

Calls for Justice: Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

A Status Report for the Government of Prince Edward Island

May 2021

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Introduction

This is the second status report on progress towards implementing the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Calls for Justice Recommendations within the Government of PEI. It signifies the Province's commitment to ending violence against Indigenous women and girls and provides an update of existing and ongoing initiatives to address these issues. It is a product of close collaboration between the Province, the Lennox Island First Nation, Abegweit First Nation, the PEI Aboriginal Women's Association, Mi'kmaq Confederacy of PEI and the Native Council of PEI. This report also represents an important era of societal growth and change with the intent to turn talk into action. To this end, this report contains a number of priority areas identified by the Indigenous Working Group that the province is ready to act upon.

Background

On June 3, 2019, "Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls" was released. The report documents the truths of more than 2,380 family members, survivors of violence, experts and Knowledge Keepers, acquired via two years of cross-country hearings and evidence gathering. Fourteen individuals from eight Prince Edward Island (PEI) families participated in this comprehensive inquiry. Through 231 Calls for Justice, the report outlines a national issue of gravity and magnitude and seeks transformative legal and social changes to end the systemic violence that has devastated Indigenous communities across Canada.

In a clear message to the nation, the Commissioners call for a world "within which First Nations, Inuit, and Métis families can raise their children with the same safety, security, and human rights that non-Indigenous families do, along with full respect for the Indigenous and human rights of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis families".

Responsibility for transformative change, in both the short and long term, extends beyond governments to institutions and industries and, indeed, to all Canadians. Collaboration is essential for the required paradigm shift to be realized—a shift that builds a society in which there is zero tolerance for violence against Indigenous women, girls, 2SLGBTQQIA people and all citizens. First Nations and Indigenous organizations must also be highly engaged to guide priority and goal-setting activities and ensure they are inclusive and postcolonial.

First and foremost, the Inquiry called on the Government of Canada to create a National Action Plan, in concert with Indigenous people, to address violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA individuals. In addition to a National Action Plan, provincial, territorial, municipal and Indigenous governments have also been called upon to develop action plans in

their jurisdictions. Calls for Justice were also specifically directed to institutions, social service providers, industries, and to all Canadians.

The Government of Canada has accepted the Calls for Justice and is working with all provinces and territories to develop a National Action Plan on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in response. This work is taking place amid the COVID-19 pandemic which has wreaked havoc on Canadians' lives and has placed vulnerable groups, including First Nations, Inuit, and Métis women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQA people at increased risk. Over the past year, the global pandemic has commanded the attention of all levels of government, but the commitment to address the Calls for Justice remains strong.

The National Action Plan is being developed collaboratively by a Core Working Group, eight sub-working groups, and a National Family and Survivors Circle. The Core Working Group is co-chaired by a representative from the federal government and a representative of the Provincial/Territorial Working Group. It is comprised of members representing various Indigenous organizations, sub-working groups, and the federal government.

Partner organizations and governments are organized into eight sub-working groups that include over 100 Indigenous women:

- the federal sub-working group
- the provincial and territorial working group
- the urban sub-working group
- the 2SLGBTQQA+ sub-working group
- the First Nations sub-working group
- the Inuit sub-working group
- the Métis sub-working group
- the data sub-working group

Sub-working groups are creating pieces of the national action plan that together will create the national action plan. Every contribution from the working groups represents a unique perspective that must be considered carefully on its own and in the context of the whole plan.

Provinces and Territories will be providing jurisdiction-specific content to the National Action Plan and Prince Edward Island will be contributing to this document.

Although a National Action Plan references a coordinated effort across the country by all levels of government to address the Calls for Justice, the responsibility to respond to the 231 recommendations made in the Final Report extends beyond the scope of a National Action Plan; it also falls on the shoulders of all institutions, levels of government, and Canadians.

Prince Edward Island takes this responsibility seriously and our commitment to this work is reflected not only in our contributions to the National Action Plan, but in work being done at the provincial/territorial level. The Province has been actively engaged in the Provincial/Territorial and Federal/Provincial/Territorial MMIWG Working Groups. These working groups provide a valuable forum for sharing information and best practices among the federal, provincial, and territorial governments and work in coordination with the Core Working Group.

The Province of Prince Edward Island is committed to working with survivors and Indigenous communities to address recommendations outlined in the MMIWG Calls for Justice through a whole-of-government approach that is led by Indigenous perspectives and grounded in thoughtfulness, sincerity, and compassion.

Calls For Justice: Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, A Status Report for the Government of Prince Edward Island is reflective of this commitment and a great deal of collaboration within and outside of government.

PEI Approach

The Government of PEI recognizes that attention must be paid to a complex spectrum of social, economic, historical, cultural, political, and other contributing factors if much-needed progress is to be made. The Government of PEI acknowledges that it is critical that Indigenous voices and priorities are at the center of the development of a made-in-PEI response to the Calls for Justice. In recognition of this, the Province has created a process to gather priorities and feedback from representatives of Indigenous organizations and communities in Prince Edward Island to inform the foundation for a path forward.

Well before the National Inquiry released its Final Report, the Province of PEI, through its Indigenous Relations Secretariat, Interministerial Women's Secretariat and Victim Services, began working closely with representatives from the Mi'kmaq Confederacy of PEI (MCPEI), the Native Council of Prince Edward Island PEI (NCPEI) and the Aboriginal Women's Association of PEI (AWA) to share information and learn more about Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) through a research project to support ongoing efforts to understand the issues and needs of Indigenous women, girls, and families affected by violence in the province. The project gathered insights from frontline staff and managers of key support organizations that provide services to Indigenous women, girls, and families affected by violence in PEI.

