



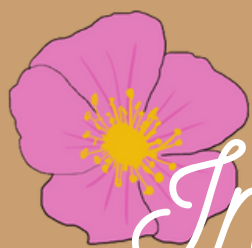
PERSONAL  
SAFETY GUIDE



*Safety is a  
sqilx'w  
Birthright*

A Workbook designed to help you  
understand the current state of  
public safety in our area, and how  
to identify when you may be in a  
unsafe situation.

/OKIB PUBLIC SAFETY/



# Introduction



The Okanagan Indian Band (OKIB) Public Safety Department (PSD) is committed to taking part in the healing of our community. This toolkit is a prayer for safety. Our prayer is that all sqilx' w impacted by Canada's ongoing colonial legacy of violence in our community and beyond are safe and know they are loved.

When the feet of our young ones touch the ground we pray you feel connected, safe, and worthy of loving kinships and relationships.

This toolkit was composed of community voices, local experts with lived experience, all of who poured into this project as part of coming together to support sqilx' w wellbeing and enhance personal safety.



# *First a message of love...*

**Trigger Warning:** This guide book contains sensitive content that may be distressing please be aware that the following information may include references to violence, including but not limited to physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, as well as other forms of harm. These topics can evoke strong emotions and memories, and may trigger feelings of distress, anxiety, or unease.

We encourage you to prioritize your well-being and engage with this content only if you feel emotionally prepared and supported. If at any point you find yourself overwhelmed, we encourage you to reach out to a trusted support person, counselor, or helpline for assistance.

Remember, you are not alone, and there are resources available to help you through difficult times. Healing is a personal journey, and it's important to respect your own boundaries and self-care needs. Take breaks, practice self-compassion, and seek support when needed.

## **Support Available 24 Hours a Day**

Hope for Wellness Help Line offers immediate mental health counselling and crisis intervention by phone or online chat. Call toll-free 1-855-242-3310 or start a confidential chat with a counsellor at [hopeforwellness.ca](https://hopeforwellness.ca).

Indian Residential School Crisis Line is a national service for anyone experiencing pain or distress as a result of their residential school experience. Call toll-free 1-866-925-4419.

Kuu-Us Crisis Line Society provides crisis services for Indigenous people across BC. Adults/Elders line 250-723-4050; youth line 250-723-2040. Or call toll free 1-800-588-8717. Learn more at [www.kuu-uscrisisline.com](https://www.kuu-uscrisisline.com).

**On your own  
homelands you are  
never alone.**

**These are the lands that  
knew you were coming  
far before your story  
began.**

**You have purpose here,  
you have belonging  
here.**

**We need you.  
Our land needs you.**

# Different types of Violence

**Important Note:** All genders and identities can be victims of domestic violence and intimate partner violence, violence does not know gender.

## Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is when forms of abuse or violence takes place within a household and can be between any two people within that household. This means it can be between parents, siblings, roommates, or anyone else who resides in a home together.

According to Canada's Public Prosecution Service domestic violence is: A case involving a physical or sexual assault, or threat of such violence, against an intimate partner. An intimate partner, with respect to a person, includes their current or former spouse, common-law partner and dating partner.

According to Section 266 of the Criminal Code of Canada, domestic assault is similar to simple assault. It is defined as applying force or threatening or attempting to apply force to another person, either with or without a weapon.

In a domestic assault case, in so-called Canada almost any item in a household could be defined as a weapon if used during an assault or threat towards a victim. The act of picking up something like a water bottle, a phone, a TV controller, a towel, or anything held in the hand (even if not thrown) could upgrade the charge to assault with a weapon. It doesn't matter if the victim suffered an injury or not.



## Intimate Partner Violence

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is when a current or former intimate partner uses power and control to abuse their partner. While the abuse is similar to domestic violence it carries a higher risk to the livelihood of the victim. It is a pattern of controlling behaviour used to maintain power in a relationship by one partner over the other, creating a power imbalance in the relationship. Below is an adapted list of the Power and Control wheel that supports folk in defining what intimate partner violence is.

IPV Violence can look like:

- **Physical Abuse:** Pushing, shoving, hitting, slapping, choking, hair pulling, punching, kicking, grabbing, tripping, biting, beating, throwing someone down
- **Sexual Abuse:** rape, any touch without sober, clear, and concise consent,
- **Spiritual Abuse:** Uses teachings or religious texts to manipulate someone to do something against their will, and/or gain power or control over their victim
- **Financial Abuse:** Will blame the victim for financial gaps in the household, withholding access to family income, having money taken away which limits access to the world and isolates the victim
- **Dominance:** When one person dominates the relationship and is the only one who has power to define the roles within the household. Removing one's identity and agency over self.
- **Isolation:** When you are isolated from friends, family, or community. Or if you have been denied access to communicate with others outside the home. You are limited when it comes to outside involvement and activities, often justified by jealousy.
- **Gaslighting, minimizing, and denying:** Make light of the abuse and not take concerns seriously. Saying the abuse didn't happen, or didn't happen as you remember it. Shifting responsibility for abusive behaviour and excusing their actions saying they were provoked.
- **Children and reproduction:** Force pregnancy in order to control and isolate from work, friends and the outside world. Sabotage birth control. Threaten to take children away.
- **Ceremonial Abuse:** When you are told to engage in a ceremony that feels unsafe or where you are isolated against your will.
- **Coercion and Threats:** Make and/or carry out threats to do something to harm. Threaten to leave or to commit suicide or other violent acts to loved ones or pets. Make someone drop charges or turn back on protection measures, or do illegal things. Threats to expose them to authority figures or community.
- **Intimidation:** Making someone afraid through looks, actions, gestures. Breaking things, or destroying property. Purposely displaying weapons to induce fear.
- **Emotional Abuse:** Putting someone down making them feel bad about themselves. Name calling, playing mind games, making someone feel guilty or purposely humiliating in order to feel a sense of superiority.

## Domestic Violence and Ongoing Colonization

In our communities as syilx Peoples we have always stood on our belief that we are all deserving of equitable treatment. That means we are each treated with respect, fairness, and are all deserving of love, safety, supported by our community. We live in a reciprocal kinship with all of life, both animate and inanimate.

However, since the violent onset of colonization that sqilx'w inherent knowledge has been damaged and left a lot of our community kin believing we aren't worthy of love, safety, and community belonging.

