

National Action Plan Community Engagement Initiative: Summary Report to YWCA Canada

Building a National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence: Identifying Priorities for Addressing Sexual Violence

Initial Summary of Findings

Hosted by: Ending Violence Association of Canada



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

EVA Canada would like to thank the individual advocates and organizations who participated in this community engagement session. Your insight and input are integral to ensuring the National Action Plan reflects the needs of sexual violence survivors and the organizations that support them.

EVA Canada would like to acknowledge and thank Sunny Marriner for her skilled facilitation of the discussion for this community engagement session. We would also like to thank Carolyn Ellis and her team at Brilliance Mastery for providing visual support and creating the graphic recording that is included in this report.

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OVERVIEW OF PARTICIPANTS AND SESSION FORMAT

This engagement session, *Identifying Priorities for Addressing Sexual Violence in the National Action Plan (NAP)*, aimed to consult experts in frontline sexual violence service and advocacy provision across a national spectrum. The goal of this session was to identify priorities related to addressing sexual violence in the National Action Plan. In particular, the session aimed to engage voices from local, provincial and national organizations serving women and gender diverse people with a broad and diverse range of experiences. Particular attention was paid to groups with high levels of contact and engagement with marginalized and criminalized women, survivors accessing grassroots frontline services, and serving and/or advocating for survivors living with precarious status (immigrant/refugee, newcomer, non-status, etc.).

Participants were not asked to provide demographic information or disclose individually. That said, we and the participant group acknowledged that many among us are survivors ourselves, while also occupying multiple roles, including advocates, activists, board members, community leaders, those engaged in legal and justice system change work, and researchers.

Many participants identify as groups working both directly with survivors of violence while also advocating for systemic change. Many would further identify as being part of the broader feminist anti-violence against women movement across Canada. Finally, individual participants self-identify across a diverse range of intersectional groups, including LGBTQIA+ and BIPOC communities.

This engagement session used an open-ended question format, along with an interactive on-line tool (MURAL), to gather input from participants. Follow-up questions were then tailored to flesh out their input, clarify or deepen their meaning, or highlight areas that may have been missed in the input rounds. As such, participants were asked to contribute their input on the broad pillar area, and then ideas were developed based on their responses rather than using scripted discussion questions at the outset. A follow-up survey was distributed to all participants as well as others who were unable to attend the engagement session. Feedback from this survey has been included in this report. In total 19 individuals participated in the engagement session, and 6 individuals engaged with the survey.

The engagement session acknowledged four organizing principles as its foundational starting place:

1. **Foundations:** Recognizing our work builds on a foundation of 50 years of prior work and the NAP must take that into account, include it, reference it, and be attentive to its recommendations.
2. **Measurement & Accountability:** Recognizing that the plan must be measurable, include concrete implementation, action, oversight, and accountability components.
3. **Key Points Focus:** Recognizing that in a limited timeframe we are only able to deliver some key points, but each of these contain within them far-reaching activities and actions that should be considered within the NAP.
4. **Scope:** Recognizing no one group is fully representative of all voices, and participants all have local, regional, provincial and national engagements and needs. For this meeting, we have endeavoured to bring representation from sexual violence advocates from coast to coast to coast to engage voices on a national scope.

Within this, participants expressed group expectations and principles expected from the NAP, many of which are listed below.

SUMMARY of RESPONSES:

- The NAP needs to account for, acknowledge, review, and build its foundations on 50 years of work already developed in Canada. We're not starting from scratch. The NAP must build on feminist, frontline/survivor-led, survivor-directed work and the many, many, many reports, consultations, and recommendations that have been generated but never truly implemented.
- State violence and structural violence must be named in the NAP.
- The NAP should consider how current systems are upholding or undermining the Charter Rights and guarantees for women and other protected groups. If policing and justice system under "protect" and threaten criminalization of women/LGBTQ2S+/BIPOC is this state violence also violation of charter rights? Is the state complicit in the sexual violence committed against women?
- The NAP must create the capacity to have a national conversation and invest in research that examines the impacts of increased credentialization and professionalization on front-line feminist centres movement, survivor-led support models, and grassroots, survivor-directed feminist organizing within anti-violence spaces. Is professionalization (including regulatory colleges) driving survivors and advocates out of their own movement, and undermining their ability to create support and advocacy frameworks based on feminist non-medical model principles?
- Building on the above, the NAP should consider carefully the language of "trauma", and trends to lean into trauma-informed practices, rather than examine the systemic (and inequality-rooted) foundations of sexual violence.
- Further to the above, any national plan needs to be trauma AND violence informed - colonial violence, systemic violence, economic violence etc.

