



# Northwest Territories

## Introduction

Survivors and families of missing and murdered Indigenous women in the Northwest Territories (NWT) deserve our respect and help. The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) acknowledges and recognizes the contributions of the many people who have shared their experiences and made recommendations for change as a part of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and the development of the Final Report: *Reclaiming Power and Place*. Their courage has provided us with a strong platform to effect change. It is now up to us to address the systemic causes of violence directed at Indigenous women, girls and 2LGBTQQIA+ people.

This report highlights work that is being done in the NWT to respond to the 231 Calls for Justice from the National Inquiry. Our process involves an honest assessment of what we are currently doing, what we need to do in the future and setting targets to measure progress moving forward. We are committed to improving the safety and well-being of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.

## Statistics

- ★ 51% of the population of the NWT is Indigenous – Dene or First Nations, Métis and Inuit.
- ★ The Violent Crime rate in the NWT is 7 times higher than the average Canadian rate
- ★ NWT has the second highest rate of police-reported family violence in Canada
- ★ Many communities in the NWT have limited to no road access.
- ★ Only 38% of Indigenous women in the NWT consider their health to be good.
- ★ Almost 30% of Indigenous northerners in the NWT live in a dwelling in need of major repairs (2016)

## Current Progress

The Government of the Northwest Territories has committed to its own action plan in response to the Calls to Justice. Work in this area to date has included:

- ★ [Doing Our Part - GNWT Initial Response](#)
- ★ Taking Action - [A Work Plan](#) to address the Calls for Justice in *Reclaiming Power and Place: Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*

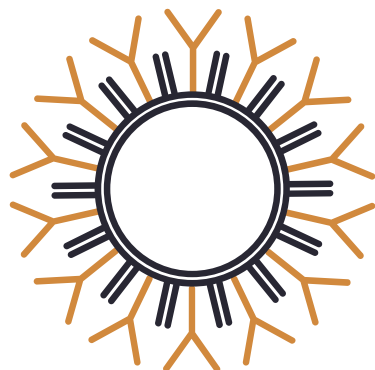


- ★ MMIWG Summary Reports – Responding to the Calls for Justice

- ★ MMIWG Preliminary Engagement Plan

In March 2021, the GNWT launched the Indigenous Cultural Awareness Sensitivity Training. This training, which is mandatory for all GNWT employees and available to the public for free, is an integral component in creating a public service where cultural diversity is appreciated, and where people from diverse cultural backgrounds communicate and work with mutual respect. The GNWT also recently announced that all internal financial management and program decisions will go through a GBA+ analysis as a part of the regular review process for all GNWT programs. These initiatives highlight some of the systematic changes that are occurring in the NWT.

The Gender Equity Division is a new unit within the Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs that expands on the work of the Women’s Advisory Office. The intent of the division is to ensure that the GNWT’s commitment to gender equality is reflected in budgets, policies and programs. This unit will also coordinate and support the intersectional and interdepartmental work required to address gender equity throughout the NWT, as well as the impacts of misogyny and family and gender-based violence.



The GNWT continues to engage with front-line stakeholders that work directly with survivors of family violence including the RCMP, shelters and victim services to continuously gauge what initiatives can be enacted to best respond to victim needs during this time. The GNWT has identified a need for greater coordination and accountability in our collective response to the incidence of family violence in this territory. To ensure this coordination, a new family violence coordinator position was approved and is required to develop a territorial family violence strategy.

Amendments to the *Employment Standards Act* and Regulations came into force on January 1, 2020, which includes the introduction of Family Violence leave. This new leave provides 5 paid and 5 unpaid days which can be taken by eligible employees to seek support or safety when dealing with a family violence situation.

Early in the process, the Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs, through the Women’s Advisory Office reached out to a number of Indigenous governments to identify a contact person that they can keep in contact with regarding the MMIWG files. Monthly teleconference calls are held with these community contacts where regular briefings are provided on the work the GNWT is doing to prepare an Action Plan and on the developments taking place nationally. Meeting notes are prepared and shared with the community contacts, and community contacts are encouraged to share those meeting notes with their leadership. The Women’s Advisory Office also has a standing offer to provide briefings to leadership.



An interdepartmental MMIWG Working Group was also established to coordinate the GNWT’s response to the Calls for Justice. This working group is chaired by the Special Advisor to the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women and includes appointed representatives from a number of departments.

### **Priorities and Next Steps**

The GNWT recognizes that this work cannot be done by governments alone. We will continue to collaborate with Indigenous governments and community organizations to respond to the needs of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people in the NWT. The following activities are planned going forward:

- ★ Engagement with key NWT stakeholders on the Territorial Action Plan
- ★ Completion of the Territorial Action Plan to be tabled in Fall 2021

### **Closing Statement**

The time for change is now. As a government, we pride ourselves on our ability to work with our valued partners to respond to the needs of NWT residents. We must be open to examining the Calls for Justice from multiple perspectives. Working together we will address systemic causes of violence, inequality, and racism so Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people can feel safe and empowered in our territory and our country.