On November 26, 2019, during the 1st Session of the 66th General Assembly of the Prince Edward Island Legislative Assembly, Motion 41 was passed, urging government to establish an

advisory committee to oversee the work of implementing and honouring the MMIWG Calls for Justice, as well as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action.

The Government of PEI has not let the global pandemic hinder its progress in addressing the Calls for Justice. As highlighted in *MMIWG Calls for Justice: A Preliminary Status Report for the Government of Prince Edward Island* tabled in the Legislative Assembly in June 2020, it established a Coordinating Committee and confirmed representatives for both the Interdepartmental Working Group and the Indigenous Working Group, described in further detail below, and engaged a facilitator to work with the Coordinating Committee. The facilitator's role has been to facilitate engagement with the Indigenous Working Group and Interdepartmental Working Group to collaborate on priority setting, information gathering and sharing.

This report also provides an update on provincial actions relating to the Calls for Justice. It is important to note that while violence against Indigenous women and girls is an issue of immediate concern, it will not be resolved through temporary or expedient solutions. In addition to ongoing and new actions, the government is setting the conditions to create permanent cultural, societal, institutional and systemic change—ultimately building a fair and just society that does not tolerate violence or injustice of any kind.

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee was created, within the Government of PEI, to coordinate work related to the National Inquiry and the Calls for Justice. It is composed of representatives from Indigenous Relations Secretariat, Interministerial Women's Secretariat and Victim Services. The Coordinating Committee is tasked with providing direction, organizing meetings and minutes, and assisting in the facilitation of work related to Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and the Calls for Justice. Recognizing that efforts to implement the Calls for Justice will require engagement across all of government, the Coordinating Committee developed an Interdepartmental Working Group comprised of representatives from each department.

Interdepartmental Working Group

The purpose of the Interdepartmental Working Group is to explore, coordinate, and prioritize provincial government response recommendations for action to the MMIWG Inquiry's Final Report's Calls for Justice.

Deputy Ministers appointed members representing every department in the provincial government to fulfill the following objectives:

1. Establish direction and priorities as a way to promote interdepartmental collaboration and/or coordination to respond to the MMIWG Inquiry Final Report's Calls for Justice.
2. Improve the flow of information related to the systemic causes of all forms of violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQA people across departments and acting as a forum for the ongoing sharing of information on engagement processes, programs, services, interventions, promising practices, and/or strategies that have been shown to:
 - a. Be effective and evidence-based; and
 - b. Improve socio-economic outcomes for Indigenous people and communities.
3. Identify and strengthen opportunities for engagement with local Indigenous organizations and other relevant stakeholders.
4. Share information with other FPT processes on the response to the MMIWG Inquiry final report (e.g., Justice, Policing, Health, Social Services, etc.) to leverage and build upon partnerships and processes and avoid overlap and duplication, as appropriate.
5. Propose approaches for PEI government participation in the development and implementation of a National Action Plan.

MMIWG Indigenous Working Group

The perspective, input, and guidance of Indigenous women in PEI is central to any work related to MMIWG and the Province's response to the Calls for Justice. This important principle led to the creation of an Indigenous Working Group in 2020 with representatives appointed by Lennox Island First Nation, Abegweit First Nation, PEI Aboriginal Women's Association, Mi'kmaq Confederacy of PEI, and the Native Council of PEI.

The Coordinating Committee works closely with the Indigenous Working Group by hosting meetings and brainstorming sessions, with the assistance of a facilitator, to gather ideas, priorities, and feedback to inform concrete, actionable items for government to continue its progress of implementing the Calls for Justice.

Keeping in mind the impact that COVID-19 has had, especially on the ability to meet safely, the Indigenous Working Group has had five meetings since June 2020. These meetings have been productive in establishing relationships with representatives, sharing information about completed and ongoing work within government and the organizations themselves, and gathering valuable input, which has culminated in the identification of priorities and areas of opportunity where the Government of PEI may begin to address these items.

Priorities Identified by the Indigenous Working Group

Indigenous perspectives and priorities are central to the work of implementing the Calls for Justice. As such, this report begins by outlining the priorities as identified by the Indigenous Working Group with corresponding commitments government has made to begin to address these priorities.

Over the course of the meetings with the Indigenous Working Group that have been held thus far, common themes began to emerge. Below is a compilation of the priority areas that were identified by the Indigenous Working Group. These are not meant to reflect the entirety of the work that is required to implement the Calls for Justice or fully realize structural and societal change, but they serve to provide direction on the pressing issues that the Indigenous organizations and communities in Prince Edward Island have identified as priorities they wish to see addressed.

The Indigenous Working Group spoke about a vision of inclusiveness; organizations working together as one with a focus on healing. Emphasis was placed on the need for the work being undertaken to have substance in the community- the grass roots need to be able to see and know that work is happening. The action items that follow the priorities outlined below are meant to provide a roadmap for the Government of PEI to take immediate action towards achieving the desired outcomes relevant to the priorities identified by the Indigenous Working Group.

Education and Awareness

In order to make progress on the road to reconciliation, we must first understand the history of Canada, its relationship to Indigenous peoples, and the complex, interwoven factors that have compounded years of generational trauma in Indigenous communities.

The Indigenous Working Group identified that education, awareness, and deeper understanding are critically important for the community, government, and public at large on the path to reconciliation. We all have a role to play in taking the time to educate ourselves on the history and impacts of colonialism, the history of Indigenous people, and the root causes of intergenerational trauma.

The Indigenous Working Group has also identified the following as priorities under the theme of Education and Awareness:

- Increased education and awareness around the MMIWG Calls to Justice within government, Indigenous communities, and the general public.
- Increased education and awareness about the 60s Scoop.
- Funding to hold workshops on 2SLGBTQQA+ human rights.

