



Navigating
**towards our
north star**

Navigating Pathways to Address
Urban Indigenous Gender-based &
Sexual Violence Framework
2024-2029



anfca
alberta native friendship
centres association

The background of the page is a light grey gradient. It features several white circles of varying sizes, some of which are partially cut off by the edges. A yellow line graphic, resembling a constellation or a stylized path, is located in the lower right quadrant. It consists of several points connected by lines, forming a shape that could be interpreted as a house or a star. The overall aesthetic is clean and modern.

Land Acknowledgement

ANFCA acknowledges that its offices and 21-member Friendship Centres are located across Treaty 4, 6, 7, 8, and 10 territories, the 22 Districts of the Métis Ôtipemisiwak, and 8 Métis Settlements, whose histories, languages, cultures, and traditions influence our work, our culture, and our Indigenous ways of knowing as both an Urban Indigenous organization and as Urban Indigenous peoples, and where we live, work, and play.

Structure of Framework for “Navigating Towards Our North Star”

Our framework is grounded on the principles of reconciliation and UNDRIP with respect for Indigenous rights focused on self-determination. The framework reviews the background and engagement with Friendship Centres that is the backbone of this work; summarizes key themes from the engagement process, outlines six strategic paths and identifies our vision, aspirations and advocacy actions for Friendship Centres as front-line service providers and ANFCA, as a provincial umbrella organization.

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Foreword

For a millennia, Indigenous people have looked to the night sky for guidance and the clusters of stars (constellations) for navigation which has led us and helped us gain knowledge and deeper comprehension of our relationship to the water, land, sky and all living things. The constellations have been responsible for ensuring the safe journey of our people as they travelled by looking to the celestial skies. They are intrinsically connected to our subconscious, intuition, heart, and dreams, transmitting healing energy and restoring balance and harmony.

- ★ The sky is a map, and through the movement in the night sky, the stars provide a compass for orientation and direction and is the inspiration for our provincial framework to address Urban Indigenous gender-based and sexual violence. It steers us towards the North Star, and a future of our visions and dreams for Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples. We understand that there is a connection from our dreams to Pakwon Kisik¹, which gives us glimpses of infinite possibilities. When we dream, we make connections, get inspiration, direction, guidance,
- healing, and understanding. It broadens our possibilities.

Our ancestral stories and teachings often give context and highlight important life lessons about our community's practices, traditional ways of thinking and living, and our ancestors' morals and values. These lessons can also help us understand who we are, where we come from and help us determine our path forward.

For over 60 years, Friendship Centres in Alberta have strived for transformational community-led change for Indigenous peoples residing off reserve and off settlement and have been catalysts in the creation of communities that are inclusive, safe and provide opportunities for Urban Indigenous peoples to flourish and prosper.



Friendship Centres create diverse approaches and partnerships rooted in interconnectedness and reciprocity to support the Indigenous communities they serve.

Through shared visions and dreams, Alberta Native Friendship Centres Association (ANFCA) and its 21-member Friendship Centres are committed to the creation of communities that offer authentic “Indigenous prosperity” where Indigenous people who call Alberta ‘home’ can see themselves reflected as part of a healthy and safe shared future. Knowing that change is inevitable and that even with best efforts in place, aspirations are not always easily achieved, ‘Towards Our North Star’ is the start of our navigation to address gender-based and sexual violence — and not the entire journey. It will be a living document requiring realignment and re-navigation as the world and our communities change and shift, just as the night sky changes through the seasons.

Background



Distinction: Urban Indigenous

Urban Indigenous identity is complex and, in Alberta, encompasses approximately 70 percent of the total First Nation, Métis, and Inuit (Indigenous) population. Friendship Centres honour, respect and celebrate the Indigenous people they serve regardless of status, citizenship, place of origin or residency. 'Urban Indigenous' in our context defines First Nation, Inuit and Métis people living off reserve, off settlement, or who seek services outside their home community in metropolitan, rural and remote communities across Alberta. This includes individuals who may also identify as being Indigenous without ties to a specific Nation or community.

This definition is in no way intended to diminish or dispute the rights of First Nations, nationhood or Treaty holders.

Alberta Native Friendship Centres Association (ANFCA)

ANFCA is the umbrella organization whose mission is to support active member Friendship Centres who, through program and service delivery, engage with and improve the quality of life for Urban Indigenous peoples. ANFCA undertakes its work in pursuit of the vision of a healthy, thriving and culturally connected Urban Indigenous community. ANFCA was established in 1970 as the first Provincial/Territorial association to be incorporated in the national Friendship Centre Movement and is affiliated with the National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC).

