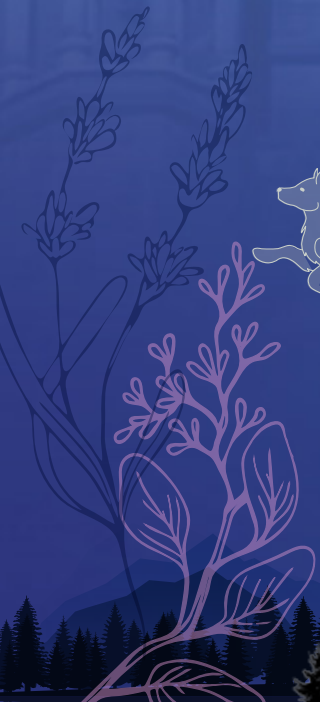


National Action Plan Progress Report

2023-24



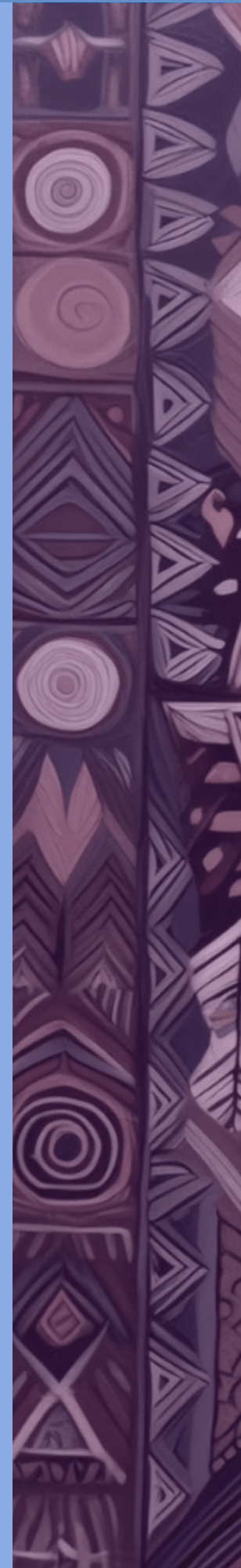


Table of Contents

ANALYSIS OF PROGRESS	7
GOAL #1	7
GOAL #2	8
GOAL #3	10
GOAL #4	12
GOAL #5	13
GOAL #6	14
GOAL #7	16
IMMEDIATE NEXT STEPS	17
MOVING FORWARD	18



The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) is a national Indigenous organization that promotes the social, economic, cultural, and political well-being of Indigenous Women, Girls, Two-Spirit, Transgender, and Gender-Diverse (WG2STGD+) people across Turtle Island and Inuit Nunangat.

Our organization is dedicated to advocating and acting on ending the ongoing genocide of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, Two-Spirit, Transgender, and Gender-Diverse People (MMIWG2S+). In alignment with this advocacy, NWAC evaluates the annual progress made by the Government of Canada on its commitment to end the genocide. This commitment is outlined in two federal government plans: the [2021 Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ People National Action Plan](#) and the accompanying [federal pathway](#).

Across Canada, the continued disappearances and deaths of Indigenous WG2STGD+ people, compounded by the lack of a transparent and accessible oversight system, has created difficulty in tracking the success of initiatives. As a result, there is a lack of understanding of how Indigenous WG2STGD+ people are at less risk.



The lack of full implementation of the National Inquiry's Calls for Justice remains a major concern. It has now been three years since the federal government released the national action plan, which raises further concerns around the lack of progress.



Our annual National Action Plan Progress Report examines the actions taken by the federal government over the past year.

In previous years, NWAC included several programs and services in our analysis that were not specific to MMIWG2S+. This year, we have taken a new approach to analyzing the federal government's progress. We have narrowed our scope to only include initiatives **specifically** designed in response to the national action plan and the Calls for Justice. As such, this report reflects the limited information that the federal government has reported since June 2023. This means that planned, ongoing, or completed actions that have not been publicly reported are not included in our analysis.

The continued lack of transparency and clarity from the federal government has impacted our ability to appropriately and accurately evaluate progress on the national action plan and the Calls for Justice. As such, there could be discrepancies between NWAC's report and that of the federal government's report.







Analysis of Progress

Goal #1:

Achieve transformative changes in attitudes, behaviours, and knowledge within the broader society to prevent and end the root causes of systemic racism, inequality, injustice, and violence, against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQA+ people in Canada.