Culture

The Indigenous Working Group identified culture as a protective factor and key area of focus. Loss of language has had a particularly significant impact on the revitalization and preservation of Indigenous culture.

The following priorities relating to language were identified by the Indigenous Working Group:

- Loss of language has a significant impact on Mi'kmaq culture and identity and it is important to ensure Indigenous language capacity is available.
- Ability to access healing and treatment in Indigenous languages.
- Initiatives that support cultural revitalization.

Health, Wellness, and Healing

A focus on health and wellness, but particularly healing, became salient over the course of the meetings with the Indigenous Working Group. Health and wellness, of course, encompasses much more than physical wellbeing and the priorities reflected below extend beyond physical health to consider spiritual/emotional wellbeing and healing.

- Health and wellness services for Indigenous people that address all forms of trauma and are either Indigenous-led or in partnership with Indigenous communities.
- Government providing access to healing programs, similar to the Aboriginal Healing Foundation.
- Culturally sensitive mental health supports and the need to recognize the impact of intergenerational trauma.
- Support for Indigenous people who are front line workers and responders to help them recover from the disclosure of trauma and suffering by members of the community that they help.
- Ongoing cultural awareness training for crisis teams.
- Access to more support for healing circles, land-based healing centres, privately run treatment centres, family counseling, mental health supports, and resilience centres and more support for traditional methods of healing.

- Increased support and training for Indigenous people to work in the health and wellness field.
- Conversations around safe healing sites often included a reflection on supports that were once available, such as ASH House, an off-reserve, centrally located space providing support for Residential School Survivors.

Justice

The recommendations made by the Final Report on MMIWG are aptly called the “Calls for Justice”, indicating the key role that justice and the provision of justice services play in addressing violence against Indigenous women and girls in Canada.

There are many priorities identified in the area of Justice by the Indigenous Working Group including:

- A Gladue Report writing position.
- An Indigenous case or court worker to assist and support individuals participating in a Gladue report.
- Ongoing education and cultural sensitivity training, that is Indigenous-led, for RCMP and police services in Prince Edward Island.
- The development of policing standards for MMIWG investigations and policing in First Nations communities.
- The need for more Indigenous police officers.
- Continued funding for the Family Information Liaison Unit to help families beyond 2023.

Support for Urban and Off-Reserve Indigenous People

As much of the Indigenous population on Prince Edward Island lives off-reserve, the need for supports specific to this population was highlighted. The Indigenous Working Group identified the following priorities relating to urban and off-reserve Indigenous people:

- Increased federal/provincial funding for urban and off-reserve Indigenous people is required.
- A need to improve provincial communications to the off-reserve Indigenous population about vaccine accessibility.

Ombudsperson/Navigator

The Indigenous Working Group members highlighted the need for an Indigenous ombudsperson; a non-partisan individual who could help Indigenous people navigate systems and structures more broadly.

Housing and Homelessness

Given the current housing crisis in Prince Edward Island, the need for emergency housing and support, as well as safe places to heal, is high. Below are the priorities identified by the Indigenous Working Group related to housing needs:

- Increased development of housing for Indigenous women and girls.
- More funding for housing repair programs and increased awareness around the grants available and how/when to apply for them.
- Need for a Resilience Centre that could function similarly to how ASH House did in the past.

Economic Development

Human Security is a thematic area of the Calls for Justice and economic development is viewed as a crucial opportunity for Indigenous people and communities to thrive. The following priorities were identified by the Indigenous Working Group relating to economic development:

- Continued programs and supports for all Indigenous artisans.
- A tax reduction or rebate specifically available for off reserve Indigenous people.

Government of PEI Response – New Initiatives

In consideration of the priorities identified above, the Government of Prince Edward Island is committed to the immediate actionable items, listed and described below, to advance the ongoing work of reconciliation and addressing the MMIWG Calls for Justice in our province. The initiatives below do not represent the entirety of the work related to MMIWG being completed within the Government of PEI, nor do they constitute the entire effort by government to implement the recommendations in the Calls for Justice. These actions, informed by the feedback received, represent immediate steps towards addressing the priorities identified by the Indigenous Working Group members.

Education/Training

The Government of Prince Edward Island is committed to transitioning the cultural training modules, offered by the Indigenous Relations Secretariat in partnership with MCPEI, into compulsory training for all new and existing employees of the public service. Envisioned in this initiative is the creation of a new and comprehensive online course, which would require government to track completion among the participants. This would ensure that strong a foundation of understanding is laid within government structures and institutions to build upon as we continue to implement the Calls for Justice.

Health

The creation of an Indigenous Navigator position within Health PEI would ensure that there is a dedicated contact within the healthcare system specifically to assist Indigenous people in accessing services and supports relevant to their health and wellness. This position would take into account the specific and unique needs of Indigenous people to access culturally appropriate care whenever possible.

Housing

Safety and security are important to achieve better outcomes for Indigenous women and girls and facilitate an environment of healing. Establishing a dedicated stream of funding available specifically for Indigenous housing in Prince Edward Island would ensure that extra supports are provided to develop culturally appropriate housing services for Indigenous people in our communities.

Support for MMIWG Work in Communities

Establish a \$250,000 fund to strengthen the capacity of the Indigenous Working Group to participate in the ongoing work related to MMIWG and the Calls for Justice. This would provide annual funding of \$50,000 to each member organization of the MMIWG Indigenous Working Group (comprised of the Aboriginal Women's Association, Lennox Island First Nation, Abegweit First Nation, Mi'kmaq Confederacy of PEI, and the Native Council of PEI) to ensure that representatives can continue to engage meaningfully in their communities and provide guidance to the Government of PEI.