*"Violence against Indigenous peoples reflects the traumatic and destructive history of colonialization that impacted and continues to impact Indigenous families, communities and Canadian society overall"*

*Statistics Canada, 2023*

When colonizers came to our homelands they began to build a society that would go to benefit their own people. Within their society they built systems that would afford safety to white folx which set sqilx'w people up to experience inequities among the services. Much of which our people still face today in "Vernon," and throughout the Okanagan.

Community safety will be most impactful when it's our own sqilx'w people who come together to create change and make plans with one another around safety.

Statistics Canada shares that Indigenous women are twice as likely not to seek out emergency services as required than non-Indigenous women because of the distrust they have for such services.

***"Indigenous women (11%) were almost six times more likely than non-Indigenous women (2.3%) to have ever been under the legal responsibility of the government and about eight in ten (81%) Indigenous women who were ever under the legal responsibility of the government have experienced lifetime violent victimization."***

*Statistics Canada, 2022*

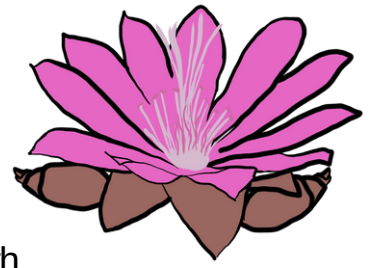


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*And the police said it was my fault. I had to be brought to the hospital from injuries and they said I likely deserved the random violence that I experienced in the park. Then they told the hospital I was being combative when I wasn't. I was screaming from the pain of the assault so the hospital then refused me a bus ticket because they said I didn't deserve it after they said I mistreated the police, putting me in an even more vulnerable situation. I didn't even have clothes to go home in and had to make my way home without shoes and in the hospital gown. I have never been treated so inhumanely in my life.”*

*sqilx'w from nkmaplqs*

# Violence against women



Violence against Indigenous women in Canada is a serious issue with disproportionate rates compared to non-Indigenous women. Here are some key statistics regarding violence against Indigenous women:

## **Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG):**

The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, which concluded in 2019, found that Indigenous women and girls in Canada are significantly more likely to experience violence than non-Indigenous women.

The inquiry's final report stated that an estimated 1,200 Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit individuals were murdered or went missing between 1980 and 2012.

*Indigenous women represent a higher percentage of female homicide victims compared to non-Indigenous women. According to Statistics Canada, in 2019, Indigenous women accounted for 28% of female homicide victims, despite comprising only 5% of the female population.*

## **Intimate Partner Violence:**

Indigenous women experience higher rates of intimate partner violence compared to non-Indigenous women. According to the General Social Survey on Victimization, in 2019, Indigenous women were three times more likely than non-Indigenous women to report experiencing spousal violence.

The same survey found that Indigenous women were more likely to experience severe forms of violence, such as being beaten, choked, or sexually assaulted by their intimate partners.

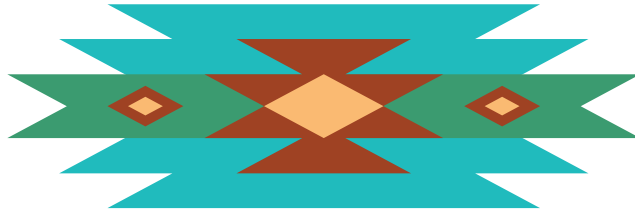
## **Socioeconomic Factors:**

Socioeconomic factors, including poverty, inadequate housing, and limited access to safe spaces within all institutions such as education, academia, and healthcare, and contribute to the vulnerability of Indigenous women to violence.

## **Systemic Factors:**

Systemic factors, such as racism, sexism, and the historical and ongoing marginalization of Indigenous communities, contribute to the violence experienced by Indigenous women.

The lack of culturally appropriate support services, inadequate police response, and systemic biases within the justice system can hinder access to justice for Indigenous women who experience violence.



# Violence against men

Statistics on violence against Indigenous men in Canada are not as extensively documented as statistics on violence against Indigenous women. However, there is evidence to suggest that Indigenous men also experience high rates of violence.

Here are some key points:

**Homicide Rates:** According to Statistics Canada's 2019 report on homicide, Indigenous men in Canada have higher rates of homicide victimization compared to non-Indigenous men. In 2019, the homicide rate for Indigenous males was 8.5 per 100,000 population, while for non-Indigenous males, it was 3.9 per 100,000 population.

**Missing and Murdered Indigenous Men:** The issue of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Men (MMIM) has gained attention in recent years. Although specific statistics on MMIM are limited, it is recognized that Indigenous men are also disproportionately affected by violence and go missing or are murdered at higher rates.

**Overrepresentation in the Criminal Justice System:** Indigenous men are overrepresented in the Canadian criminal justice system. They are more likely to be arrested, incarcerated, and involved in violent incidents. This overrepresentation is influenced by various factors, including socioeconomic disparities, historical and ongoing systemic injustices, and challenges within the community.

**Intersections with Other Forms of Violence:** Indigenous men may also experience violence within the context of intimate partner violence, family violence, and systemic violence. These forms of violence can have severe physical, emotional, and psychological impacts on individuals and communities.

It's important to note that these statistics provide a general overview and may vary across different Indigenous communities and regions within Canada. Additionally, there is a need for further research and data collection to fully understand the extent and nuances of violence against Indigenous men in the country.





# IndigiQueer, Two-Spirit, and Gender Diverse Kin

Statistics specifically focused on violence against Indigenous Queer, Trans, or Two-Spirit Kin in Canada are grossly limited. Data collection on violence against the communities are still developing, and there are ongoing efforts to improve data collection and reporting.

However, the available information and studies indicate that Indigenous Queer, Trans, Two-Spirit and Gender Diverse Kin face elevated rates of violence and discrimination.