The NAP's foundations should be built on:

- Clear, comprehensive, disaggregated data available for free across Canada (including free access to court transcripts)
- Consideration of the creation of national roles/bodies. Ideas included:
 - Sexual Assault Ombudsperson that is outside of policing system for marginalized survivors (sex workers, incarcerated people, etc.) to be able to report people that harm within systems such as police officers, social workers, correction officers
 - A fully-funded, non-governmental national advocacy organization that centers sexual violence that can better advocate for services and supports, and systemic change
 - Developing a national gender-based violence steering committee with frontline representation
- Support for, and full core funding for, the survivor-led, frontline feminist independent, stand-alone community sexual assault centres (SACs)/rape crisis centre (RCC) model created across Canada by advocates/survivors over 50 years, including the ability for frontline survivor-directed advocates to expand autonomous SACs/RCCs into areas without current access

Participants called for some core legislative changes and government actions required to address systemic problems, including:

- Abandoning the government appeal of the Safe Third Country Agreement (which increases risks for survivors who are asylum seekers trying to cross from US to Canada)
- A comprehensive, fully intersectional look at child protection/welfare system - generates risks for children and youth. This includes abandoning all government appeals of human rights rulings for First Nations children and youth
- Universal Basic Incomes and Universal Pharmacare

PILLAR 1: Support for Survivors and Their Families



Overarching Themes:

Funding is one of the greatest stressors and obstacles in providing independent, community-based support to sexual violence survivors. Participants repeatedly return across all NAP pillars to the theme that *core* funding is needed and that project funding/grant models are consistently contributing to failing survivors, lowering efficiency, pulling focus, and depleting the workforce and movement's ability to respond appropriately.

Participant responses fell broadly into nine categories or priority areas relevant to support for survivors and their families in addressing sexual violence:

- Funding
- Research & Data
- Justice System
- Intersectionality and Addressing a Lack of Diversity in Response
- Frontline Independent Sexual Assault Centres and Services
- Post-secondary and Campus Support for Survivors
- Financial Support to Survivors
- Mapping and System Navigation
- Alternatives to the System

Below we highlight some of the key points in each of these categories.

FUNDING:

- Provision of core operational funding for rape crisis and sexual assault centres that is not tied to a requirement for police reporting
- Funding for community supports that are created without the end goal of conviction
- Funding for peer-based services and peer support models which recognize lived experience as expertise and are led by survivors
- Well-resourced, free counselling services, funded through permanent sources that are not tied to short term projects (ie. funding that allows for responsiveness to community need) and that adequately compensate professionals and others to provide these services

- Work with WAGE (and perhaps other funders like CWF) to develop more opportunity for service delivery funding and/or organizational capacity building funds, and work to create accessible options for funding (i.e. not through CWF)
- Funding that recognizes the intersectional and intersectoral needs of sexual violence survivors, including areas of health, justice, and public safety. Funding should reflect the reality that sexual assault centres provide "wrap around" services.
- Funding and resourcing should be equitable with other sectors. The sexual violence sector has been long neglected. This means high staff turnover which in turn impacts survivors and their families in significant ways.
- Funding to address the criminalization of survivors.
- Funding to support capacity for independent feminist trauma-informed counselling which is timely and meets the complex needs of survivors. This requires well-resourced sexual assault centres with funding that supports sustainable programs and enables longer term staffing to be in place.
- Funding to support more counsellors to minimize waiting lists (increased funding, resources to train peer support volunteers or professionals). Our waitlists are usually 8 months to 1 year due to insufficient staffing and high demand.

Emerging Theme: Participants repeatedly articulated the need for community-based, stand-alone, independent, autonomous, feminist sexual assault centres in all areas of the country. They highlighted the long history of these centres, their survivor-led/peer-based models, their intersectional/ARAO analyses, their independence, and their equality-based advocacy as the seat of Canadian sexual violence work.

- Funding and resourcing that reflects the specificity of sexual violence work and the difference we provide in sexual violence support as compared to other types of support. This is different from generic victim counselling centres.
- Support for survivors and their families who are typically excluded from the current system(s) due to cultural and social isolation. We know that our newcomer populations are utilizing alternative, natural supports. Secure funding to allow centres to find this expertise and meet folks where they are at.