Since June 2023, the federal government has continued to support programs to achieve transformative changes in attitudes, behaviours, and knowledge within broader society through three initiatives:

- 1 **The Increasing the Capacity** of Indigenous Women and 2SLGBTQQA+ Organizations to Address Gender-Based Violence Program has distributed \$20 million to 45 Indigenous organizations over the past year.
- 2 **The Addressing Anti-Indigenous Racism** in Health Systems Program has funded 157 projects since its inception. It is unclear how many projects were funded since June 2023.
- 3 **The Addressing Racism and Discrimination** in Canada's Health System Program has provided \$13 million to 12 organizations since June 2023.

In addition to these programs, Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) has been working to co-develop distinctions-based Indigenous health legislation. Unfortunately, the federal government has yet to table this legislation; the stated goal is to introduce the legislation in late winter 2024.

Although we have seen significant investments over the last year, outcomes from these funding programs appear to be sparse. This may be partly due to the lack of clarity on how many funded projects respond to the ongoing MMIWG2S+ genocide. There is a critical need for more publicly accessible information and transparency, including the reporting of outcomes, which are needed to evaluate the impact of these programs in answering the Calls for Justice.



Goal #2:

Keep families and survivors at the centre of the process and provide concrete support to survivors and families of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people in Canada.

Over the last year, the federal government continued to fund initiatives for survivors and families of MMIWG2S+ people. Notably, it extended funding for Family Information Liaison Units until 2025. The federal government has also continued to support the following four initiatives:

- 1 In 2023, the **Community Support for Healing and Family Initiative** put out a call for proposals following an increase in funding in Budget 2023. Justice Canada has not yet announced the funding recipients for this program.
- 2 In 2023, the **Support for the Wellbeing of Families and Survivors of MMIWG and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People Contribution Program** provided funding to one new recipient. In total, this program has provided over \$12.4 million to 33 organizations since 2021.
- 3 In March 2024, the federal government committed \$20 million towards the search of the Prairie Green landfill, outside of Winnipeg, for the remains of two Indigenous women. This follows two feasibility studies, which estimated a search would cost approximately \$90 million.
- 4 In May 2024, the governments of Canada and Manitoba announced their partnership for a **Red Dress Alert pilot program** following 16 pre-engagement sessions held by the National Family and Survivors Circle, Manitoba MMIWG2S+ Coalition, and Members of Parliament.



These programs represent a significant opportunity for survivors and families of MMIWG2S+ people to be placed at the centre of the process. However, the federal government has not been overly transparent in announcing how funding is being leveraged. We expect more clarity to be provided in the coming months as departments make decisions on funding recipients. Moreover, new funding for the Support for Wellbeing program has decreased significantly over the past year—an indication of the program transitioning to what represents an ongoing funding allocation. It is critical that the federal government continue to introduce innovative programs to ensure that survivors and families of MMIWG2S+ people remain at the centre of the process.

Critical first steps have been taken to develop Canada's first Red Dress Alert pilot program. Over the next year, it will be important for the federal government to continue collaborating with Indigenous partners, as well as the provinces and territories, to implement regional-specific alert systems across Canada.

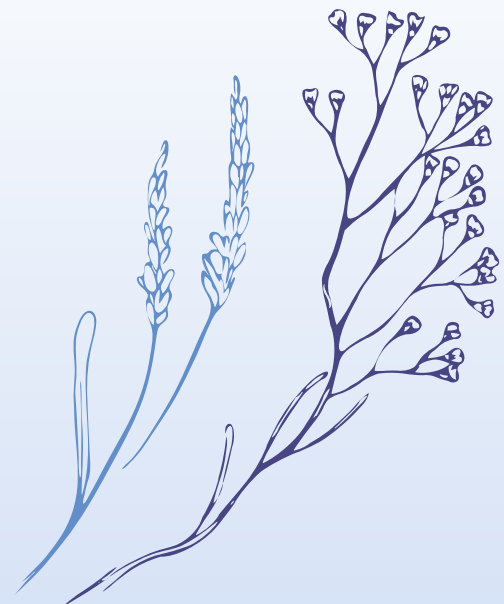


Goal #3:

Support the delivery of programs and services by Indigenous organizations, including at the grassroots level, to address all forms of gender- and race-based violence.

In previous years, the federal government has made considerable progress in supporting programs and services delivered by Indigenous organizations. Over the past year, it supported seven initiatives under this goal:

- 1 **The Supporting Indigenous Women's and 2SLGBTQIA+ Organizations Program** has continued to fund 32 ongoing projects across Canada, totalling \$13.25 million.
- 2 **The Pathways to Safe Indigenous Communities Initiative** had reportedly allocated all of its funds for the 2023–24 fiscal year. It is unknown where and who is receiving funding.
- 3 **The Indigenous Shelter and Transitional Housing Initiative** has supported 47 shelter projects across Canada, but it is unclear how many of these projects began after June 1, 2023.
- 4 **The Family Violence Prevention Program** spent over \$41 million to support the operation of emergency shelters and transitional housing. It remains unclear who and how this funding is being used, which is a reflection of who is targeted by this funding.