Here are some key points to consider:

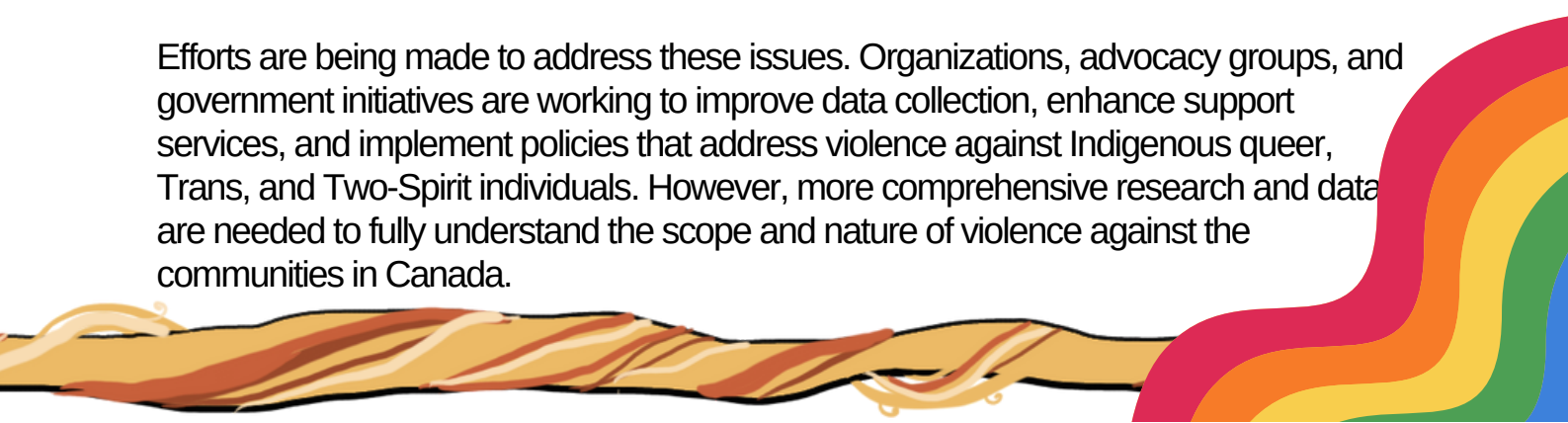
**High Rates of Violence:** Indigenous Queer, Trans, and Two-Spirit Kin experience higher rates of violence compared to non-Indigenous Queer and Trans individuals. They are vulnerable to various forms of violence, including hate crimes, physical assaults, sexual violence, and harassment.

**Intersectional Vulnerabilities:** Indigenous Queer, Trans, and Two-Spirit Kin face intersecting forms of discrimination and violence due to their Indigenous, LGBTQ2S+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and Two-Spirit) identities. This intersectionality compounds their risk of experiencing violence and marginalization.

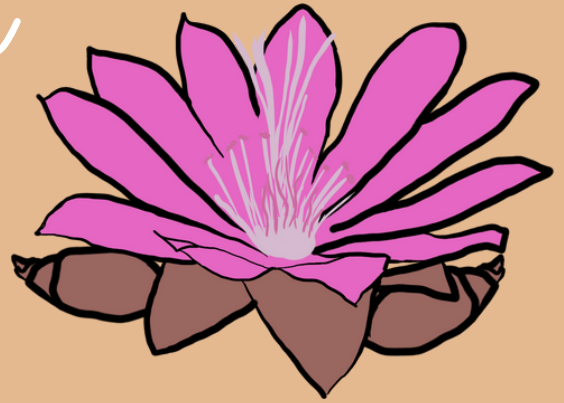
**Systemic Discrimination:** Systemic discrimination within various systems, including healthcare, justice, and social services, affects Indigenous Queer, Trans, and Two-Spirit individuals. This discrimination can create barriers to accessing support and protection, contributing to their vulnerability.

**Underreporting:** Like with violence against other equity-deserving communities, underreporting is a significant challenge. Factors such as fear, distrust of authorities, and previous negative experiences may discourage individuals from reporting incidents of violence.

Efforts are being made to address these issues. Organizations, advocacy groups, and government initiatives are working to improve data collection, enhance support services, and implement policies that address violence against Indigenous queer, Trans, and Two-Spirit individuals. However, more comprehensive research and data are needed to fully understand the scope and nature of violence against the communities in Canada.



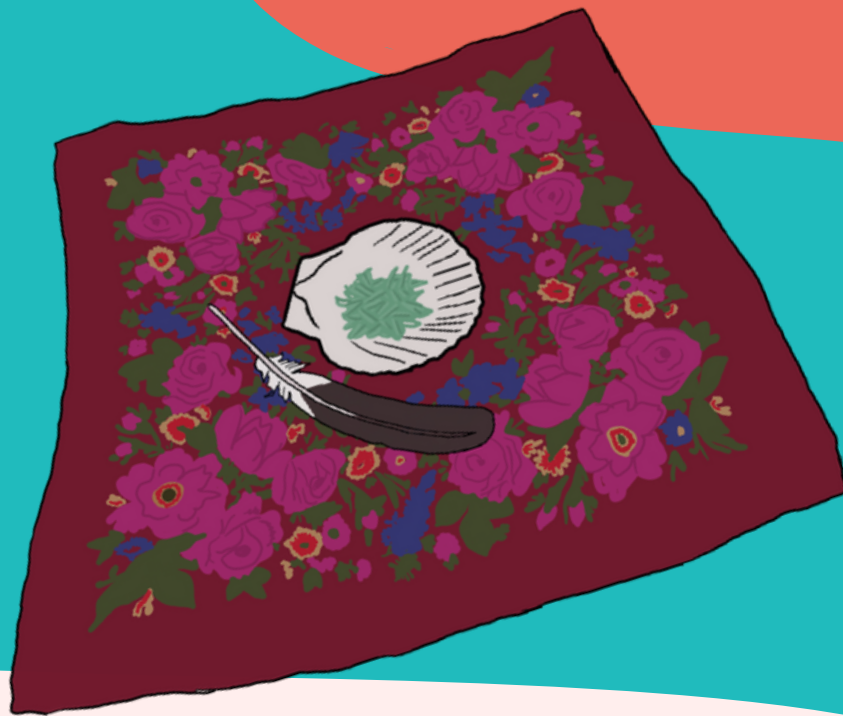
*Are you in an unsafe situation?*



**Physical Violence: This includes anything that restricts you from accessing resources, to violence**

This includes actions such as:

- Hitting
- Slapping
- Pinching
- Grabbing
- Stabbing
- Biting
- Kicking
- Punching
- Pushing
- Choking
- Tripping
- Burning you
- Using weapons against you
- Not allowing access to medication, mobility aids,
- food, fluids, or sleep
- Making you use drugs and/or alcohol when you
- don't want to
- Throwing objects at you
- Punching walls
- Restraining you