RESEARCH & DATA:

- Must be an increased emphasis on national data collection (not downloaded to sexual assault centres)
- Ensure that data collection is trauma-informed
- Funded national data on the prevalence and nature of sexual violence beyond justice statistics to understand what is needed in terms of support
- Clear data-sharing provisions between institutions like RCMP and advocates
- Have national conversation on the examination of impact of professionalization and credentialization on front-line feminist sexual assault centre movement
- Research led and informed by survivors' experiences

Emerging Theme: Data and Information was raised consistently by participants across all four pillars. Collecting data, making it available on both granular (e.g. community-based) and national levels, and the quality and type of data needed were recommendations returned to again and again.

JUSTICE SYSTEM:

Participants noted a number of ways that changes to the justice system could better support survivors and their families. These include:

- Community supports funded and created without the end goal of conviction
- Provide resources to assist survivors in navigating court and judicial systems, legal supports (eg. family court)
- Explore questions about what it would look like to support survivors of sexual violence through an emphasis on community support, especially in the context of conversations around defunding the police
- Strengthen oversight and accountability measures, including:
 - Strengthen civilian oversight of policing
 - Sexual Assault Ombudsperson that is outside of policing system for marginalized survivors (sex workers, incarcerated people, etc.) to be able to report people that harm within systems such as police officers, social workers, correction officers

Emerging Theme: Placing "conditions" on supports and services create barriers and isolate and endanger survivors. Participants particularly highlighted that support/services should NOT be tied to reporting to the criminal justice system, accessing the justice system in any way, securing convictions, etc. Further, support/services should be free to all, and NOT be tied to immigration status, documentation, etc.

INTERSECTIONALITY & ADDRESSING LACK OF DIVERSITY IN RESPONSE:

- Support for diverse survivors who may not fit into or may not feel comfortable accessing supports
- Address the issue of the criminalization of survivors
- Ensure that survivors without permanent residency in Canada are able to access services and financing and ensure that access to and eligibility for services is not tied to immigration status
- Ensure that risk assessment and risk mitigation tools are intersectional, informed by survivors or those with lived experience
- “Looking at who we are not supporting. Even while many are shifting to inclusive language, the way we look at and talk about sexual violence is from a cis, heteronormative lens that erases trans, gender diverse, and queer survivors of violence. How are 2SLGBTQ+ survivors supported? Not just included but supported?”
- Specialized support and mental health services for First Nations families and children of MMIW, including proper in-depth training for front-line healthcare officials with working with First Nations families.
- Create and support a diversity of options in service delivery that reflect intersectional understandings of sexual violence, including:
 - peer-based services and peer support models which recognize lived experience as expertise and are led by survivors
 - Support for survivors and their families typically excluded from the current system(s) due to cultural and social isolation

FRONTLINE INDEPENDENT SEXUAL ASSAULT CENTRES AND SERVICES:

Participants identified a number of measures and priorities to better support survivors through frontline independent sexual assault centres. In addition to those listed above, these included:

- Provide operational funding for feminist, community-based sexual assault services/responses across Canada. Ensure that funding is not tied to a requirement for police reporting
- Funding for peer-based services and peer-support models which recognize lived experience as expertise and are led by survivors
- Increased capacity for independent feminist trauma-informed counselling which is timely and meets the complex needs of survivors. This requires well-resourced sexual assault centres with funding that supports sustainable programs and enables longer term staffing to be in place
- Elimination of waiting lists for counselling through increased funding prioritizing support to survivors over criminal justice system initiatives and policing. Waiting lists should not be addressed by lowering or shortening the amount of support individual survivors get

- Support for the work that sexual assault centres do to provide wrap around services for survivors with complex needs, including legal support, substance use, housing, and financial supports as well as mental health/trauma services. There is a continuum of services rooted in trauma-informed work.

Emerging Theme: Participants highlighted the need for better understanding of and reliance on the diverse nature of the work of frontline (feminist) SACs/community-based services and need for recognition of the difference from “generic victim counselling services”. Stress the wrap around nature (housing, substance use, legal, advocacy, systems navigation) that SACs do. More calls for this kind of service, services to meet complex needs, survivor-directed, “survivor is the expert” SAC approach. Continuum of services rooted in trauma-informed work.

- Support for long-term systems navigation support through community-based victim services/advocates and access to lawyers
- Increased crisis response supports.
- Identify resources and strategies to support for survivors and their families typically excluded from the current system(s) due to cultural and social isolation. For example, we know that our newcomer populations are utilizing natural supports. Secure funding to allow centres to find this expertise, and meet folks where they are at.