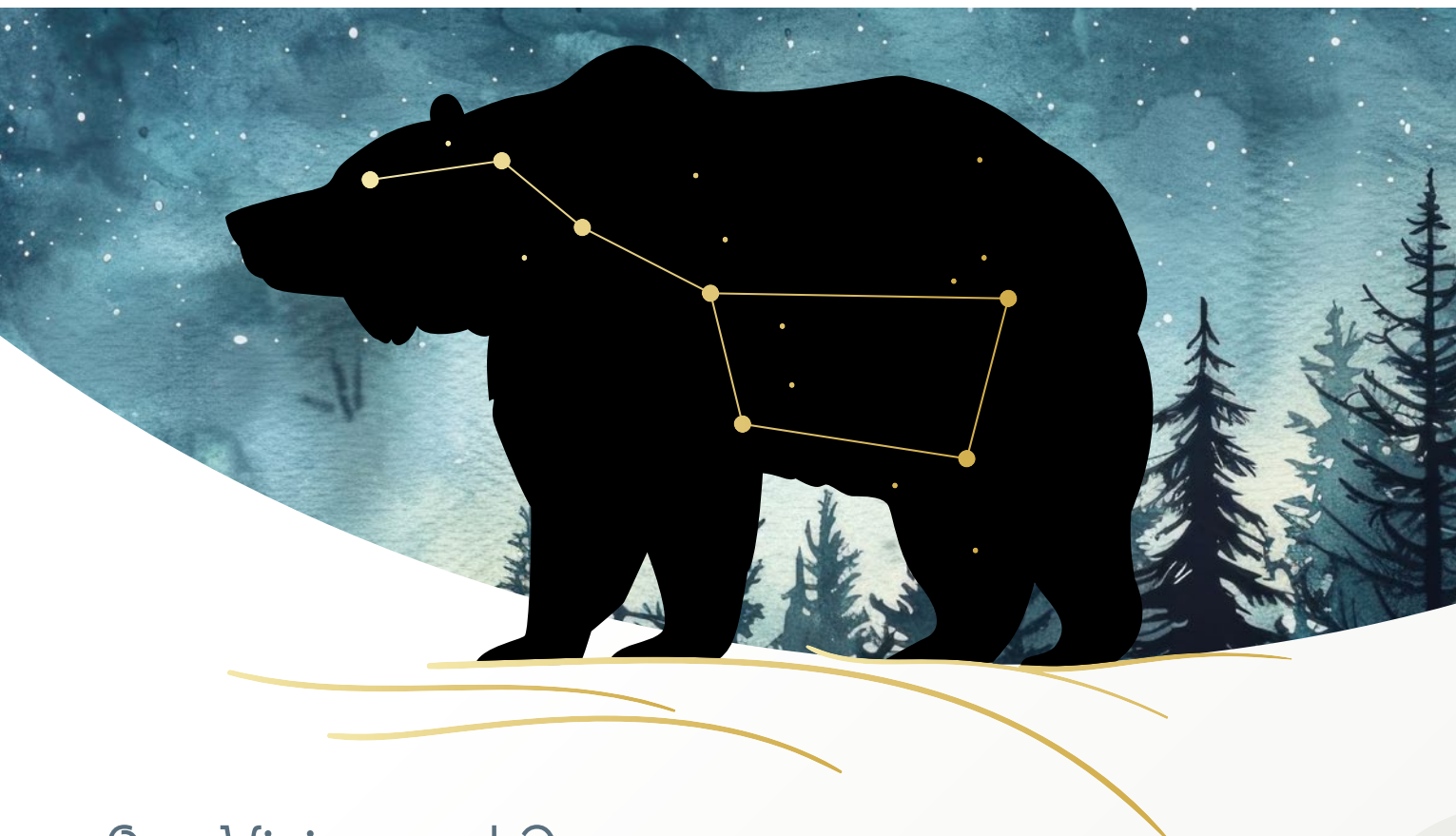
ANFCA provides leadership, advocacy, resource and funding development, communications and provincial stakeholder and government engagement to achieve its mission and goals. ANFCA communicates with the policy-making levels of government to inform them of the needs of Urban Indigenous peoples and the positive impact of Friendship Centres to influence government policies and programs on their behalf.

Alberta Friendship Centres

In Alberta, 21 member Friendship Centres work to improve the lives of Urban Indigenous people in their communities by delivering over 700,000 documented points of service annually. Collectively, Friendship Centres are the largest off-reserve Indigenous service delivery infrastructure.

Friendship Centres in communities both large and small are often the first point of contact for Urban Indigenous people seeking culturally safe programs and services, a sense of community, wrap-around supports, culture and learning. Friendship Centres are the culturally safe places that Indigenous people will seek out in times of crisis and distress. They provide an open-door policy offering access to all Indigenous people regardless of place of origin, residency, or status, including those transitioning to urban or off reserve and off settlement environments, and for the many Indigenous individuals and families who have resided in urban settings for two or three generations to walk proudly in their culture and Indigenous identity.

With the multi-dimensional culturally based activities, programs and services available at Friendship Centres, there is no stigma attached to asking for help or for accessing needed services. Friendship Centres are safe cultural hubs that offer programs and services to address gender-based and sexual violence. Friendship Centres are known and trusted community organizations that reduce systemic and institutional barriers to healing that many Urban Indigenous people have and continue to experience. Offering a multitude of culturally informed supports and services under one roof further helps to remove barriers, increases access to needed supports and increases positive short- and long-term outcomes in the lives of those they serve.



Our Vision and Dreams

Towards Our North Star is more than the name of our framework for the elimination of gender-based and sexual violence — it is the vessel that gives expression to protecting and nurturing the potential of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples. It is the essence and connection between Indigenous people and our communities and must be embraced and nurtured to honour and uphold Indigenous values of care, healing, kindness, empathy and respect. It is a building block for healthy and positive relationships, for communication and support between people and for people; it represents a symbolic keystone to support resiliency and recovery.

- Our vision and dreams for a future free of gender-based and sexual violence, and healthy, safe and inclusive communities for Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples weaves traditional knowledge, experiences and learning (Kiskêyihtamowin) into the fabric and foundations of this framework. To be successful, the implementation of our aspirations and actions must align with Indigenous values and be grounded in the aspirations of Friendship Centres and the communities they serve. The framework affirms that Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples impacted by violence are not alone. They are connected to and sustained by the spirit of their ancestors, families and communities.
- The framework provides a beacon of hope to Urban Indigenous people and communities who want and need it most. It is an enduring call to protect the inner spirit and to nurture and grow the potential inside every Indigenous woman, girl and 2SLGBTQQIA+ person.
- It also provides a guiding light, energy and knowledge that every Indigenous woman, girl and 2SLGBTQQIA+ person impacted by gender-based and sexual violence will need on their personal journey towards self-determination, healing and Indigenous prosperity.

Executive Summary

Navigating Towards Our North Star embraces Indigenous peoples' legacy of healing and the transmission of higher knowledge. Its name relates to our traditional relationship to the sky and stars which have always guided Indigenous people and charts our path forward.

