

POVERTY REDUCTION



Native Women's
Association of Canada

L'Association des
femmes autochtones
du Canada

Culture and Growth

- Indigenous women, girls and gender diverse people are excluded from decision-making positions and forced into financially vulnerable positions. This can pose further challenges to their economic and social development.
- Culture is a human right that has long been obstructed for Indigenous people because of assimilation policies developed by the Canadian Government.
- Poverty, especially for Indigenous women, girls and gender diverse people means being vulnerable to violence, and to lack of autonomy and access to services. Poverty is social disconnection, which is why cultural identity and social inclusion are absolutely necessary to poverty reduction.
- Increased participation in society and the labour market is essential for growth, especially for those who face additional barriers such as Indigenous women with a disability or 2SLGBTQ+ individuals. This means increasing access to culture will increase social inclusion and economic security through appropriate employment and social services.

Indigenous Women and Conditions of Poverty

- Gender, race and social status are all factors that play a critical role in determining poverty. In Canada, Indigenous women are more likely to live in conditions of poverty than anyone else.
- Indigenous women are more likely to experience conditions of poverty because of the dominance of colonial systems and the continuation of societal discrimination based not only on race and gender, but also on class and culture.
- According to the 2006 census, more than 37% of Indigenous women, compared with 17% of non-Indigenous women, were living in poverty.
- Women living in poverty are especially vulnerable to domestic violence because their financial instability makes it difficult for them to escape violence at home. This can lead to Indigenous women and girls being sexually exploited, or go missing or murdered.
- Poverty can be exacerbated for Indigenous women with compounding layers of discrimination such as age, gender identity and disability.
- **Invisible poverty:** Many First Nations, Métis and Inuit women live in invisible poverty. This includes food insecurity, lack of reliable health care, presence of fear in accessing services, low wages and social exclusion.

TO LEARN MORE, PLEASE CONTACT:

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NWAC and the Poverty Reduction Strategy

NWAC worked closely with Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) to engage with Indigenous women on the development of a new Poverty Reduction Strategy. NWAC met with Indigenous women with lived experiences of poverty, engaged with women in an online survey and consulted Indigenous women leaders from every province/territory. Some of the core themes from the engagement are: access to culture/cultural supports, accurate data, and need for consideration concerning intersectionality and marginalization.



Recommendations

- Increase food security and sustainability projects in communities, including gardening, access to affordable healthy foods and traditional food gathering.
- Invest in rewarding employment opportunities for Indigenous women that provide a living wage and foster pride.
- Explore the additional intersectionality of Indigenous women with disabilities, LGBTQ+ and Two-Spirited individuals, and those who are disenfranchised such as youth.
- Need for self-determination of First Nations governments and control over programming for Indigenous women. Programs need to be holistic and women-centered.
- Take a Housing First model to provide safe and stable housing for Indigenous women and their families.
- Provide northern communities with access to quality programs and services, especially in areas of water, healthcare and mental wellness of children.
- Empower Indigenous women in their fields of passion and support Indigenous women business owners, especially women in northern and isolated communities.
- Invest in better training to create more reliable Indigenous service providers and reduce barriers to Indigenous-led programming.
- Policies must be proactive in providing culturally appropriate services and programs to prevent violence perpetrated against Indigenous women and their families.