- 5 **In March 2024, Canadian Heritage** closed a second call for proposals for the Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities Initiative. Funding recipients have yet to be announced.
- 6 **The Support for the Wellbeing of Families and Survivors** of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People Contribution Program funded one new project in 2023; however, it was unclear if this project received funding after June 1, 2023.
- 7 **The Increasing the Capacity of Indigenous Women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ Organizations** to Address Gender-Based Violence Program provided \$20 million to 45 organizations last year.

The federal government continues to support several programs delivered by Indigenous organizations across Canada. Unfortunately, many of these federal funding programs continue to lack transparency on who and where funding is going. Additionally, of the seven programs identified under this goal, only one had a funding call-out over the past year. Once again, it is critical that the federal government introduce new and greater opportunities for Indigenous organizations to address all forms of gender- and race-based violence over the coming year.

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Goal #4:

Address the broader root causes of violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQA+ people.

Since June 2023, the federal government has made some progress to address the root causes of violence, including investing in or developing the following initiatives:

- 1 **The First Nations Infrastructure Fund** received an additional \$10 million in program funding. Since this program launched in 2016, 51 connectivity projects (32 completed, 19 ongoing) have supported 291 First Nations communities across Canada.
- 2 **In January 2024, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC)** launched a call for proposals to establish a National Indigenous Housing Centre, which will support initiatives under the Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy. This call for proposals only closed in March, and CMHC has not announced the results of this competition.
- 3 **The Universal Broadband Fund** has helped bring high-speed internet to Indigenous communities, including through a new commitment in March 2024 of \$11.4 million to connect over 2,600 Indigenous households in Ontario.
- 4 **Since April 2016, ISC has supported** 4,982 housing-related infrastructure projects across Canada.
- 5 **In February 2024, the Supreme Court of Canada** upheld the constitutionality of *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families*. This will play a critical role in affirming the right to self-government of Indigenous Peoples and help to address the broader roots of violence against Indigenous WG2STGD+ people.

Unfortunately, over the past year, the federal government has not made significant progress on developing a guaranteed basic income. As well, the Cultural Space in Indigenous Communities Program was not extended past June 2023.



Goal #5:

Develop a national Indigenous human rights accountability mechanism focused on Indigenous human rights that includes Inherent, Treaty and Constitutional rights. This mechanism will create shared accountability for upholding the human rights of Indigenous Peoples regarding gender-based violence.

Over the past year, the federal government has continued to work to develop a national Indigenous human rights accountability mechanism. Although we have yet to see an oversight body implemented, the federal government has taken the following steps:

- 1 **The Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs (CIRNA) MMIWG Secretariat** continues to track and report on federal pathway progress annually.
- 2 **In February 2024, the federal government hosted** the Second National Roundtable on MMIWG2S+ People. At the roundtable, stakeholders discussed creating an oversight body for the Calls for Justice and establishing a Red Dress Alert pilot program.
- 3 **Since March 2023, the Standing Committee on Indigenous Peoples** studied the Canadian Human Rights Framework as it pertains to Call for Justice 1.7. The committee is expected to report on the creation of a human rights ombudsperson in the coming months.

Frustratingly, there has been little progress in achieving this goal. Although mechanisms are in place to track progress, without an independent oversight body it is difficult to hold the federal government accountable. It is imperative that the federal government leverage the expertise of Indigenous communities and organizations to take action on this goal.



Goal #6:

Support a paradigm shift in policies and systems across Canada which defines transformative change in justice, health and wellness, human security, culture, and Indigenous human rights that include Inherent, Treaty, and Constitutional rights.

As previously discussed, the federal government is driving considerable change in addressing racism and discrimination experienced by Indigenous Peoples in the health system. It has also leveraged five key initiatives to support a paradigm shift:

- 1 **The Indigenous Languages and Cultures Program** has provided \$39 million to 68 projects over the last year. However, this program is expected to sunset at the end of 2024, as the federal government has not announced any plans to renew this program.
- 2 **The System Change** Informed by Gladue Principles to Address Indigenous Overrepresentation in the Criminal Justice System Program has provided \$2.7 million to 16 projects since June 2023.





- 3 **Following Kathy Neil's** appointment as Deputy Commissioner for Indigenous Corrections with Correctional Services Canada (CSC) in 2023, the department has played a significant role in recognizing the value of Elders on Indigenous offenders. However, we eagerly await further changes to be announced within CSC regarding Indigenous corrections.
- 4 **In 2023, Justice Canada** completed Indigenous-led engagements on the Indigenous Justice Strategy. Based on the consultations, Justice Canada is currently developing the strategy and expects to finalize it in 2024.
- 5 **Over the past year, Justice Canada** has provided just \$12,621 to nine organizations to support the Indigenous Justice Program.