Urban Indigenous people are living and functioning in a society with vast imbalances of power and privilege rooted in colonial and deeply discriminatory systems. Oppression (like systemic racism) is woven into the very foundation of contemporary culture, society and laws, and is a direct result of colonial governments, institutions, systems and policies. Alberta's high rates of violence perpetrated on Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples continues to erode the positive sense of self, Indigenous identity, health and personal well-being which contribute to social and economic exclusion. Intergenerational traumas inflicted upon Indigenous peoples are still very much present and alive, taking a toll on our spirit and mental, emotional and physical well-being. Charting and navigating new paths forward that are based on Indigenous values of reciprocity, active protection, relationships, equity and healing will be challenging but is absolutely necessary.

“Respect for and full inclusion of the dynamic, resilient and strong Urban Indigenous communities and voices would lead to human rights advancements, culturally appropriate programs and services and significantly improved socio-economic conditions.”²

² 2021 Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People National Action Plan

ANFCA is setting out what we are committing to do and how we will measure and report on progress. This is different from what has come before. It sets a well-being and strength-based vision for eliminating the disproportionate levels of gender-based and sexual violence inflicted upon Urban Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples. This framework is based on a dual approach — provincial scope and community-based. There is a strong focus on primary prevention and healing and the critical role of Friendship Centres and Urban Indigenous people in community for achieving intergenerational change.

“Towards Our North Star” identifies and responds to the drivers of violence, requiring accountability from all; from those who set policy and oversee mechanisms to address gender-based and sexual violence, to those who perpetrate violence, and the organizations and systems who support change and healing, and those who have mandates to respond to people impacted by gender-based and sexual violence. We all have a responsibility for keeping Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples safe, and ensuring institutional practices, policies and legislation promotes safety, equity, inclusion and acknowledge the complexity and diversity of the experiences of Urban Indigenous people, and the different timely responses and culturally safe capabilities that are required to meet their needs.

Taking Coordinated Action: Alberta Friendship Centre Movement

The causes of high levels of gender-based and sexual violence against Urban Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples have been well documented in a number of previous studies and reports including the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples) Final Report 'Reclaiming Power and Place' and the National Action Plan to End Gender-based Violence, as well as the '113 pathways to justice: Recommendations of the Alberta Joint Working Group on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls'. These National and Provincial action plans recognize that Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples experience some of the highest rates of poverty, homelessness, food insecurity, unemployment and continue to face barriers to education and employment, all in which contribute to high rates of gender-based sexual violence and the need to take a multifaceted approach to create change.

ANFCA will continue to enhance our focus on taking concrete actions through advocacy, relevant and authentic partnerships, government relationships and funding development to address gender-based and sexual violence that aligns with the aforementioned

documents and ensuring that the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) are overarching. ANFCA recognizes that no organization or level of government alone can eradicate this violence. This work must be done in partnership, collaboration and through authentic relationships across organizations and with the leadership of government, Indigenous communities and organizations.

Alberta Friendship Centres are in the best position to lead in developing solutions for gender-based and sexual violence by taking measures to ensure the safety of Urban Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples, providing access to Indigenous-led and culturally safe services and programming for victims, supports for families of Missing and Murdered Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples and continue raising awareness within their communities.





These six navigational paths will be the drivers of change, and will be delivered through actions that are specific, time-bound and resourced to strengthen how ANFCA works and learns together with Friendship Centres, their communities and the specialist sectors to achieve our goals. ANFCA believes that by moving “Towards Our North Star,” this will have the following long-term impacts on Indigenous gender-based and sexual violence:

- Commitment to addressing the underlying social conditions and norms that lead to violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples.
- Friendship Centres and their communities design, lead and deliver solutions to affect change.
- ANFCA, Friendship Centres, community stakeholders and services work better together.
- Friendship Centres have sustainable capacity to deliver programs and services, creating stronger continuity of care.
- Indigenous-led and culturally safe primary prevention programming is valued and supported by government and stakeholders.
- Societal systems and institutions effectively support and protect Indigenous peoples impacted by gender-based and sexual violence.
- Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples are safe and respected in all settings and experience economic, political, cultural and social equality.
- Indigenous youth understand healthy relationships, how to seek help and can access culturally tailored services creating resilient and self-determined adults.
- Indigenous victims in the justice system are protected, safe and supported.
- Individuals are supported to heal and overcome the trauma of violence, and can access integrated and inclusive responses including for families of Missing and Murdered Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples.
- Individuals who use violence are held accountable and supported to change.
- Reduced tolerance of Indigenous gender-based and sexual violence and inequity across Alberta.
- Indigenous families and communities are supported and lead actions and advocacy to prevent all forms of gender-based and sexual violence.



Accountability and Evaluation

Accountability for this framework and related actions and implementation plans will be upheld through the principles of reciprocal accountability and through ongoing performance measurement and evaluations. This will include working with Friendship Centres and partners to support data collection and analysis, evaluating progress against this framework and supporting external partners in their related evaluation implementation. Friendship Centre voices and feedback will be collected and will provide indicators of achieving our visions and dreams of change with a focus on changing the social conditions, structures and norms that perpetuate harm against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples.

1. Urban Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples need to have their experiences of gender-based and sexual violence validated, and have access to the support they want and need.
2. Indigenous culture has always held women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples as sacred. Gender-based and sexual violence is a devastating disruption of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples' sacred place in our communities.
3. Systemic violence is rooted in inequitable attitudes and beliefs and is the root cause of gender-based and sexual violence and the increasing numbers of Missing and Murdered Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples.
4. Sexual and gender-based violence is a major public health problem and one of the most prevalent human rights violations committed against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples.
5. We believe that gender-based and sexual violence cannot be separated from a broader context — one in which those that are harmed, those that cause harm and the violation itself exist in a larger system of social norms and inequities. The shortcomings and successes of our systems can radically alter the trajectory of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples' lives.
6. Reintegrating Indigenous knowledge in addressing Indigenous gender-based and sexual violence is essential to restoring our cultural heritage, recognizing the interconnectedness of all life and honouring the wisdom of our ancestors.
7. From an Indigenous worldview, culture permeates all aspects of life and is essential to the overall well-being of Urban Indigenous populations. If living within one's culture and being involved in the ceremonies and traditions is the essence of Indigenous identity, health and well-being, it can be argued that losing one's culture or being disassociated from it can contribute to a breakdown of health and well-being that can contribute to gender-based and sexual violence.