**Sexual Violence: Includes everything from forceful sexual interactions (physical or verbal) or any unwanted intimate contact where you didn't give clearly communicated consent.**

For example:

- Touching or grabbing you in sexual ways against your will
- Having sex with you when you don't want to
- Criticizing your sexual interactions
- Criticizing your body – for example, calling you “fat” or “ugly”
- Making you act out sexual fantasies against your will, such as making you wear certain clothing or making you perform a sexual act that you don't want to do
- Forcing you to have sex or perform sexual acts with others
- Making you perform humiliating sex acts and/or humiliating you during sex
- Criticizing you for your sexual history
- Using derogatory words against you like “slut” or “frigid”
- Refusing to take “no” for an answer
- Using pornography to show you how it's “supposed to be done”
- Making you watch pornography when you don't want to
- Involving children in sexual acts
- Involving weapons or unwanted objects in sexual acts
- Involving animals in sexual acts



**Emotional/ Psychological Violence: Includes acts of intimidation, fear mongering, and threats such as physical intimidation, and name calling to cause shame, hurt, or control over you.**

For Example;

- Shaming you – for example, blaming you for the abuse, telling other people you are “crazy”, or making fun of you in front of others
- Controlling your behaviour – for example, not allowing you to wear make-up or to dress the way you want to
- Constantly questioning you about where you’ve been, who you were with, and what you were doing
- Judging or criticizing your thoughts, feelings, opinions, beliefs and/or actions
- Making racist and/or sexist comments about you or other women or Indigenous women
- Humiliating you or embarrassing you in front of others
- Yelling at you
- Calling you names like “stupid” or “idiot” and putting you down
- Insulting the people you care about
- Acting very jealous – for example, constantly accusing you of cheating and checking your phone or computer to find “evidence”
- Minimizing your feelings or needs, such as telling you you’re “overreacting” or “too sensitive”



**Financial Violence: Controlling all the finances that come into your home, and withholding money as an act of control. As well as over-exploiting your labour for their own gain.**

**For example:**

- Telling you how or how not to spend your money
- Taking control of your bank card or credit card
- Not allowing you to have your money
- Threatening to kick you out of the house
- Keeping you from seeing shared bank accounts or records
- Forbidding you to work or limiting how much you work or where you work
- Using your social insurance number to obtain credit without your permission
- Using your child's social insurance number to claim an income tax refund without your permission
- Giving you presents and/or paying for things like dinner and expecting you to return the favour or give something back in return
- Using their money and status to make you feel like you are not important
- Trying to control you by making you financially dependent on them

**Spiritual Violence: Includes restricting access to practice your culture and ceremonies, language, or spirituality. Also includes mocking or criticizing your beliefs.**

**For Example;**

- Making fun of your spiritual beliefs or culture
- Preventing you from practicing your spiritual beliefs or culture, such as stopping you from seeing an Elder or participating in community events and ceremonies
- Using spiritual beliefs or culture to manipulate you



# *Are you in an abusive relationship?*

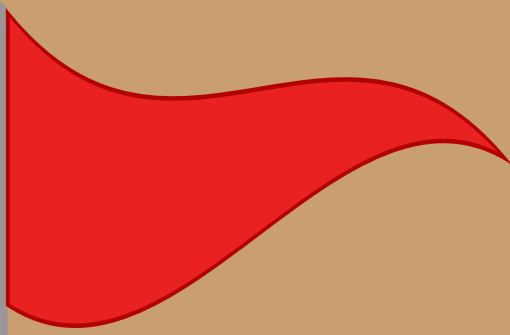
Anyone from any diverse background can experience domestic violence, and while women and gender diverse folks are more likely to experience abuse in relationships, it's important to note that men are also victims and often stay quiet longer. Sometimes victims of violence feel they are at fault for causing abuse to occur in the relationship.



“

The one thing we pray for you to know and feel is the abuse was never, and is **NEVER** your fault.

Abuse is often derived from one person wanting to control the power dynamic in a relationship. The purpose is to break someone's self worth down in order for the abuser to feel a sense of control.



# Red Flags

The following are red flags to watch for:

- You avoid partaking in activities or using clothes that make your partner angry. For example, you might avoid posting on social media or wearing a low-cut top.  
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- Your partner often opposes your opinions and perceptions, telling you that your perceptions are incorrect or false (gaslighting).  
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- You are asked to check in with your partner at all times to let them know where you are and who you are with, even when spending time with close relatives.  
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- Your partner blocks you during conversations or changes the subject to reflect it onto you and your behaviour.  
-----
- Your partner tells hurtful jokes and tells you that you are "too sensitive" if you don't laugh or find it funny.

- Your partner makes you feel as if your feelings are wrong or don't matter.  
-----
- Your partner makes you or indirectly pressures you to apologize for what you didn't do.  
-----
- Your partner puts words in your mouth or speaks for you without consent.  
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- Your partner has intensive mood swings. One moment they may seem distant, the next, they are unavailable, and then they are loving. You may feel you don't know what to expect or what version of them you get, so you try to change your behaviours to receive love and affection, often to no avail.  
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- Your partner denies what they've said or actions that took place, including actions from a previous relationship.

