



Native Women's  
Association of Canada

L'Association des  
femmes autochtones  
du Canada

# Data Methodological Guide in Support of the Data Working Group:

A Toolkit for Best Practices When  
Collecting Data on the MMIWG2S+  
Genocide



## WHO IS THIS TOOLKIT FOR?

This toolkit is designed for those currently working in law enforcement, including those who:

- ✎ interview family, friends, and community members associated with MMIWG2S+ cases
- ✎ investigate missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse (WG2STGD) people
- ✎ provide law-based services to survivors
- ✎ develop and analyze policy pertaining to the MMIWG2S+ genocide at all government levels

## THINGS TO REMEMBER

This toolkit is designed for those currently working in law enforcement, including those who:

- ✎ Indigenous women and girls have a homicide rate 4.5 times higher than that of non-Indigenous women in Canada.
- ✎ 75% of survivors of sexual assault in Indigenous communities are young women under 18 years of age.
- ✎ Indigenous women are approximately 3.5 times more likely to experience some form of spousal violence than non-Indigenous women.

While these statistics help to understand the severity of the MMIWG2S+ genocide, Indigenous WG2STGD people are more than statistics.

## INDIGENOUS METHODOLOGY AND KNOWLEDGE

Indigenous methodology and knowledge in data not only helps connect data collection, data use, analysis, and interpretation to Indigenous communities, but also invokes a deep appreciation for all life. Appreciating the uniqueness of other cultures reminds us that we are all connected in different ways.

As someone connected to law enforcement, you have the opportunity to provide safety and care during difficult times. Being sensitive to those who are struggling or are vulnerable shows courage and a determination to treat others with empathy, kindness, and respect. Providing individuals with space for quiet time, reflection, and smudging can make all the difference for family, friends, and community members who are looking for someone, missing someone, or worried about the well-being of someone.



We all have our own paths to walk in life. Being mindful of how another person's path is different but just as important as your own is important.

Indigenous Peoples experience, practise, and celebrate their spirituality in their own, unique ways based on their culture and community. The Seven Sacred Teachings are a critical part of many Indigenous People's teaching and provide guidance and wisdom in all aspects of life.

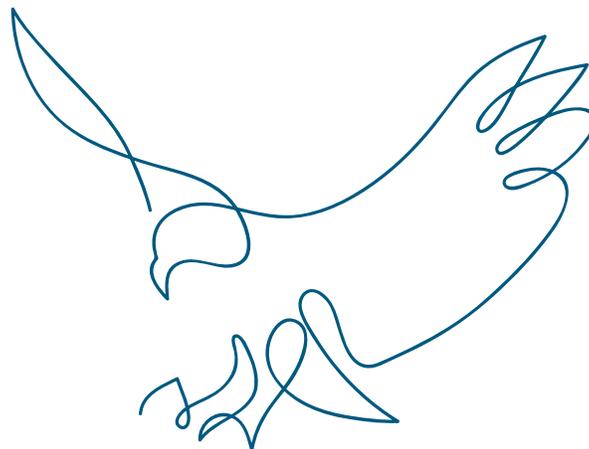
## THE SEVEN SACRED TEACHINGS

The Seven Sacred Teachings are guiding principles on how to treat others and are used within many Indigenous cultures. These teachings demonstrate how to "live the good life" through the "activation of honouring the past, present, and future grounded in Anishinaabe social wellbeing teachings and spirituality" (Bernard, 2018, pp. 24–25).

The Seven Sacred Teachings:

1. Nibwaakaawin—Wisdom
2. Zaagi'idiwin—Love
3. Minaadendamowin—Respect
4. Aakode'ewin—Bravery
5. Gwayakwaadiziwin—Honesty
6. Dabaadendiziwin—Humility
7. Debwewin—Truth

The Seven Sacred Teachings should be applied by those working in law enforcement whenever possible to demonstrate solidarity, concern, and empathy towards Indigenous people affected by the MMIWG2S+ genocide.



## APPLYING THE SEVEN SACRED TEACHINGS<sup>1</sup> IN MMIWG2S+ CASES

### *Nibwaakaawin—Wisdom*

Wisdom is a guiding principle that should be used in many ways. For those working in law enforcement, wisdom can come from your previous experiences working on MMIWG2S+ cases and your knowledge about the ongoing genocide. Those working in law enforcement must place the wisdom of Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers, Fire Keepers, and community members above their own. Indigenous communities know the missing or murdered person, and the circumstance of their experience as an Indigenous person. Those working in law enforcement must have the wisdom to understand what they can learn from Indigenous people when collecting information. Wisdom can also be incorporated into practice—to have the wisdom to leave behind harmful stereotypes and stigma, allowing for personal and professional growth.

### *Zaagi'idiwin—Love*

Love is universal to all cultures. We love our families, friends, and communities. Those working in law enforcement should always remember that the person who is missing, has been murdered, or has experienced violence is, first and foremost, a human being. The families, friends, and communities who come to speak to you regarding the missing person are their loved ones and should be treated with kindness and respect.

Those working in law enforcement should also employ this principle by providing small acts of love whenever possible. When asking a question of a family member, friend, or community member, are you doing so in a caring and loving manner? How would you want this person to be treated if they were a loved one of yours? Everyone is loved by someone.

### *Minaadendamowin—Respect*

Respect is essential to those working in law enforcement. Those working in law enforcement can show respect by respecting the wishes, time, well-being, and needs of family members, friends, community members, and survivors of MMIWG2S+. Respecting the knowledge, experiences, and thoughts of these people will create rapport and promote the rebuilding of trust between those working in law enforcement and Indigenous communities.