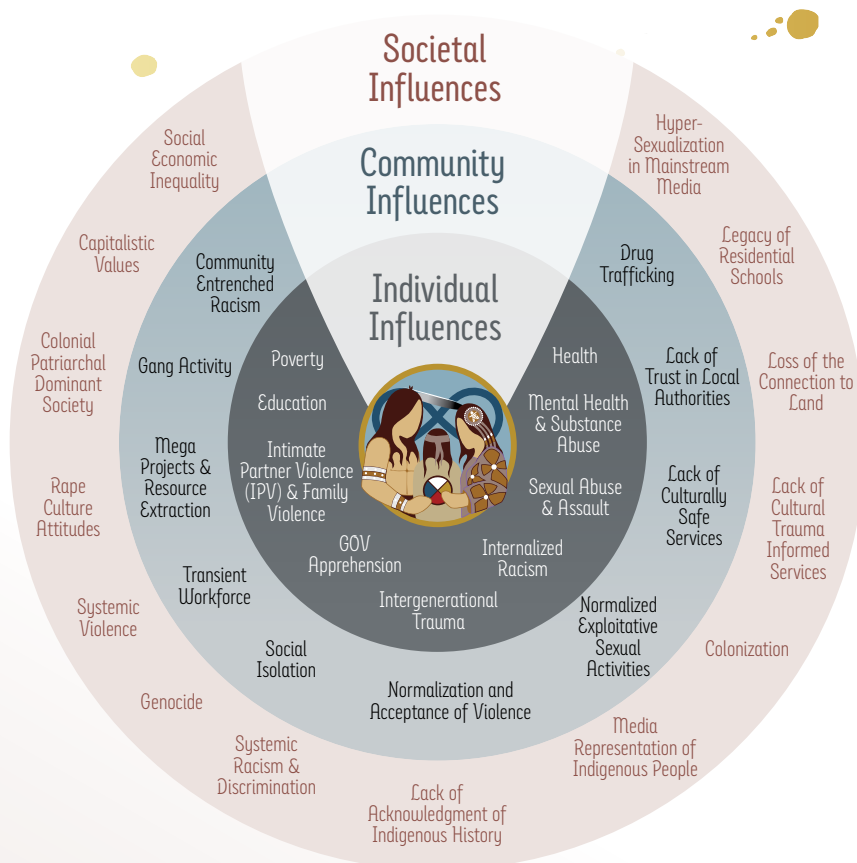
Methodology

ANFCA undertook a literature review of numerous reports and research papers, including the “Missing and Murdered Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples final report: Reclaiming Power and Place” in which the ‘Calls to Justice’ are reflected in our strategy and encompasses the following influences that contribute to high rates of Urban Indigenous sexual and gender-based violence:

Aligning our vision with Missing and Murdered Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples Final Report, TRC Calls to Action and UNDRIP.

These guiding documents call on action from governments, justice, health and education systems, and many other role players to enact changes to protect the safety of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples. ANFCA’s development of this framework to address gender-based and sexual violence incorporates specific Missing and Murdered Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples Calls for Justice, TRC Calls to Actions and embraces the principles of UNDRIP with a vision of creating healthy and safe communities for Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples.

In developing this framework, ANFCA utilized a multi-pronged approach and community consultation strategy that



encompassed facilitated in-person and virtual Friendship Centre engagement sessions with 197 participants and a survey completed by 113 respondents for a total reach of 310 stakeholders.

This process represents Urban Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples experiences, voices and knowledge, gathered and interpreted by Indigenous people, and uniquely informs the pathways, visions, aspirations and actions that follow.

The preliminary results were assembled and summarized in a working document entitled “Working in Friendship to Eliminate Violence: Moving the Calls to Justice to Action,” which distilled hundreds of pages of community consultation notes. Two additional research projects were commissioned based on a review of relevant policy frameworks and best practices related to supporting Urban Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples, particularly those with intersectoral needs, and those fleeing violence and to gain access to safe, affordable housing. The recommendations of those studies are reflected in this framework. We listened to family members of victims and to the voices of survivors, to Elders and to Friendship Centres and their communities to determine where to focus immediate efforts.

In assessing the engagement and research results, ANFCA applied two orienting questions to help determine specific aspects of its Strategic Action Framework:

1. What strategies and actions can ANFCA and Friendship Centres employ to enhance safety for Urban Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people in Alberta's Friendship Centre communities?
2. What are your dreams and visions for a gender-based and sexual violence free community?

The responses to these two orientating questions form our navigational pathways, visions, aspirations and strategic actions.

Summary of what we heard:

- Culturally appropriate relationships, protocols and service agreements that create partnerships must be established.
- Racial discrimination is a primary reason that makes a community unsafe and contributes to gender-based and sexual violence. (60% of participants)
- Accessing government services can be retraumatizing for survivors of gender-based and sexual violence and it is crucial that these service spaces are culturally safe. (60% of participants)
- There is a lack of services or inadequate culturally safe services for Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people seeking supports. (83% of participants)
- Non-Indigenous organizations and service providers do not understand what Indigenous trauma-informed programming means or how to support Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people as survivors of gender-based and sexual violence. (90% of participants)
- Law enforcement and the justice system are the least accessible and fair towards Indigenous peoples, causing unreported incidents of gender-based and sexual violence to continue. (50% of participants)

“In residential schools, our women learnt to be accommodating, even if that was harmful for them — to save themselves from getting punished. This behavior has been passed down through generations, to alter this behavior of self-compromise and accommodation can only be achieved through cultural supports and intergenerational healing.”