Calls for Justice

Overview

“Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls” provides 231 Calls for Justice falling under five key themes: Indigenous and Human Rights, Culture, Health and Wellness, Human Security and Justice. Appropriately digesting and thoughtfully responding to such a large and varied number of Calls for Justice is complex and hinges on the working groups having adequate time and capacity to analyze them and to collaboratively identify practical ways to promote and realize reconciliation in the province.

Not all of the Calls for Justice are within the authority the Province of PEI. Accordingly, those Calls for Justice are not reflected in this report. On the other hand, some of the actions outlined in the report pre-date the National Inquiry and the Calls for Justice. It is important to include them to paint a full picture of what has been done in recent years and what is being done now with respect to justice for Indigenous people on the Island. Because some Government of PEI actions relate to more than one Call for Justice, this document reports by theme, rather than on a Call-by-Call basis, to avoid duplication.

In addition to the government-related Calls for Justice, the National Inquiry identified a role for all Canadians with respect to the treatment of Indigenous women, girls, and the 2SLGBTQQIA community. “Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls” calls on Canadians to read the report and to learn and celebrate Indigenous history, culture, pride and diversity and to acknowledge the land and its importance to local Indigenous communities. It also calls on us all to become allies in the fight against racism. And, finally, the report requests that all Canadians hold governments accountable to act on the Calls for Justice. The Province of PEI wholeheartedly supports these Calls and hopes that Islanders take them to heart and play a role in bettering the lives of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA individuals.

Highlights of Progress Made by the Government of PEI to Date

The information contained herein is provincial government progress and action to date. It is important to note that this report is part of a continuum, and not to be seen as concluded efforts.

Human and Indigenous Rights and Governmental Obligations

The first theme relates to Human and Indigenous Rights and Governmental Obligations. As “Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls” points out, Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people are holders of inherent Indigenous rights, constitutional rights, as well as international and domestic human rights. Therefore, the report calls for a human-rights based approach to creating the necessary paradigm shift, in which issues of importance to Indigenous women and girls would be reframed from “unfulfilled needs” to “denial of rights.” This approach, reflected in the following Calls for Justice, will reaffirm Canada’s commitment to uphold and to promote the human rights of people in vulnerable circumstances.

The report calls on all governments (federal, provincial, territorial, municipal), in partnership with Indigenous Peoples, to develop and implement a National Action Plan to address violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people. The National Action Plan should ensure equitable access to basic rights such as employment, housing, education, safety and health care. This theme also calls for action relating to prioritizing and resourcing measures to reduce marginalization, promote participation in governance and leadership, prevent violence, and eliminate jurisdictional gaps.

The Public Service Commission (PSC) encourages government departments and agencies to identify potential employment opportunities, including casual, temporary and student positions, for qualified candidates from a diversity of groups. The PSC Diversity Consultant works with organizations representing Indigenous communities on client referrals and on identifying training and education opportunities for employees.

The province’s Diversity Talent Pool and the Diversity Employment Program, in existence for more than a decade, works with candidates from Indigenous communities to find meaningful and longer-term employment. Its programs provide information on government departments and hiring processes, and offer counsel and assistance with job searches. In December 2019, the PEI government endorsed a Diversity and Inclusion Policy for hiring that recognizes the growing cultural diversity in the province, emerging population demographics and the range of needs in the community, including those of Indigenous people.

In 2015, the Province signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that establishes an Aboriginal Mentorship Program between MCPEI and the Government of PEI. The MOU not only provides practical opportunities for skills development and workplace experience, but it allows for career exploration.

In addition, the Province is providing funding to an MCPEI initiative to support 18 Indigenous entrepreneurs to create social enterprises in Lennox Island and Abegweit First Nations in the areas of craft tourism, agriculture and property maintenance.

The prevention of family violence is firmly on the Government of PEI's radar. In fact, the Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence (PAC) has been in place since 1995. The Aboriginal Women's Association of PEI is a member of PAC. The Family Violence Prevention Strategy calls for "promoting the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendation for professional development and training for public servants on the history of Indigenous peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, and incorporating training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism."

Within the Government of PEI, departments submit their funding priorities for areas such as health, education and housing to the Department of Finance for consideration. In other words, much of the work is done at the departmental level. However, departments are required to address Indigenous considerations when submitting policy options for approval.

Culture and Education

The National Inquiry deemed cultural rights to be inseparable from human rights and Indigenous rights, as articulated in various instruments including the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). "Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls" also pointed out that such rights were inseparable from the social and political rights necessary to their full enjoyment.

The report calls on all governments to acknowledge, recognize and protect the rights of Indigenous Peoples to their cultures and languages as a matter of right and as per the Constitution. This theme also addresses the need to preserve Indigenous knowledge; public education to confront and eliminate racism, sexism, homophobia, and transphobia; and support for Indigenous-led initiatives to facilitate access to cultural knowledge and to improve the representation of Indigenous people in media and pop culture.

The education of our Island youth is vital to the continuous improvement and growth of our communities and our province as a whole. Through various initiatives and programs that incorporate Indigenous culture, history, and traditions, we can provide a diverse educational experience that will contribute to building capacity for empathy, respect, and understanding in the youngest members of our population. This foundation ensures that as they get older, they will already have an understanding of the legacy of residential schools, the importance of preservation of Indigenous language, and Indigenous ways of knowing and learning.

The Department of Education and Lifelong Learning has a number of education initiatives underway. This includes the “4 Seasons of Reconciliation” training that is provided to all educators. The online learning module provides diversity and inclusion awareness training and a historical perspective for teaching Indigenous ways of being. Any educator that completes the training receives a certificate from the First Nations University of Canada.