# Human Trafficking & Exploitation

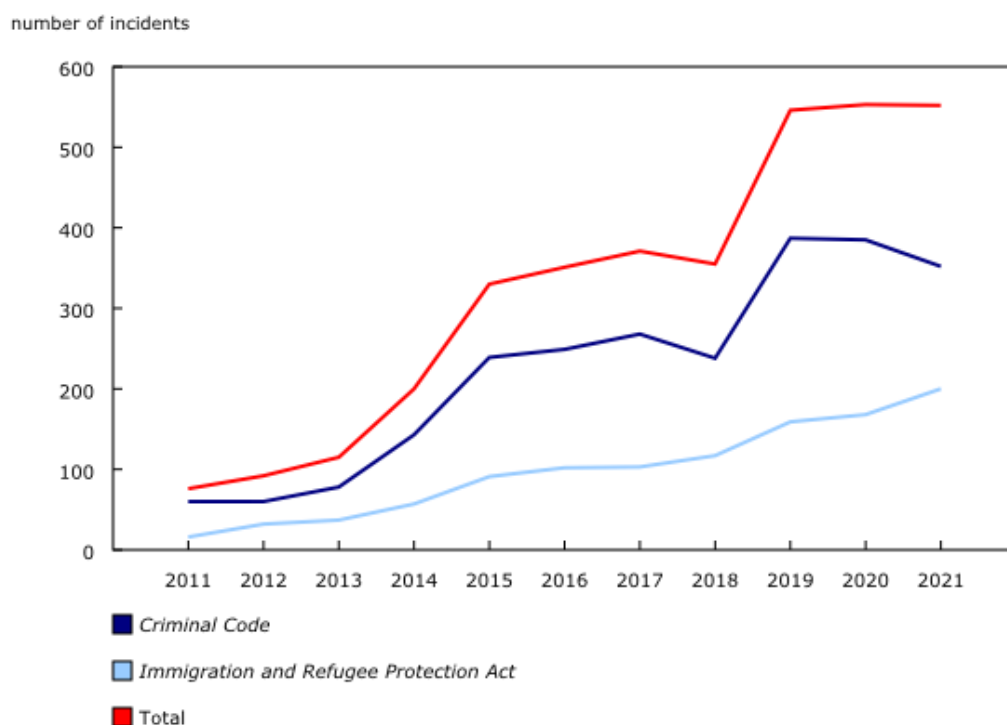
According to a survey done in 2019 by frontline service providers, 50% of human trafficking victims in Canada are Indigenous girls, and 51% of trafficking victims are Indigenous women.

These staggering numbers are due to the violence that colonization has brought to Indigenous homelands that have resulted in the dehumanization of sqilx'w people. Community care is important because naturally as humans we go where we feel we have belonging. So if our own people don't feel like they belong in our community they go where they feel they have a community who understands them, and sometimes that means the larger metropolitan areas such as Vancouver.

**Our people are our responsibility as a collective.**

As you'll see in the chart below human trafficking has been on the rise in Canada, with a steady increase among all genders and identities.

## Police-reported incidents of human trafficking, by statute, Canada, 2011 to 2021



## How does it happen?

There are several ways that traffickers gain access, and/or trust with their victims.

**Recruitment:** Traffickers can use a variety of ways to approach potential victims. This includes pretending to be a potential boyfriend, friend, or potential employer. They use methods such as connecting to people they deem vulnerable through social media platforms, on the street, in local restaurants, bars and in the Okanagan it's been shared by those we interviewed it's often bars and a promise for a gathering at a popular hotel chain. Often, false promises are made to the potential victims about money, high brand clothing, work or fully funded education opportunities, etc.

**Pimps:** Pimps are traffickers, who may act individually or as part of a larger operation.

### There are two types of Pimps:

**Romeo Pimps** may draw a young person into their lives with false promises of affection, love, or access to a glamorous lifestyle.

**Gorilla Pimps** often find potential victims through the use of violence, sexual assault, and abuse as a way to 'break' that individual and flip them into 'the game,' where they will be further exploited.

Traffickers often have a trained eye and can pick up on human behaviours that tell them someone is in a position of vulnerability. They understand their victims, and look for ones who are in search of a 'better' life, one they can often falsely promise.

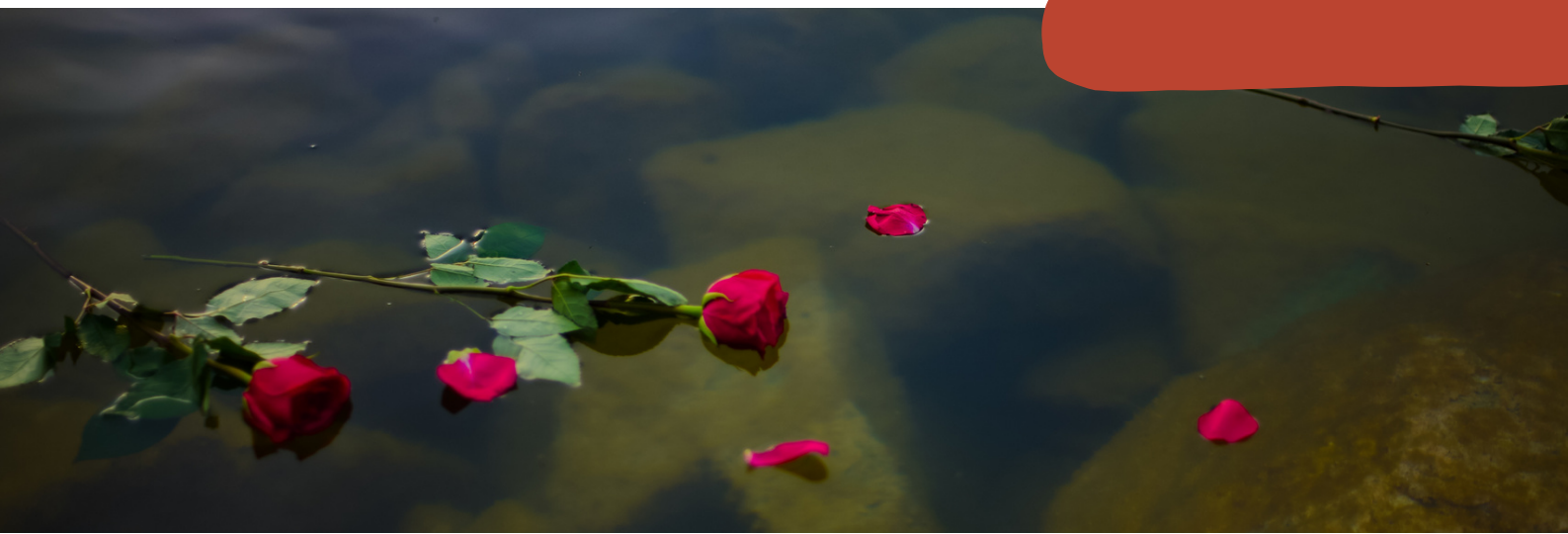
## Signs you are being trafficked

- You are being controlled by force, verbal or physical threats, or deception;
- You are told to keep in constant contact (and are given one or more cell phones)
- You are being given expensive gifts
- You feel you are isolated from your family, friends and loved ones
- You are earning or making money and not allowed to keep it
- You are being forced to give your identification to someone else
- You are told to look a certain way (hair, nails and clothes etc.)
- You are being denied food and/or sleep, this can often be a form of offsetting someone's ability to make decisions
- You feel forced to have sex for money or in exchange for gifts, housing, food, substances, or safety

If you answer yes to these, then you may be a victim of human trafficking, and you need to seek help.