-Community Engagement Participant

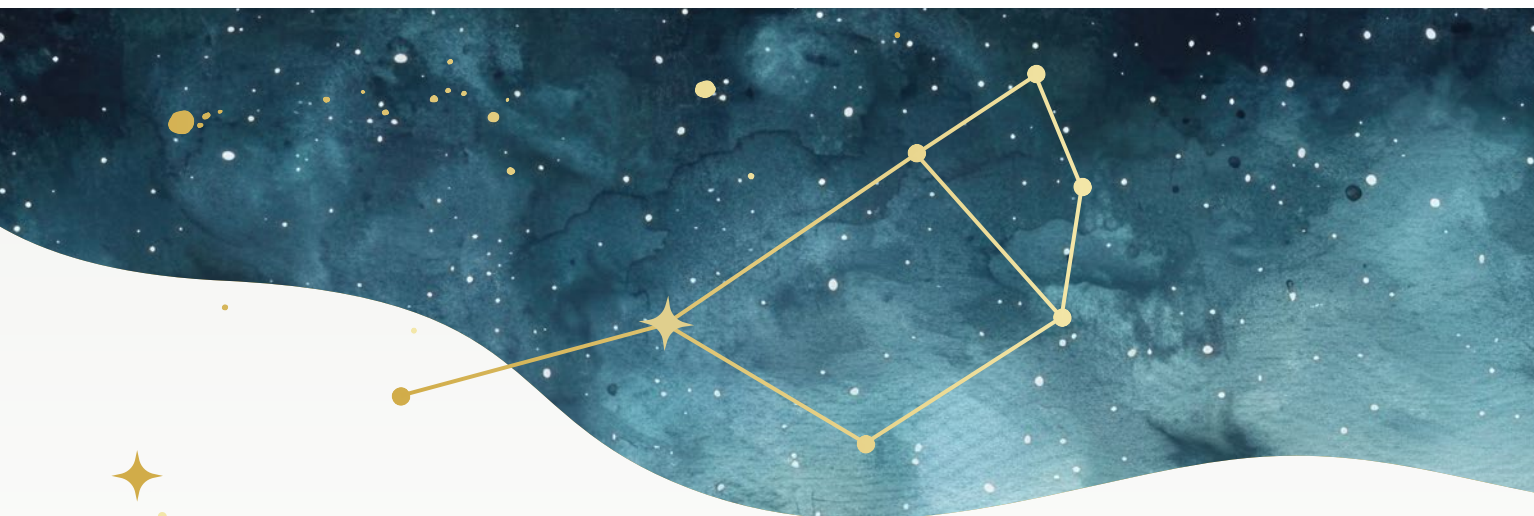
“It is very discouraging to work hard, have hopes, apply for jobs, and not get any results. Most of the employers have prejudices against us and we face racism during job interviews.”

-Community Engagement Participant

- Culturally competent crisis response teams and culturally safe environments are the most immediate programming that communities need to support victims of gender-based and sexual violence. (70% of participants)
- More than half of engaged participants shared stories of their negative experiences with local hospitals and health-care systems as Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples, negatively impacting their overall wellness including when seeking help after a sexual assault or other forms of gender-based and sexual violence.
- Family unity needs to be a priority for Child and Family Services. Presently, 69% of children that are “in care” in the province are Indigenous and there are few programs to support family unity that are Indigenous-led, culturally safe or rooted in Indigenous traditions.
- Lateral violence is a contributing factor in creating unsafe communities and services.
- 50% of participants stated they have not left their community in the past 5 years due to lack of public transportation and know many Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples who are unable to safely leave violent situations due to lack of transportation options.

“Communication and educational pieces need to be created for our youth and young adults on healthy intimacy, consent, and sexual exploitation.”

-Community Engagement Participant



Navigating towards our north star

Matootisan Asiniuk – Seven Sisters (Pleiades): Their appearance in the sky marks important changes. The Seven Sisters’ celestial dance across the night sky weaves together love, pursuit, and transformation.

Six pointed stars relate to our six pathways.

Navigating Towards Our North Star

Each of the navigational paths “Towards Our North Star” (providing guidance for Indigenous peoples’ journey through life) in this strategy are interconnected, and are dependent on wider changes across Alberta that will help address gender-based and sexual violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples.

The specific actions in this framework are defined by community driven (Friendship Centres) and provincially driven (ANFCA) reflecting the participants voices from community.

Path One:

Towards Indigenous strength-based well-being and self-determination

Path Two:

Towards inclusive Urban Indigenous communities

Path Three:

Towards culturally safe health and wellness services

Path Four:

Towards Indigenous-led primary prevention and intervention

Path Five:

Towards spaces to thrive

Path Six:

Towards healing and justice

★ Path One

Towards Indigenous Strength-based Well-being and Self-determination

Championing Indigenous Values and Culture

We are here because of those who came before us. We draw upon Indigenous values and teachings for strength, wisdom and guidance. We uphold holistic Indigenous approaches and build upon ceremonial resiliency to address gender-based and sexual violence and strive to achieve balance in mental, spiritual, emotional and physical well-being.

Vision

Indigenous values and cultural knowledge — our tools of resiliency — are embraced and the roots of all programs and services for Urban Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples, as well as men, promote resilience, positive Indigenous identity and promote intergenerational healing and well-being.

Aspiration 1.0.

Urban Indigenous youth are resilient, culturally connected, have positive Indigenous self-identity and walk with strength-based self-determination.

Community Driven Actions

Action 1.0.1

Expand, enhance and create Indigenous land-based learning and cultural programming opportunities for Urban Indigenous youth.

Action 1.0.2

Expand, enhance and create culturally based mental wellness and resiliency building programs for Urban Indigenous children and youth.

Action 1.0.3

Expand, enhance and create programs that encompass mental wellness, resiliency building and gender-based and sexual violence prevention.

Provincial Driven Actions

Action 1.0.4

Resource and develop provincial prevention and awareness initiatives to combat sexual exploitation and human trafficking of Urban Indigenous women, youth and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples.

(Based on outcomes from ANFCA's Protecting Our Sacred Fires)

Action 1.0.5

Advocate for and create provincial opportunities and initiatives for youth resiliency building and mental wellness for Urban Indigenous.