Much work is being done to develop and update curriculum to include Indigenous history and perspectives. The Language Arts Curriculum committee prioritized the inclusion of diverse perspectives in literature and worked with outside agencies such as the Mi’kmaq Confederacy of PEI to evaluate and select titles to be included in classroom libraries for students in grades 7-9.

The Student Wellbeing Teams (SWT) work diligently to specifically address the needs of on and off reserve Indigenous students. A representative from MCPEI sits on the Student Wellbeing Teams Steering Committee, ensuring that the needs of Indigenous students are considered in the delivery of these services. The Student Wellbeing Teams also work with a Transition Coordinator at MCPEI to assist and ensure smooth transition for Indigenous students leaving school on the reserve to attend intermediate school beginning in grade 7. There are three Student Wellbeing Team Leads working with Abegweit, Scotchfort and Lennox Island to provide support for Indigenous students and their families. SWT members have taken cultural sensitivity training and professional development that includes Indigenous concepts such as Healing Circles and Restorative Justice.

Social studies curriculum for grades K-12 is being developed to include Indigenous history, including residential schools, culture and tradition. This development includes sharing information and best practices on teaching this content and identifying the training needs educators may have to deliver content. The integrated curriculum for grades K-6 includes Indigenous culture and a focus on identity and self-awareness.

The Department is creating a committee with Indigenous representatives, teachers, and government officials to develop additional content for curriculum. Including Indigenous perspectives in this process will ensure that we honour the importance of education in the reconciliation process.

In further promoting reconciliation efforts, a pilot project saw 65 students gather with their peers at Abegweit First Nation to gain perspective and knowledge. A collaborative project between Senator Brian Francis and members of the local performing community promoted the singing of the national anthem in Mi’kmaq in Island schools. Schools province-wide also observe Orange Shirt Day each year.

The Province was pleased to commit funds toward the building of the Urban Indigenous Centre on the Charlottetown waterfront. Collaboration with Indigenous people to develop learning initiatives about Mi'kmaq history and culture for Islanders and newcomers takes place via the province's Cultural Action Plan. It funds, or otherwise supports, a number of Indigenous-related arts and culture initiatives. This includes an Indigenous stream under the PEI Arts Grants (\$15,000), Indigenous Art Bank Collection Program (\$5000), Annual Pow Wow Fund (\$10,000), and professional development funding for Indigenous artists (\$20,000). The Province also supports the creation of Indigenous tourism experiences, a provincial Indigenous tourism roadmap, and visibility at the Cavendish Visitor Centre.

The Public Library Service celebrates the rich Mi'kmaq history and culture through its Indigenous-related collections. PEI is also fortunate to have its first Indigenous Poet Laureate, Julie Pellissier-Lush. In her role as Poet Laureate, she generously shares her stories and knowledge at many events across the Island and, in the process, elevating and amplifying Indigenous voices in PEI.

And, finally, the Province worked in partnership with Indigenous representatives, including the PEI Mi'kmaq, and the other provinces in an Indigenous Tourism in Atlantic Canada Study.

Health and Wellness

From the perspective of the National Inquiry, health is considered much more broadly than the simple absence of illness or disability. It considers the mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being of an individual. The report links the right to health to other fundamental human rights and stresses that the absence of appropriate services place women, girls, and gender-diverse people in vulnerable situations.

Under this theme, the report calls for accessible and culturally appropriate Indigenous-centered and community-based health and wellness services, engagement of Knowledge Keepers in developing programs for trauma and violence survivors, funding for holistic wraparound services, and culturally-appropriate crisis response teams.

The Government of PEI views health and wellness broadly – as supported or optimized by a healthy environment; air, water, soil, and ecosystems.

The Department of Health and Wellness, through Health PEI, works closely with Accreditation Canada (AC) to ensure fully accredited health care facilities so that clients are assured that health care facilities and staff meet the same quality health care standards used nationally and internationally. Germane to this report, Accreditation Canada recently added a new standard, Aboriginal Community Health and Wellness. The Abegweit First Nation Mi'kmaq Wellness

Centre has already attained this level of accreditation. Accreditation Canada requires organizations to be culturally competent with respect to the populations that they serve. Therefore, Health PEI will apply the new Accreditation Canada standard of ensuring safe, non-judgmental spaces are available for clients to discuss traditional, complementary or alternative medicine. Health care practitioners are expected to consider alternative methods of care, including cultural healing practices of Indigenous peoples, on a case-by-case basis, when appropriate and requested by individuals and families. Accreditation Canada has developed a new toolkit outlining COVID-19 standards which has been one source of guidance for PEI Indigenous health care standards during COVID-19.

On behalf of the Province, under the Mi'kmaq-PEI-Canada Partnership Agreement, Health PEI, co-chairs the Health Policy and Planning Forum (HPPF), a tripartite body of Federal, Provincial and First Nation leaders whose vision is to improve health services for PEI Mi'kmaq communities. Current HPPF priority areas include: 1) mental health and addictions, 2) home care, 3) primary care and 4) e-health. Guided by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report, the HPPF has a work-plan that is updated and reported on annually to ensure it is achieving intended goals. The HPPF also focuses on methods to integrate Jordan's Principle, which is a requirement that all First Nations children living in Canada can access the products, services and supports they need, when they need them (without delay while the funder is decided). Activities for applying Jordan's Principle are updated regularly.

One activity of the e-health Working Group of HPPF places focus on health and equity issues for Indigenous populations through a collaborative initiative between Lennox Island, Abegweit, MCPEI, Chief Public Health Office, Health PEI, Indigenous Services Canada, and UPEI. The goal of this work is to calculate the rates of diabetes, cancer, heart disease, and chronic respiratory diseases among First Nations people in PEI and includes the exploration of community data systems.