The stories that Indigenous people share about their family member, friend, or community member are sacred and personal. Respect the information shared and its validity to ensure that you are not drawing your own conclusions based on your own bias.

Respect also means respecting the importance of Indigenous Knowledge, teachings, and life in all aspects of law enforcement.

### *Aakode'ewin—Bravery*

Those working in law enforcement engage in acts of bravery every day. Bravery means so many things—the bravery to take on new challenges, the bravery to engage in dangerous situations, and the bravery to do what is right. Consider the bravery of those who have come to you for help. Think about how brave their loved one(s) must have been in their situation, and understand the bravery of Indigenous communities to fight for their lives.

<sup>1</sup> inspired by Edward Benton-Benai



Those working in law enforcement can show bravery by using the Seven Sacred Teachings in their work, by being brave against anti-Indigenous racism in law enforcement, and by never giving up the search for those who are missing and murdered. Bravery can also be shown through diligence, hard work, and dedication to solving murder cases so that communities can move forward.

### Gwayakwaadiziwin—Honesty

Living an honest life is a strong and noble cause. Honesty is paramount for those working in law enforcement when collecting information from family members, friends, communities, and survivors affected by the MMIWG2S+ genocide.

The first act of honesty is understanding Canada’s dark past of settler-colonialism. The next is being honest with oneself about your position. Remember that no class, race, gender, sexuality, ability, and so on is “wrong.” Be honest about what advantages you have and that you have promised to serve and protect everyone. Be honest with family members, friends, communities, and survivors, and let them know they can be honest with you. Often anti-Indigenous racism has led to hasty conclusions from those working in law enforcement. Assure witnesses of your intentions and desire to find the truth.

### Dabaadendiziwin—Humility

Acting with humility is the most foundational way that law enforcement can uphold the Seven Sacred Teachings. This means knowing that you understand why Indigenous Peoples fear help from those working in law enforcement; you want to do better moving forward; and you understand Indigenous Peoples are the experts in their own experiences. You can demonstrate humility and understanding by learning Indigenous protocols and actively engaging in truth and reconciliation efforts. This means asking for help when needed and trying to understand the perspective of family members, friends, communities, and survivors affected by the MMIWG2S+ genocide.

### Debwewin—Truth

Truth is relative. Everyone has their own truths. As a person working in law enforcement, you are seeking out the truth that will help find a missing person. For law enforcement, using the Sacred teaching of truth means engaging actively with the principles of truth and reconciliation—appreciating the truth as expressed by Indigenous Peoples and accepting the experiences of Indigenous family members, friends, communities, and survivors as truth. While we all have our own truths, the position of those working in law enforcement when collecting information on MMIWG2S+ cases does not require personal truth. Your truth is less relative to the task at hand. You need to advocate on behalf of the truth of Indigenous Peoples to ensure success.

Using the Seven Sacred Teachings is a best practice when working with Indigenous family members, friends, communities, and survivors to gain information about a MMIWG2S+ case. The act of using these teachings will show you are open to Indigenous Knowledge and that you care about truth and reconciliation. This will also help to foster new beginnings between those working in law enforcement and Indigenous communities.

See how [Treaty Three Police](#) and the [Thunder Bay Police Service](#) are using the Seven Sacred Teachings in their law enforcement work.



## RESOURCES FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT WORKERS:

- **Community Support Worker Training Program** (created by the Native Women’s Association of Canada )
- **The Greater Sudbury Police Service Indigenous Women and Girls Missing Persons Toolkit and Resource Guide** (created by the Greater Sudbury Police Service)
- **Loved ones of MMIWG2S call for police accountability across Canada** (article by Steven Wentzell)
- **NWAC’s helpful toolkit** (use whenever doing research with Indigenous communities)
- importance of ceremony and smudging
- **Pathways to Positive Policing Relationships** (examining police policies and practices in Mi’kma’ki)
- **Joining the Circle: Identifying Key Ingredients for Effective Police Collaboration within Indigenous Communities**
- **Addressing Gendered Violence against Inuit Women: A Review of Police Policies and Practices in Inuit Nunangat**
- **Knowing Each Other Better to Help Each Other Better** (Police Services and Inuit in Nunavik [Arctic Québec])
- **MMIWG2S+ Policing Recommendations** (from the Inaugural Justice Practitioner’s Summit on MMIWG2S+, pp. 10–12)
- **Honouring Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls by Ontario Provincial Police a video by the Ontario Police Services** (a land acknowledgement resource)

Resources For survivors, family, and community members:

- **The Greater Sudbury Police Service Indigenous Women and Girls Missing Persons Toolkit and Resource Guide** (helpful toolkit that has information and resources for family)
- Heal the Healers Program (created by the Native Women’s Association of Canada)
- **When a family member goes missing toolkit**
- **Ka Ni Kanichihk Missing Persons Toolkit** (includes selfcare tools, safety tips, and customizable posters)



For immediate mental health services:

- The MMIWG National Inquiry's toll-free support phone line is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, at 1-844-413-6649. The service is available in English, French, Cree, Ojibway, and Inuktitut.
- Mental health counselling and community-based cultural support services are available through Indigenous Services Canada. Local Indigenous organizations co-ordinate the service of Elders, traditional healers, and community-based support workers.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- **Benton-Benai, Edward.** *The Mishomis Book: The Voice of the Ojibway.* Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2010.
- **Bernard, Tamara.** "We are More than Missing and Murdered: The Healing Power of Re-writing, Re-claiming and Re-presenting." Master's thesis, Lakehead University, 2018.





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