(Based on outcomes from ANFCA's Filling Our Tipis and ANFCA's Rise Up)

Action 1.0.6

Advocate for increased capacity to provide long-term staff and programming for Urban Indigenous women and youth to ensure a continuum of care.



Aspiration 1.1.

Urban Indigenous families, survivors, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples have access to healing and wellness programs to promote resilience, self-determination and a positive sense of identity.

Community Driven Actions

Action 1.1.1

Expand, enhance and create cultural connective and multifaceted approaches for healing supports and programs for Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ who have experienced gender-based and sexual violence.

Action 1.1.2

Expand, enhance and create programs aimed at addressing Urban Indigenous children's healing in the context of gender-based and sexual violence.

Provincial Driven Actions

Action 1.1.3

Continue to create formal partnerships with government and other stakeholders to ensure policies and services are culturally competent, strengths-based and trauma-informed and meet the needs of Urban Indigenous people and Friendship Centre communities.

Action 1.1.4

Advocate for resources for increased Rites of Passage ceremonies and the transmission of Indigenous ways of knowing as youth transition into adulthood.

Action 1.1.5

Advocate for increased programs and services addressing urban Indigenous children's healing in the context of sexual and gender-based violence.

Aspiration 1.2.

Urban Indigenous men embrace their cultural roles as partners and are advocates to stop gender-based and sexual violence in communities.

Community Driven Actions


Action 1.2.1

Expand, enhance and create programs developing Urban Indigenous men and boys cultural knowledge and response to gender-based and sexual violence. (i.e. I am a Kind Man)

Provincial Driven Actions

Action 1.2.2

Advocate for resources to increase programs in Friendship Centres to promote Indigenous youth self-identity, resiliency and increased mental wellness.



Culture is a necessary part of prevention and healing from traumatic events. A healthy relationship with Indigenous culture is closely linked to strength of self-identity and belonging, both of which are critical for positive mental health.

Reconnecting Indigenous men with their cultural backgrounds, belief systems and traditional knowledge is essential to promoting new cycles of wellness, healing and maintaining resiliency. Cultural connections support Indigenous men to regain their sense of community and family belonging, gain emotional and mental wellness, and acknowledge their challenges while recreating a relationship with their culture and bonds with their male peers.

★ Path Two

Towards Activated and Inclusive Urban Indigenous Communities

Championing Inclusivity

Our culture and traditions are relationship-based. Our teachings are that relationships are medicine and all of life is connected and founded on respect, reciprocity, and responsibility. Communities based on those values create a respectful environment to explore, learn, and communicate.

Vision

Holistic, collaborative partnerships and relationships are for Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples to have equitable access to services, programs and amenities where they can build a better life. Mobilized and activated Friendship Centre communities that provide equity and, through sustainable, authentic relationships, integrate community-led responses that ensure there is no wrong door to walk through for Indigenous people who experienced gender-based and sexual violence.

Aspiration 2.0.

Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples receive barrier free access and equitable opportunities to supports and services in the community they reside.

Community Driven Actions

Action 2.0.1

Expand, enhance, and create availability of safe social, recreational and cultural spaces for Urban Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples.

Action 2.0.2

Expand, enhance, and create cross-sectoral initiatives to strengthen services and supports in Friendship Centre communities for those affected by gender-based and sexual violence.

Action 2.0.3

Expand, enhance, and/or create wrap-around programming in Friendship Centers to ensure support for Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples who have experienced gender-based and sexual violence.

Provincial Driven Actions

Action 2.0.4

Address Indigenous lateral violence through a campaign at Friendship Centres promoting Indigenous acts of kindness, love, and community.

Action 2.0.5

Advocate for increased rural and remote public transit options to increase safety.



Aspiration 2.1.

Friendship Centres are sought as meaningful partners to create safe and inclusive communities.

Community Driven Actions

Action 2.1.1

Expand, enhance, and create relationships, accountability, and response models between Friendship Centres and local partners.

Provincial Driven Actions

Action 2.1.2

Develop social media campaigns and training tools (infographics, etc.) to educate partners and the general public on TRC, Missing and Murdered Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples, and UNDRIP.

Action 2.1.3

Develop and implement data strategies in all sectors to better understand needs and trends in Urban Indigenous communities.

Indigenous cultural safety is the process of making spaces, services and organizations safer and more equitable for Indigenous people by considering current and historical colonial impact and seeking to eliminate structural racism and discrimination.



★ Path Three

Towards Culturally Safe Health and Wellness Services



Championing Cultural Safety

We work from a place of good medicine and anchor our work in the medicine of each other, the medicine referring to the fostering of physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual well-being. Good medicine is the ability to sustain oneself in a caring and fulfilling way by looking after ourselves and others. It is promoted through having access to services appropriate to our needs and enhanced by living in a safe environment with a spirit of community.

Vision

Friendship Centres are authentic partners in health and wellness services. Urban Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples have access to culturally safe emergency and primary health care, social care programs, mental wellness, and substance use programs in any community they call home.

Aspiration 3.0.

Urban Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples have access to health services and wellness supports that are safe and discrimination-free.

Community Driven Actions

Action 3.0.1

Expand, enhance, and create cultural safety training opportunities with local health care services through regional relationships and tables.

Action 3.0.2

Expand, enhance, and increase access to primary health care options in Friendship Centres including vaccination clinics, mobile cancer screenings, and health promotion workshops.

Provincial Driven Actions

Action 3.0.3

Advocate for resources for increased mental wellness and substance use supports in Friendship Centres through partnerships and collaboration.

Action 3.0.4

Develop and resource community-specific cultural safety training for health care and gender-based and sexual violence service providers available through Friendship Centres.



Aspiration 3.1.

Friendship Centres and local health care services partner in social prescribing models to support Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples.

Community Driven Actions

Action 3.1.1

Create social prescribing relationships and models within community-based primary health care with Friendship Centres to ensure culturally safe Indigenous wellness supports.

Action 3.1.2

Expand, enhance, and create crisis supports for Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples fleeing abuse with intersectoral needs such as active addictions and physical trauma through collaborative efforts.