Indigenous Cultural Awareness, Sensitivity and Competency training was offered regularly for health professionals in community-based services through Health PEI's Integrated Chronic Disease Prevention and Management project titled "Working Together for Aboriginal People's Health". Designed in partnership with several Indigenous groups, the program was developed and piloted 2014 – 2017 and became a regular offering from 2017 onward. The training is delivered by a facilitator and an Indigenous leader in 3 modules, each 4 hours long. COVID-19 has impacted this training, but to date, over 200 health care professionals have participated in the modules, which focus on the historical, political, and cultural issues that impact the health of Indigenous peoples as well as Indigenous concepts of healing and health.

Training of Indigenous health care professionals is a priority. The identification of strong candidates who have been mentored and encouraged to pursue a health care career will provide culturally appropriate Indigenous services. These gifted individuals will be role models for Indigenous youth. Health PEI also extends training opportunities that are offered to Health PEI primary care clinicians to First Nation health centre staff.

In efforts to promote wellness, especially during the last year with the pandemic, Indigenous communities in PEI are able to access funds through the Wellness Grant Program. In response to COVID-19, virtual and e-health solutions were put in place, removing barriers to care for rural Islanders, such as those living in communities like Abegweit or Lennox Island First Nation. This included a mental health and addictions information line and a virtual Child and Youth Urgent Mental Health Clinic. Psychiatric Urgent Care Clinics (PUCC) were introduced to reduce strain on the emergency departments and to limit mental health and addictions patients' potential exposure to infection (PUCC was discontinued when no longer needed). Patients discharged from these clinics as well as from acute care and emergency departments received a follow-up call within 24 hours. Through Health PEI, the Province created a COVID-19 Kids Activity Book that was distributed throughout the Island to help explain the pandemic, normalize anxiety, and give children some control over how to deal with their feelings.

In responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Province recognized the increased vulnerability of Indigenous people in Abegweit and Lennox Island and committed to providing \$100,000 for each band to assist in pandemic related response and needs. In developing the vaccine rollout plan, the Province ensured that Indigenous people 18 years of age and older and living in Indigenous communities were included in Phase 1 of the COVID-19 Immunization plan. Phase 2 of the Immunization plan included any Indigenous adults that were not immunized in Phase 1.

In 2019-2020, the Province conducted a province-wide series of Gambling Focus Groups to better understand gambling in PEI. Two of the six sessions were devoted to Indigenous representatives (Abegweit First Nation and Native Council of PEI), and through collaboration were held in Indigenous facilities. The resulting report was vetted with participant groups to ensure accuracy and interpretation so that the findings can be used in an upcoming three-year strategic plan.

With respect to mental health and addictions, a new mobile mental health service is being established for all Islanders including Indigenous Islanders. In addition, provincial employees who serve the First Nations communities on PEI have been involved directly in some cultural healing practices; including assisting with a photo project and providing clinical services such as Wampum Critical Incident Stress Management, a model grounded in cultural practice.

Human Security

The National Inquiry considered the right to security as both a physical and social right. Physically, the right to security includes the right to life, liberty, and personal safety as well protection of psychological integrity. With respect to social security, the report calls for protective services and social service assistance to guarantee access to essential services and life's basics.

In addition, the report calls for upholding the social and economic rights of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA people; recognition of the right to self-determination; support programs for those in the sex industry; educational programs; a guaranteed liveable income (for all Canadians); adequate housing; safe spaces; and affordable transportation.

As part of the Provincial Climate Change Action Plan, the Province has developed a Sustainable Transportation Action Plan (STAP), which includes activities pertaining to transportation issues in rural Island communities; for example, providing accessible, safe and affordable options for rural transportation. Implementation of the STAP is in the early stages, but is ongoing. Access to safe and reliable transportation is also considered in the development of programs; for example, as part of a planned Indigenous Courtwork Program, assisting clients to secure transportation to court dates will form part of legal navigation support.

In June 2018, the Native Women's Association of Canada presented a submission to the Standing Committee of Justice and Human Rights called, "Trafficking of Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada." This submission highlighted that, "Indigenous women are disproportionately affected by racialized violence in Canada through exposure to both historic and ongoing gendered discrimination. Canada's colonial legacy has forced Indigenous women and girls into dangerous and precarious social and economic conditions, which in turn has made them more vulnerable to different kinds of violence. This includes situations of exploitation and human trafficking, a prevailing concern that has yet to be properly addressed and recognized."

With respect to highway safety, the Province is working to determine driver licensing participation within Indigenous communities, identify challenges faced by Indigenous people when accessing services and understand the connections between accessible transportation and the health and safety of Indigenous women and girls. Access PEI engaged the Indigenous Relations Secretariat in the development of its soon-to-be-introduced 2021-2025 Service Strategy for the Government of PEI.

The Province is represented on the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance which works with industry players and police agencies to highlight the realities of human trafficking, including incidences of crimes perpetrated against Indigenous people. In addition, through its Highway Safety division, it continues to raise awareness of human trafficking to law enforcement and commercial carriers through education materials, enlisting truckers to report suspicious activity at truck stops, circulating training videos and passing out awareness material.

The Department of Social Development and Housing is working in partnership with Canadian Mental Health Association to address housing needs on the Island through the Community Housing Fund. The Native Council of PEI will be receiving support to develop 20 units of temporary housing for Indigenous people living off-reserve.

Fishing and farming are famously economic heavyweight industries in Prince Edward Island. The ability of Indigenous people to participate in these industries not only acknowledges their special relationship with the land and water, but presents an important economic opportunity.

