **key findings** of "[The Road to Safety](#)" include:

- Pressures placed by the pandemic increased the frequency and severity of intimate partner violence experienced by Indigenous women and gender diverse people. 85% of survey respondents reported an onset of intimate partner violence during the pandemic, and 77% of survey respondents reported that they experienced an increase in intimate partner violence during the pandemic.
- 67% of survey respondents faced challenges in accessing services during the pandemic, with 30% indicating that essential support services shut down. Growing waitlists to access services, inadequate access to transport and childcare, quarantine and isolation, racism and discrimination, and the involvement of MCFD and/or law enforcement agencies also prevented many Indigenous survivors from accessing anti-violence support services and safety.
- 47% of survey respondents did not have access to an Indigenous-run transition home or safe house with culturally safe and relevant supports and services.

According to **Leslie Varley, Executive Director of BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres**, “Overall, our findings indicate systemic challenges of access to justice and safety for Indigenous women and gender diverse people. Indigenous women reported widespread racism; fear of child apprehension and police when reporting violence; lack of safe housing when fleeing violence; and inadequate anti-violence services. Most government funding to address violence against Indigenous women is not in the hands of Indigenous organizations. Indigenous communities must receive funding to establish and operate programs ourselves, such as Indigenous-run 24/7 crisis support for Indigenous women, girls, and gender diverse people across B.C.”

States Summer Rain, BWSS’s Manager of Direct Services & Indigenous Women’s Program: “In 2022 alone, Tatyanna Harrison, Alysia Strongarm, Noelle ‘Elli’ O’Soup, Keara Joe, Carmelita Abraham, and Chelsea Poorman have all gone missing or died under suspicious circumstances in B.C. Indigenous women and girls are being hunted down like prey because perpetrators know they can get away with sexist, colonial violence against us. Police and child services agencies perpetuate the violence, white Canadian men rip down posters of MMIWG, and there is glacial inaction by all levels of government to the Calls for Justice by the National MMIWG2S Inquiry. This is an urgent state of crisis, and we will continue to take action until the violence ends.”

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Leslie Varley, BCAAFC Executive Director: 250-893-0494

Angela Marie MacDougall, BWSS Executive Director: 604-808-0507

Media Login details:

Topic: The Road to Safety: Indigenous Survivors in BC Speak Out against Intimate Partner Violence during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Time: Jul 13, 2022, 08:30 AM Vancouver Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83100222486?pwd=dmZLY1MzcHBRb2YyR3RQcFN6Vit2Zz09>

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