Since the release of the national action plan and federal pathway, the federal government has also established the Indigenous Language Commissioner role and recognized National Ribbon Skirt Day. These represent two significant achievements under this goal. That said, the federal government has stalled on this goal. Transformative change cannot happen without the creation of mechanisms such as a Justice Reform Committee. With the expected release of the Indigenous Justice Strategy in 2024 and ongoing work by the Deputy Commissioner of Indigenous Corrections, NWAC is hopeful that more initiatives will be taken to support a greater paradigm shift across Canada in the coming year.

Since the release of the national action plan and federal pathway, the federal government has also established the Indigenous Language Commissioner role and recognized National Ribbon Skirt Day.



Goal #7:

Establish a culturally appropriate Indigenous data infrastructure reflective of Indigenous and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, based on Indigenous data sovereignty and culturally rooted and distinctions-based indicators.





The development of Indigenous-led data infrastructure is essential to reflect the distinct experiences of Indigenous People in data. Under this goal, CIRNA has been leading the Indigenous-Led Data Research Project since 2021—providing \$9.5 million in funding to **43 Indigenous-led data research** projects. However, it is unclear how many new projects received funding after June 1, 2023. It is vital that CIRNA, and other federal departments and agencies, continue to support the development of Indigenous-led data infrastructure projects.

Additionally, between July 2023 and June 2024, CIRNA and Statistics Canada have been hosting **consultative engagements on data standards for missing persons**. Through this work, the departments are aiming to gather information from police on MMIWG2S+, vulnerable, marginalized, and racialized people. This initiative is critical to understanding and improving policing data as it relates to the MMIWG2S+ genocide, opening new pathways to address the continued violence against Indigenous WG2STGD+ People. NWAC urges the federal government to advance progress on this initiative.



Immediate Next Steps

The federal government's national action plan outlined several immediate next steps to be taken to support its implementation. Although the federal government has consistently made little progress towards implementing the immediate next steps over the past years, in 2023, it has made some progress:

-  **On June 3, 2023, the federal government released** the 2022–23 Federal Pathway Annual Progress Report, which outlined its progress on the Calls for Justice.
-  **In February 2024, the federal government hosted** the Second National Roundtable on MMIWG2S+ People with federal, provincial, territorial, and Indigenous stakeholders.
-  **In 2023, Innovation 7 and the Ministerial Special Representative** Jennifer Moore Rattray engaged with survivors, families, and organizations to support the creation of an Indigenous and Human Rights Ombudsperson. It is expected that their reports will be released in 2024.
-  **The Community Support for Healing and Family Initiative** put out a call for proposals following an increase in funding in Budget 2023. Funding recipients have not yet been announced.

Despite these efforts, the federal government continues to fail at producing a costed implementation plan. Furthermore, there continues to be a lack of independent oversight over the coordination and implementation of the national action plan at the federal level. It is imperative that the federal government address the remaining immediate next steps to ensure transparency and accountability moving forward.



Moving Forward



It is incomprehensible that five years after the National Inquiry released its final report, the federal government has yet to respond to this genocide with a sense of urgency. Moving forward, NWAC hopes to see accelerated action from the federal government to implement every Call for Justice. Specifically, we must see immediate action on the following:

- 1 **Release an implementation plan** that is costed, measurable, and actionable to accelerate the implementation of the national action plan, while also increasing transparency and accountability around the release of specific funds and programming to address the MMIWG2S+ crisis.
- 2 **Implement Red Dress Alert systems** across Canada that are regionally specific and respond to the needs of survivors, families, and Indigenous communities and organizations.
- 3 **Accelerate the introduction** of oversight bodies that monitor, report, and enforce the role of the federal government in upholding the rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- 4 **Improve access** to Indigenous-led and culturally relevant healing and violence prevention services for Indigenous WG2STGD+ people across Canada.
- 5 **Address the disproportionately high rates** of incarceration experienced by Indigenous WG2STGD+ people by upholding the Gladue principles and improving access to culturally relevant and trauma-informed services.





While we acknowledge the work that has been completed so far, the federal government must act with urgency to end this ongoing genocide. We are still at a crisis point, as violence against Indigenous WG2STGD+ people continues at a disproportionate rate across this country. It is critical that the federal government respond to the legal imperatives outlined by the National Inquiry and bring an end to the MMIWG2S+ genocide in Canada.

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Native Women's Association of Canada

L'Association des femmes autochtones du Canada

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