The Province funds several programs related to fishing and farming that stand to benefit the Indigenous community in Prince Edward Island. The Rural Growth Initiative, for example, has supported 12 projects with Indigenous communities and organizations since 2018-2019. There is a Skills PEI office that works with the Abegweit First Nation and both First Nations are represented on the Province's Rural Community Council. The Department of Agriculture and Land has met with members of MCPEI, Abegweit First Nation, and Lennox Island First Nation to understand and discuss priorities for agriculture in First Nations communities. Meetings like this encourage open dialogue and allow an opportunity for the Department to share information about programs and encourage applications to them.

The PEI Department of Agriculture and Land's Canadian Agricultural Partnership (CAP) cost-shared Community Food Security Sub-Program is designed to support PEI residents in obtaining safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diets through a sustainable, local food system that maximizes community self-reliance through the promotion of entrepreneurial development, planning and public education partnerships among community organizations, government and industry. Projects must be explicitly inclusive of identified groups, including the Mi'kmaq and other Indigenous groups. To date, more than 800 Indigenous people have participated in projects funded through the Community Food Security Sub-Program.

The Province participates in the annual Indigenous Consultation Atlantic and is partnering with Indigenous organizations to determine how it can support their priorities for agriculture.

The Department of Agriculture and Land has initiated a project, Land Matters PEI, to modernize land-related legislation. The Department of Agriculture and Land established an Advisory Committee, which includes a position reserved specifically for a member of L'nuey. Additionally, L'nuey provided a presentation to the Land Matters Advisory Committee on Mi'kmaq interests in land-related matters.

Through support from the Department of Fisheries and Communities, the Province has provided equipment and technical support to a shellfish hatchery in Lennox Island. The Department also runs the PEI Fisheries and Aquaculture Clean Technology Adoption Program, which encourages fisheries and aquaculture sectors in PEI to adopt sustainable and clean technologies and practices.

The Department of Economic Growth, Tourism, and Culture works to support Indigenous people through several programs and services. A wage subsidy program works to connect Indigenous participants to the workforce and provides support for social enterprises focused on

craft/tourism and agriculture. This program provides access to important experiences that enhance work place skills. The 2020/21 budget has committed \$274,372 to this program.

The Province, through the PEI COVID-19 Workforce Integration Fund, is supporting a project in Abegweit First Nation that will provide expertise training. Three mentors will provide direct training and entrepreneur skills development for three community members who will be working as future managers/supervisors at new band-owned businesses.

The Department also supports a summer employment program in Abegweit to assist students to successfully complete grade 12 and transition from high school to post secondary education, apprenticeships, or the workforce. This includes practical skills development and work experience.

Through the Workplace Essential Skills project, support is provided for up to 10 Lennox Island residents to improve essential skills and prepare to complete their GED.

Child Protection

In collaboration with MCPEI, the Province has developed a protocol to ensure that the child protection services provided to Indigenous children in PEI promotes and preserves the Indigenous cultural identity.

Under the Child Protection Act, the Director of Child Protection is required to notify the designated Band Representative when intervening in situation with a child believed to be Indigenous. The Director must also work in collaboration with the Designated Band Representative in developing a plan for care for the child.

The two organizations also work together on a number of other child protection initiatives including providing prevention and support services to children and families living on reserve, recruiting and retaining Indigenous foster parents, and staff training about the history and impact of residential schools.

The Department of Social Development and Housing has also created an Indigenous Policy Analyst position to lead efforts in the Child and Family Services Division to implement culturally appropriate services for Indigenous children and families, improve relationships with Indigenous communities, and providing support to front-line staff to ensure responsive service delivery.

As of early 2021, PEI has also ended the controversial practice of issuing birth alerts.

Justice

The National Inquiry found that relationships between Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people and the judicial system are problematic. Barriers in this area relate to the isolation of victims due to inadequate services, failure to accommodate language barriers, and the lack of Indigenous content in the media as well as how Indigenous victims are portrayed. As described in the report, Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people are over-policed and over-incarcerated yet under-protected as victims of crime in Canada.

There are several Calls for Justice relating to this theme, some of which relate to provincial governments; e.g., implementing recommendations from previous inquiries and commissions, supporting victims of crime, enacting missing persons legislation, having effective protection orders, expanding restorative justice programs and legal aid services, using Gladue reports, developing Indigenous-specific sentencing options, and conducting research into men who commit violence against these vulnerable groups.

The Province of PEI has been very active in relation to justice and Indigenous women and girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people and is willing to work with the federal government on additional action items. For example, PEI is keen to participate on a National Working Group, including representation from Indigenous communities, if one is established to replace the existing First Nations Policing Program with a new legislative and funding framework. Though the Island does not have an Indigenous police force, there is strong agreement that such a force should include core policing services and specialized services and that standard police training should be supplemented by community engagement and cultural awareness training. An oversight body, with representatives from each province and territory as well as from the Indigenous community, should be established.

PEI's Victim Services is a system-based approach that operates within the Department of Justice and Public Safety, but independently from the police, Crown attorneys and the courts. Its client-centered model allows close working relationships with criminal justice personnel and community agencies. Through Victim Services, Indigenous and other victims of crime have access to a number of services; i.e., information about the justice system, court preparation, emotional support and short-term supportive counseling, assistance in preparing a victim impact statement, referrals to services, and help for victims of family violence. These services are available to victims regardless of whether they reported the crime to the police and whether the perpetrator is charged or if there is a conviction. PEI's Criminal Injuries Compensation Program provides compensation to eligible victims of personal injury crimes for pain and suffering, wage loss, counseling costs, medical or dental costs and funeral costs. Under the Employment Standards Act, paid and unpaid leave provisions are in place for situations of domestic violence, intimate partner violence and sexual violence. Victim Services staff

participated in a one-day information session hosted by RCMP on the investigation and response to missing and murdered persons cases.