### 1. Contact police or emergency services by calling 911

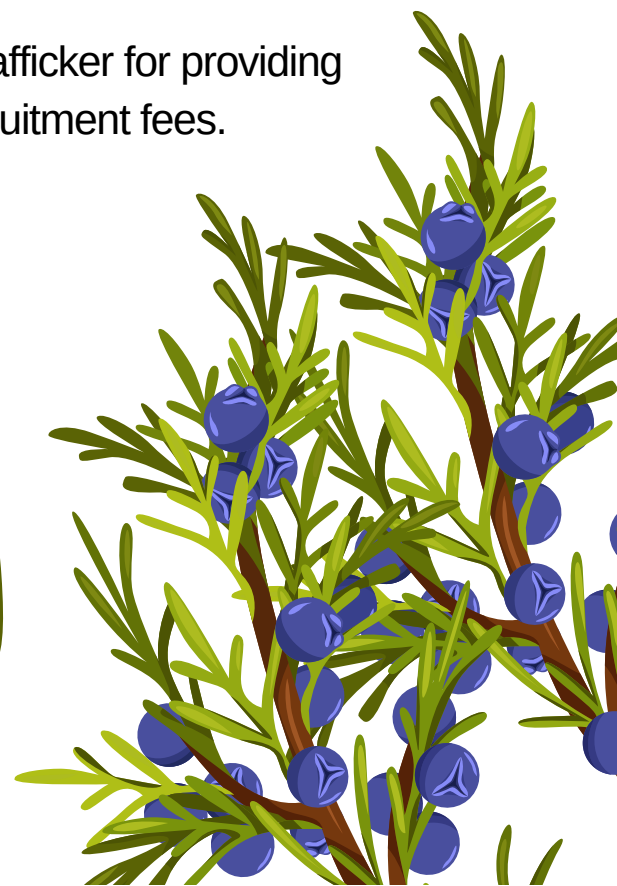
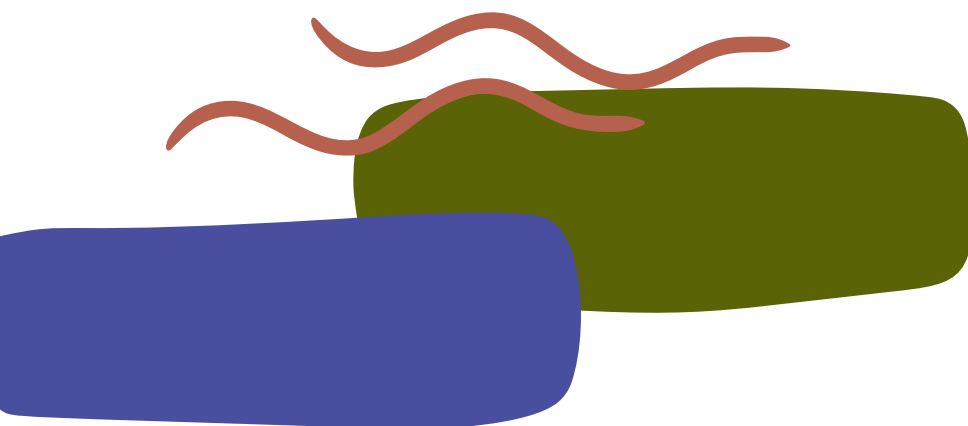
1. Call the **Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-833-900-1010**. The Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline is a confidential, multilingual service, operating 24/7 to connect victims and survivors with social services, law enforcement, and emergency services, as well as receive tips from the public.



## What to watch for in others you believe may be being trafficked

Sometimes victims may:

- Often not know they are being trafficked because their trafficker is a intimate partner, or caretaker;
- Sometimes those being trafficked are seemingly being well taken care of, with housing, food, clothes, and other wants and needs being met. However, this is a form of control and grooming the victim;
- Not be made aware of their rights and supports available to them that allow them their free will
- They are often taught to not engage with authority, or to fear them. This makes Indigenous folks highly at risk particularly because statistics show there is already a large distrust in authority.
- Feel isolated, or that they no longer have contact with their family.
- Some traffickers will threaten the victim through inciting threats towards their loved ones in order to further isolate and control the victim
- Feel as though they have to repay their trafficker for providing housing, clothing, food, gifts, drugs or recruitment fees.





*“When me and my girlfriend were at the bar in Vernon a white couple, an older man, around 60 years old and his very young girlfriend, who was around 25, approached us and started buying us drinks all night. They kept the drinks flowing and started to build us up with compliments saying we would be great to work for their company. They said there would be a lot of travel and asked if we could start right away. I was very young, definitely underage to be in the bar. I didn’t know any better and thought this was a great opportunity. They asked if we’d come back to the Sandman after the bar and we could have an after party and they would get us the applications and interviews for the job that was still unclear. I would’ve agreed but luckily my friend who was a bit more street smart than me said that it felt off and we weren’t going to go with them. I agreed with her and we left without saying anything.*

*Looking back, that was absolutely a recruitment attempt. They promised the world, promised “travel,” and that we would be boarding a plane almost right away. The older man used the younger woman to approach us and gain trust and access to us knowing we would never otherwise engage with him. All I can say is be very careful of anyone who promises you big things, and just stick with your close group of friends and make sure you have a rule to never leave any establishment without each other.”*