Provincial Driven Actions

Action 3.1.3

Implement training and recognition of social prescribing models of care in Friendship Centres.

Action 3.1.4

Advocate for Indigenous cultural safety training policies and practices among public sector and non-profit sector organizations.


Action 3.1.5

Advocate for Indigenous counselors and nurse practitioner positions in Friendship Centres, ensuring cultural safety and wrap-around supports.

Action 3.1.6

Promote and advocate for Urban Indigenous social-prescribing partnerships across the Alberta Friendship Centre Movement.





“Eliminating Indigenous health inequities requires addressing the determinants of health inequities which includes institutionalized racism, and ensuring a health care system that delivers appropriate and equitable care. There is growing recognition of the importance of cultural competency and cultural safety at both individual health practitioner and organizational levels to achieve equitable health care.

As each community has specific Indigenous practices and traditions, Friendship Centres are able to provide cultural safety training to local health services and other frontline serving organizations as well as being recognized as social prescribing partners in positive health outcomes.”

-Community Engagement Participant

Social prescribing aligns with Indigenous holistic conceptualizations of health and well-being. Social prescribing is a holistic, person-centred, and community-based approach to health and well-being that bridges the gap between clinical and non-clinical supports and services. It draws on the central tenets of health promotion to mitigate the impacts of adverse social determinants of health and health inequities by addressing non-medical, health-related social needs including housing, nutrition, employment, income, and social connections supports. This makes Friendship Centres in Alberta natural partners as social prescribers.

★ Path Four

Towards Indigenous-led Primary Prevention and Interventions

Championing Indigenous-led Solutions

Our Indigenous knowledge carries ancient and intergenerational wisdom that is flexible, fluid, and adaptive as it evolves into contemporary settings. This knowledge evolves from and is responsive to our world and communities, which makes it ideal for developing and advancing meaningful Indigenous solutions to gender-based and sexual violence.

Vision

Friendship Centres and Urban Indigenous communities are empowered and resourced to lead their own solutions to address Indigenous gender-based and sexual violence. Primary prevention programs are embedded with Indigenous cultural frameworks. And educating Urban Indigenous women, men, and youth about healthy relationships, consent, and promote resilient well-being is paramount.

Aspiration 4.0.

Urban Indigenous men walk proudly in their culture beside women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples as protectors and advocates.

Community Driven Actions

Action 4.0.1

Expand, enhance and create violence prevention, early intervention, and healing programs for Urban Indigenous men and boys in Friendship Centres.

Action 4.0.2

Expand, enhance, and create opportunities for Urban Indigenous men to tell their stories of healing and trauma, and to support the end of gender-based and sexual violence.

Provincial Driven Actions

Action 4.0.3

Advocate for resources to increase the 'I am a Kind Man' program across Friendship Centres.

Action 4.0.4

Advocate for mental wellness programming for Urban Indigenous men.

Aspiration 4.1.

Indigenous youth are held as our sacred fires for the future and supported to create communities free from gender-based and sexual violence.

Community Driven Actions

Action 4.1.1

Expand, enhance, and create programs that encompass mental wellness, resiliency building and prevention of gender-based and sexual violence.

Action 4.1.2

Expand, enhance and create opportunities of rites of passage ceremonies and programs for Urban Indigenous youth entering adolescence or adulthood to embrace traditional roles and responsibilities.

Action 4.1.3

Expand, enhance and create programs for life promotion and resiliency building for Indigenous youth focused on a future free from gender-based and sexual violence.

Provincial Driven Actions

Action 4.1.4

Continue to expand knowledge and awareness recognizing and responding to the human trafficking and sexual exploitation of Urban Indigenous youth through prevention initiatives.

Action 4.1.5

Advocate, resource, and create programs to promote life and build resiliency for Indigenous youth.

Aspiration 4.2.

Friendship Centres, their urban communities, and the survivors and families of Missing and Murdered Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples are champions and voices for change.

Community Driven Actions

Action 4.2.1

Expand, enhance and create awareness campaigns to bring attention to the voices of Missing and Murdered Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ (MMIWG2S) peoples, survivors and families.


Provincial Driven Actions

Action 4.2.2

Increase awareness and prevent human trafficking and sexual exploitation of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples.

Action 4.2.3

Develop social media campaigns and PSAs with the voices of Friendship Centre leaders, survivors, and families of MMIWG2S peoples.



Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples are more than just victims of violence. They have resilience, courage, and vision. Many have become Friendship Centre Elders, Executive Directors, community leaders, educators, and political activists. Through lived experience, they have gained deep insights into what victims of violence require to heal and preventive models that could have made their journeys not happen in the first place.

Strategies to address violence impacting Friendship Centre Indigenous communities must be self-determined and prioritize Indigenous led solutions.

★ Path Five

Towards Spaces to Thrive

Championing Empowering Environments and Social Infrastructure

Forces and systems have changed our Indigenous ways of knowing and being and how we have walked in the world. They have changed the shape of our daily life, where we are born, grow, work, live and age. Our traditional ways of community need to be re-embraced into the contemporary age where our communities ensure the ill are taken care of, the hungry are fed, and a safe canopy of hope provides shelter for Indigenous women, and protects children and our two-spirited family.

Vision

Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples enjoy the highest level of connection and well-being through equitable access to basic human needs from services and infrastructure that meet their social and economic needs due to the elimination of systemic inequities.

Aspiration 5.0.

Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples have access to Indigenous-led shelters, second-stage housing and permanent housing for survivors.

Community Driven Actions

Action 5.0.1

Expand, enhance, and create opportunities for Urban Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples to access safe and affordable housing and transitional safe spaces.

Action 5.0.2

Expand, enhance, and create opportunities for Urban Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples to access to safe, affordable transportation options with a focus on rural and remote communities.

Provincial Driven Actions

Action 5.0.3

Advocate for increased emergency and second-stage shelters in rural, remote, and northern communities.

Action 5.0.4

Create a comprehensive housing needs framework for Urban Indigenous-led shelters, second-stage housing and permanent housing for survivors.