With the launch of the National Inquiry, provinces and territories received funding to establish Family Information Liaison Units (FILUs) until March 31, 2019, with an extension to March 31, 2023. The Island's FILU provides a centralized, coordinated mechanism for family members of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls to access requested information related to the loss of their loved one. Through involvement with the PEI FILU, a number of families were able to obtain information from police reports, autopsy reports, and court records, thereby finding answers and closure and, ultimately, reducing further trauma to next generations of adults and children. This unit complements and collaborates with other mechanisms that assist families and victims; for example, providing funding to a number of Indigenous organizations for projects relating to recommendations from an April 2018 Conference Board of Canada report. For example, the FILU contributed funding to the Aboriginal Women's Association for its project, "Finding Our Way through Prevention and Knowledge," supplementing the support received from the Interministerial Women's Secretariat through its Violence Against Women Prevention Grant. Other projects included a culture and healing through dance program, violence-related awareness programming, a PEI Missing Indigenous Persons Tool Kit, cultural knowledge sessions, and engagement with the Indigenous women's community in PEI to enhance awareness and social action on the MMIWG Final Report's Calls for Justice.

The Province has and continues to develop legislation relating to justice and the Indigenous and 2SLGBTQIA communities. For example, its Victims of Family Violence Act provides for Emergency Protection Orders and Victim Assistance Orders in cases of family violence. Missing Persons legislation was tabled in the Legislative Assembly in March 2021 and the Justice of the Peace Act has been enacted. This Act requires the establishment of criteria for the selection of candidates including "sensitivity to and understanding of gender, racial equity and issues affecting indigenous peoples."

The Province of PEI has joined with Justice Canada and the Mi'kmaq Confederacy of PEI in a tripartite agreement to fund the Indigenous Justice Program (IJP) which provides culturally specific, holistic programming to Indigenous people (and their communities) that are in conflict with the law. The IJP is administered by MCPEI and advised by an Indigenous Advisory Committee made up of representatives appointed from three Indigenous organizations and bands: the Lennox Island First Nation, the Abegweit First Nation, and the Aboriginal Women's Association. Representatives from the RCMP, Charlottetown Police, federal and provincial governments also sit on the Advisory Committee. The committee discusses justice-related issues and works to improve access to culturally-responsive justice programs and supports. The program has improved and strengthened mutual understanding of Indigenous people and the justice system through both training and cross-cultural sharing and continues to work to address the overrepresentation of Indigenous people in contact with the justice system. The IJP

offers Indigenous Justice Circles, which include Healing Circles, Conflict Resolution Circles, Early Intervention Circles, Sentencing Circles, and Reintegration Circles, which are led by trained Circle Keepers. In accordance with the Island's legal system, this traditional option is offered as an alternative to individuals who have committed a crime and have acknowledged their responsibility.

The Province assists MCPEI with the planning and delivery of its annual Indigenous Justice Forum. Participants include court staff, judiciary, Crowns, and provincial officials from Victim Services, Community and Correctional Services and Health Promotion. Both police and justice officials have participated in a cultural retreat for justice system professionals as well as a two-day conference entitled *Bringing Balance to the Scales of Justice*, hosted by the IJP in partnership with the Province and Justice Canada. MCPEI also delivers training to the Atlantic Police Academy and engages with the PEI Law Society on a regular basis.

In concert with the IJP, the Province offers other effective community-based options, such as an Alternative Measures Program, the availability of Sentencing and Healing Circles as an option, and restorative justice forums. The Province is developing a Restorative Justice Program, and seeks input from the Indigenous Justice Program as it recognizes this approach to justice is rooted in Indigenous traditions and values. When requested by Indigenous offenders, the Indigenous caseworker facilitates access to Elders, including visits to the provincial correctional centre. Provincial officials sit on the steering committee for MCPEI's Reintegration and Healing Program which helps individuals prepare to reintegrate back into their community from federal correctional facilities. The Province is working with MCPEI to develop an Indigenous Courtwork service to complement existing services and provide legal navigation and support to those involved in the formal justice system. MCPEI recently concluded a three month engagement process to collect insight from the Indigenous community on what the barrier and challenges are of those in the formal system. The input received from the engagement sessions will be incorporated into future program development work of the Indigenous Court Work service. In 2018, the Province and MCPEI entered into a Memorandum of Understanding to confirm the submission of Gladue Reports to the Courts. When considering sentencing an Indigenous offender the Court may order a report that includes sentencing recommendations and information on cultural considerations. In an effort to ensure culturally relevant options are available and Gladue principles are applied, MCPEI and Community and Correctional Services meet on a regular basis to ensure that Gladue recommendations are made and align with pre-sentence reports as much as possible. In early 2021, Dalhousie University concluded an assessment on the Indigenous Justice Program. This report captures the lived experiences of those involved in/or impacted by the criminal justice system, including those with experiences of Gladue reports. The report includes the voice of both on and off reserve individuals and provides concrete recommendations to be included in the Indigenous Justice Program.

Conclusion

The Government of Prince Edward Island acknowledges the important role it can play in ensuring better outcomes for Indigenous people on the Island and although we are very proud of the work we have accomplished together thus far, the Government of PEI recognizes that there is much more work to be done to fully realize an equitable society for all. This report outlines a strong start to the process of implementing the Calls for Justice that, alongside the priorities identified by the Indigenous Working Group, provide a foundation from which we can build upon.

This work has not been- and cannot be- done without the PEI Mi'kmaq First Nations and Indigenous organizations. Indeed, their ongoing advice, input and feedback will enable the Province to help create the future they envision for themselves and their families. We look forward to a partnership built on trust and respect as we continue this work together.

*“Keep us restless until we find peace.”
- PEI Indigenous Working Group, October 2020*