*sqilx’w from nk’maplqs*



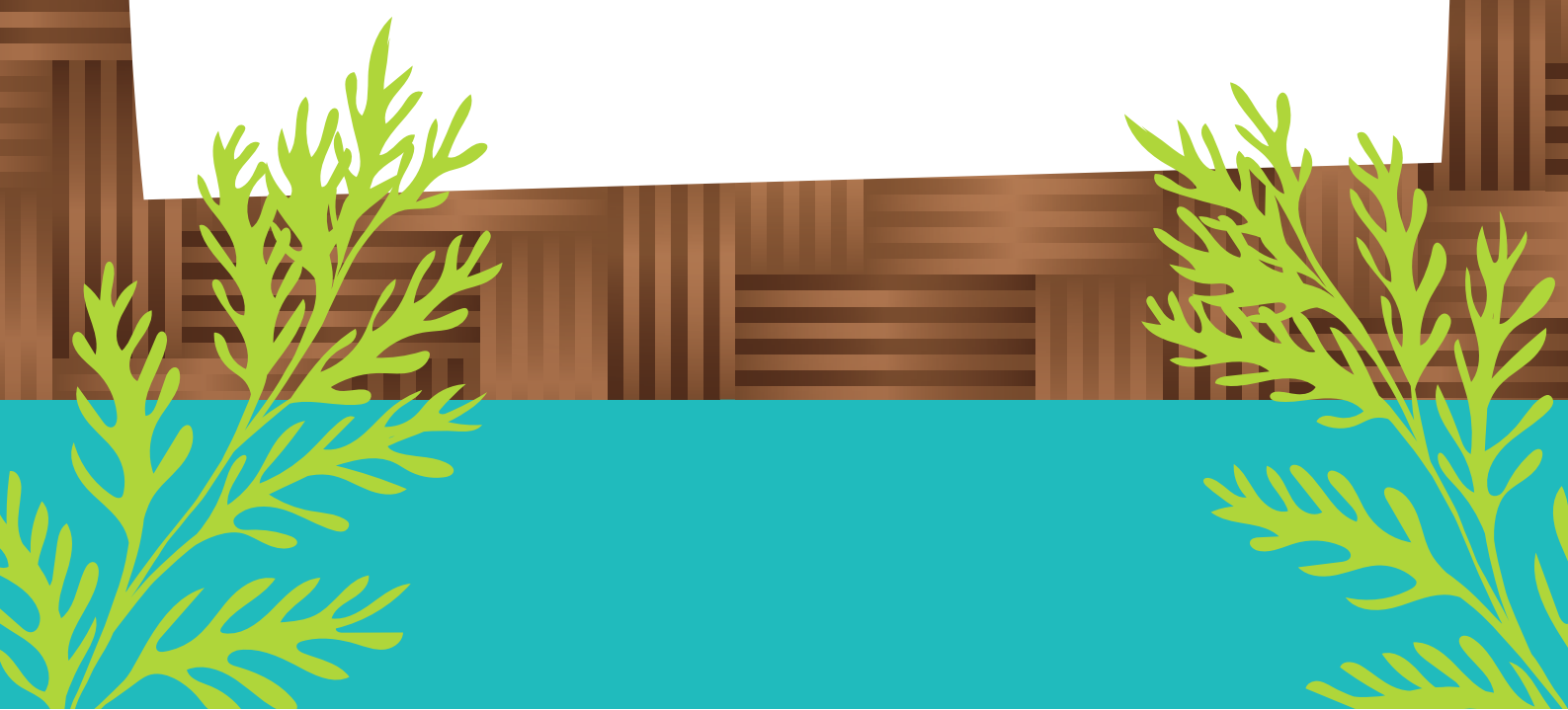


# Human Trafficking Helpline

If you are in need of help

The Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week in over 200 different languages, including 27 Indigenous languages. It can be accessed toll-free by phone at 1-833-900-1010 or online at Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline.

You will receive information on next steps and be given access to local resources that will support you.



# *Planning for Safety*



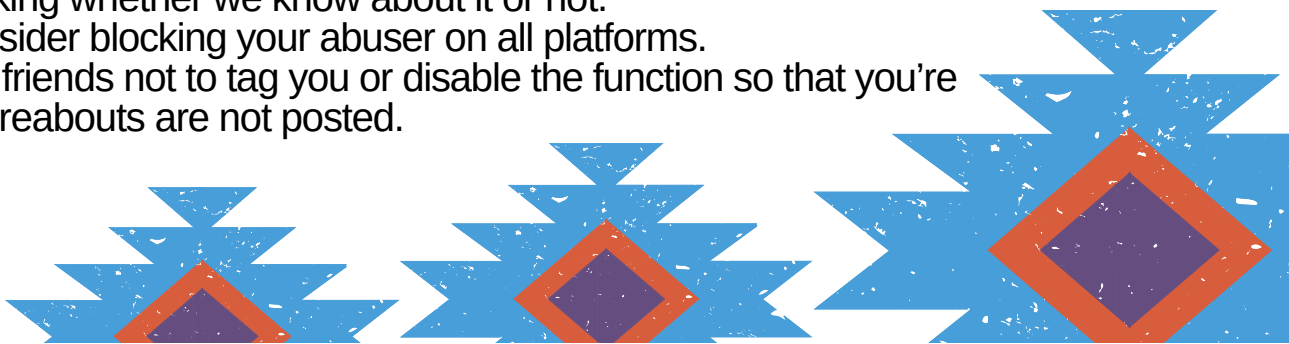
Leaving abusive and potentially violent situations requires a plan to lower the risk of harm. While a plan is best created alongside an outside support it's not always possible.

## Here's some suggestions when planning to leave:

- Tell someone you trust about the abuse.
- Try and ensure someone knows you are planning to leave and memorize their phone numbers incase you become separated from your phone at any point.
- Consider the level of force your partner has used in the past, and let this information help you to plan appropriately. This will help you to predict the level of danger.
- If you are being physically harmed, protect your face with your arms around each side of your head, with your fingers locked together. Don't wear scarves or long jewellery, or anything that can be used as leverage.
- Park your car by backing it into the driveway and keep it fueled, keep a spare key in a place outside the house in case you need to flee.
- Gather important documents. This includes things such as personal identification, bank cards and/or cash, financial papers related to family assets, keys, medication, photos of the abuser and your children, health cards, status cards, birth certificates, personal address/telephone book, cell phone and legal documents (e.g. house deed/lease, restraining orders/peace bonds.)
- Do not tell the abuser you are leaving. Leave at a time they will be least likely to see you or know you are fleeing.
- Request a police escort or a safe person to accompany you.
- Think about places and patterns that your ex partner will know about and try to change them.
- Consider letting your workplace know what is happening.
- Once you leave, never go back, or confront the abuser and seek support immediately. This may mean you consider getting a peace bond or restraining order.