Action 5.0.5

Advance Indigenous gender equality and equity to address the drivers of gender-based and sexual violence, including through initiatives aimed to improve community attitudes and norms toward sexual and gender-based violence.

Aspiration 5.1.

Cycles of poverty are diminished through supports and training, giving Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples the tools to enter the labour force for economic independence.

Community Driven Actions

Action 5.1.1

Expand, enhance, and create Urban Indigenous digital literacy programs related to job-seeking skills to increase employment opportunities.

Action 5.1.2

Expand, enhance, and create networks and partnerships with industry and employers to promote and support Urban Indigenous employment for women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples.

Provincial Driven Actions

Action 5.1.3

Support Friendship Centres through provincial partnerships with the employment sector to increase access and programs in community.

Action 5.1.4

Advocate to enable Friendship Centres to provide targeted programs addressing gender equality and socio-economic empowerment.

“For Indigenous women who manage to make it into emergency or secondary housing, there is nowhere to go after that. Indigenous women are choosing between homelessness and abuse, and go back to the abuse to have a roof over their heads even after leaving their partner for months or even years.”

-Participant

Two types of assistance are clearly critical: provision of safe, secure, and affordable housing; and provision of a continuum of individualized and open-ended wraparound supports including outreach services, housing and financial

assistance, spiritual and emotional support for as long as they need it. All women and their stories are unique, and require different approaches and different service options, provisions, and considerations. Safety needs to be a factor in every housing decision.

Economic reconciliation aims to create meaningful partnerships based on a holistic, value-driven approach to attaining community economic prosperity. Indigenous prosperity is more than financial prosperity. It is about safe and healthy communities that are able to equally participate in the economy. Skills training partnerships with Friendship Centres can support Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples to succeed and be independent and create safety from those who seek to exploit and harm.

★ Path Six

Towards Healing and Justice

Championing MMIWG2S Peoples, Families, and Survivors Well-being

Indigenous justice systems were based on a holistic philosophy in which law is a way of life and justice is part of the life process. Justice is a resolution of disputes, the healing of wounds and the restoration of social harmony guided by unwritten customary laws, traditions, and practices that are learned through oral teachings. A circle of justice connects everyone involved on a continuum, with everyone focused on the same center representing the underlying issues that need to be resolved to attain peace and harmony for individuals and the community.

Vision

Culturally relevant, restorative, and holistic systems of justice for Indigenous peoples are embraced and supports are embedded for Indigenous offenders, victims, families, youth, and children as well as those Indigenous communities impacted by the actions of those who perpetrate harm.

Aspiration 6.0.

MMIWG2S peoples and families are supported through their justice and healing journeys.

Community Driven Actions

Action 6.0.1

Expand, enhance, and create programs to provide families of MMIWG2S peoples with long-term cultural, emotional, and social support.

Action 6.0.2

Expand, enhance, and create access to Indigenous restorative justice programming.

Action 6.0.3

Expand and enhance access to court support workers and mobile advocates to walk beside and hold up families of MMIWG2S peoples and survivors of gender-based and sexual violence.

Provincial Driven Actions

Action 6.0.4

Create and resource culturally safe approaches and engagement opportunities to highlight stories and voices of MMIWG2S peoples and survivors of gender-based and sexual violence.

Action 6.0.5


Create opportunities for training and traditional restorative justice programming in Friendship Centres through advocacy and program development.

Action 6.0.6

Advocate for improved collection and access to data regarding gender-based crimes against including incidents of human trafficking, sexual exploitation and MMIWG2S peoples.

Action 6.0.7

Advocate for increased culturally safe legal aid and victims' services through developed partnerships provincially and in Friendship Centre's communities.



Embracing Mobile Advocacy

Survivor-driven and trauma-informed advocates work in partnership with survivors, focus on self-determination, and empower Indigenous survivors of gender-based and sexual violence to be safe and rebuild control of their lives. Survivors lead the process, choose their own goals, and define what is safest for them. Mobile advocacy is not a crisis response but rather mid- to long-term support designed to follow survivors across a wide range of needs.

Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples have long experienced racism, racial profiling, victim blaming, and not being believed when reporting a crime to police causing a detrimental lack of trust with the entire justice system and contributes to high rates of unreported gender-based and sexual violence crimes.



Looking Forward

This document exists because Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples in Alberta face the pervasive prospect of imminent, traumatic harm through gender-based and sexual violence, and there is a failure to address systemic and institutional racism in their communities to protect their rights and foster their well-being.

ANFCA's gender-based and sexual violence framework 'Navigating Towards Our North Star' is built on the solid foundation of community leadership, grassroots engagement and innovative culturally rich programming offered through Friendship Centres for Urban Indigenous people who are striving to co-create healthy, inclusive, and safe communities. ANFCA gratefully acknowledges the tireless efforts of front-line staff, volunteers, and Indigenous Elders across Alberta within Alberta's member Friendship Centres.

ANFCA is grateful for the guidance and leadership of Friendship Centre advocates and experts who work for, and with Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples impacted by gender-based and sexual violence. Most importantly, we acknowledge each person who has lived or is living with forms of gender-based and sexual violence. Not everyone is able to speak up, but everyone is deserving of healing and support. Thank you to every person who is raising their voice for change and sharing their experiences to shape the future. We have much to do and aspirations to achieve. 'Towards Our North Star' will guide and motivate us collectively as we move forward together.

The pathways, visions, aspirations, and actions presented here provide our navigation towards our North Star for the next 5 years, and will guide our organization in launching new initiatives, driving more effective advocacy, and securing essential funding through a shared province-wide, Indigenous-led vision for the elimination of gender-based and sexual violence in partnership with Alberta Friendship Centres. 'Towards Our North Star' is more than the name of our framework. It is the vessel that gives expression and physical manifestation to the enduring spirit of Indigenous peoples and based on the interactions between our dreams and our visions.



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Supporting Alberta Friendship Centres in creating
healthy, thriving, culturally connected Urban
Indigenous communities since 1970.

