

BC Association of Aboriginal  
Friendship Centres  
**BCA AFC**

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July 13, 2022

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

**VANCOUVER, B.C.** - 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, released a year-long research project: "The Road to Safety: Indigenous Survivors in BC Speak Out against Intimate Partner Violence during the COVID-19 Pandemic."

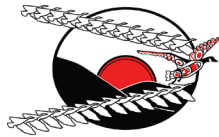
In partnership with the University of Victoria, these leading Indigenous and anti-violence organizations in B.C. undertook a research project involving surveys and first-hand interviews with Indigenous women and gender diverse people across the province to understand the experiences of intimate partner violence that Indigenous women and gender diverse people are facing during the COVID-19 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.

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- 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."

## **Contact**

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