## Internet, Social media, and personal device safety

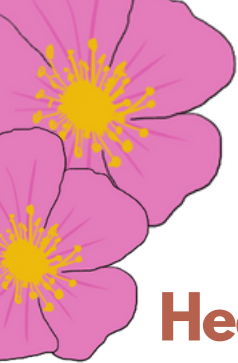
- Clear your browser history when planning to flee, or use ghost mode on Google.
- Clear your call log if you've called anywhere that may be used against you.
- Find a safe computer, which can be found at libraries, cafes, shelters, or your workplace.
- Email can be used to access a lot of our personal information, consider opening an alternate email to utilize for bills, plans, bookings, etc.
- If you have the means consider purchasing a prepaid cell phone that can't be tracked once you flee. Most cellphones have some form of tracking whether we know about it or not.
- Consider blocking your abuser on all platforms.
- Ask friends not to tag you or disable the function so that you're whereabouts are not posted.



## Self Care, Self Esteem, Positive Statements

- When it comes to caretaking ourselves after fleeing abuse it can be very difficult. It takes time for our brains, bodies, and nervous systems to make the shift from survival mode to regulated. In fact it's very normal for that to take years.
- Here are some tools you can consider using when leaving abuse and how it helps to regulate your nervous system so you can begin your healing journey.
- Follow grief ceremony: Connect with family, Elders, or other cultural resources that can walk you through the process of dealing with grief. Grief is any big change in life and to sqilx'w people that meant we had ceremony to walk us through it. So be gentle and when you feel the drive to always know ceremony is there waiting for you.
- Make a list of 10 things you would tell your closest loved one or best friend if they were experiencing what you are and follow them. This will help you to begin to trust yourself and trust that you are capable of making good decisions, trust your gift of intuition and repair your self love.
- Watch your favourite movies, take up space in whatever way you want, move and dance in your space and fill it with your good energy and embody your newfound freedom.
- Seek out support groups of folks going through similar things, talking with others who understand your situation will help you through the difficult times.
- Sleep. Get as much sleep as your body is asking for. After leaving survival mode our bodies begin to self regulate and when it's finally safe to feel everything your body will want to recover and that happens through sleep. So honour sleep as part of your self care.
- Eat as healthy as you can and exercise. Our people were very intelligent about using our bodies to discipline our minds in order to honour our emotions. Even starting with daily 30 minute walks will help to organize the neural pathways in our brains that often become disorganized after sustaining abuse.
- Find new things to do that will help you to create new routines, and empower your growth. Things like martial arts are great to get into because it empowers you to know that your body is strong and you have everything you need to caretake yourself. It also boosts your confidence.
- Hangout with friends. Do the things you were unable to do in relationship and find healing in the platonic relationships that are around you.





## Healthy Relationships

It's important to learn to identify the markers of a healthy relationship after leaving an abusive situation. Leaving toxic relationships requires a lot of learning and unlearning, and that includes some deep reflection.

Here's some important things to consider when moving through healing: Take some time to identify some of the traits and behaviours you noticed your ex-partner exhibited and use that to inform your next relationships.

Take time to yourself, to build your self love and self esteem. You deserve the healthiest version of yourself before anything else. And this will only contribute to helping find a healthy relationship.

Take time to build your support system, including seeking out mental health supports that will help you to heal and feel strong again.

Take time to get to know what your triggers are so you can begin to come into your healing by investigating them. Asking yourself where it came from and sitting with it and feeling the emotions your body is now safe to have about the trauma. This is best done alongside a counsellor or trusted friend with capacity to support your healing.

Begin to repair your intuition. Once you learn to know what your triggers are you can start to draw a difference between what is intuition and what is a trigger. Our intuition is a gift and is meant to support us in many ways. You can begin healing your intuition through guided meditation. Even 5 minutes meditations on YouTube are a great start.

***Most importantly, have the deepest level of compassion for yourself. Leaving or moving on from an abusive relationship requires bravery, courage, and strength. You are worthy of a beautiful life that includes safety, security, and healthy love.***

Here's some things to ask yourself to identify that you are in a healthy relationship:

- Do they consider my feelings?
- Do they ask for my opinion when making decisions?
- Do they respect my family and friends?
- Do they support my decisions?
- Is our relationship based on respect?
- Do I feel safe and secure in my relationship?
- Can I go out with my friends without my partner without consequence or fear?
- Can I participate in activities and hobbies I enjoy?

If you answered yes to the questions above it is a sign that you are in a healthy relationship.





# Teachings of Love

Grief is not meant for just death. Grief happens anytime we as people make a shift in our lives, and it's a journey we must honour.

It's important to find the beauty in the things that become part of our story. We should never carry shame for our story, we should carry instead gratitude for the good. Thank kwulencuten for giving you the strength to walk away from what is not meant for you, thank kwulencuten for the lessons we carry from the things we've faced. And thank kwulencuten for giving us this new day to become even more in love with ourselves as sqilx'w. Because we are beautiful in all ways, on all days, in every world. When thinking of grief it is a very powerful time for our people. Although it's not the same as being xaxa (very sacred) in times of ceremonial grief, it in any form is a powerful medicine. This means we can either use that powerful medicine to redefine ourselves and create newness and life, or we can use it to harm. And as sqilx'w we are commanded to bring beauty to the spaces we occupy and recreating our life to be more beautiful does just that.

Let the moon never look down on us and be sad for the ways we don't know. Instead look up at the moon and use its medicine and energy to help you. Know that the moon energy lives in you, the love and energy that emits from our homelands lives in your DNA. You are the land and the land is you. So take your worries to the relatives, to the water, the mountains, to the rocks, the trees and visit with our relatives. They long for our energy, for our voice, our songs, our prayers, and even our tears. We used to live in deep kinship with the land relatives and hard times would never be faced alone we had our land to grieve with. So take your tears to the mountain, the water, the moon, and give it away.

**Never let anyone make you forget how important you are to our people, to our land, to our ceremonies.**

**You are beautiful because you are Okanagan.**

**Never forget your sacredness.**



**This project was brought to you through the Call to Action heard from our community during the development of Community Safety Action Plan.**

**This toolkit is possible because of you and your love for our community.**



*Okanagan Indian Band*



Public Safety  
Canada

Sécurité publique  
Canada

Kelsie Marchand & smuqaken Marchand, compiled this report in collaboration with community members, community Knowledge Keepers, using trauma-informed practices.