POST-SECONDARY AND CAMPUS SUPPORTS FOR SURVIVORS:

- Increased consistency and requirements for post-secondary institutions in addressing and responding to sexual violence
- Require universities and colleges to work with sexual assault centres to support students

FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO SURVIVORS:

- Access to professionalized and natural supports for survivors and their support networks should be FREE, and funded for the professionals and others who provide these services
- Access to financial support and compensation for survivors
- Resume criminal compensation for survivors nationally

Emerging Theme: Financial support to survivors. Participants note that financial support, paid leave, compensation, and FREE support services are all crucial.

MAPPING AND SYSTEM NAVIGATION:

Participants noted that better understanding of the systems survivors must navigate in the aftermath of sexual violence and support for assisting them in doing so is integral to better supporting survivors. Some of the strategies for mapping and systems navigation outlined by participants included the following:

- Sexual Assault Ombudsperson that is outside of policing system for marginalized survivors (sex workers, incarcerated people, etc.) to be able to report people that harm within systems such as police officers, social workers, correction officers
- Development and funding for community navigators and advocates
- Long term systems navigation support through community-based victim services/advocates and access to lawyers
- Development and funding for assistance in navigating court and judicial systems, legal supports (e.g. family court)
- Identify strategies to connect “professional” services with these other “informal” networks. Their impact can be and are just as important.
- Strengthen knowledge-base and information-sharing among organizations to learn about services and supports.
- Increase capacity and tools necessary to navigate federal, territorial/provincial, and First Nations jurisdictions and reach, including better knowledge sharing around capacities of different levels of government that will help address the differences in legislation across jurisdictions and regions.
- Create a clear national picture of the different types of support for sexual violence survivors.
- Create a national advocacy organization that centers sexual violence that can better advocate for services and supports

ALTERNATIVES TO THE SYSTEM:

Participants emphasized that supporting survivors and their families requires imagining new alternatives that exist outside the current system. Some of the priorities and strategies participants raised in creating and supporting these alternatives include the following:

- Asking questions about what it would look like to support survivors of sexual violence through an emphasis on community support, especially in the context of conversations around defunding the police?

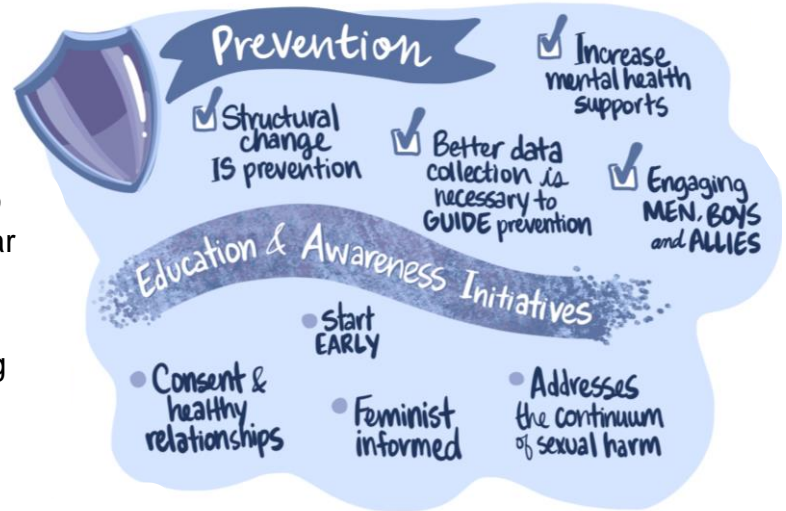
- Asking “what support can look like outside of ‘professionalized’ services? Often the most marginalized due to geography, language, culture do not access formalize services such as policing, victim services, or sexual assault centres due to fears associated with police and the justice system as a whole. We need to investigate bolder informal and natural supports and the role they can play to fill gaps for survivors and their families – child minding while a survivor seeks medical care or just has a nap is just as important as counselling. We need to look at the hierarchy of needs survivors and their families require for their overall well-being.”
- Exploring and establishing transformative justice options for accountability
- Reimagining possible responses to sexual assault beyond the criminal law system, including alternative models grounded in restorative or transformative justice. This could be through funding pilot models and ethically collecting disaggregated data to get a sense of what works and for whom
- Developing infrastructure for third-party reporting
- Building a national advocacy organization that centers sexual violence that can better advocate for services and supports
- Creating supports for survivors and their families typically excluded from the current system(s) due to cultural and social isolation

Emerging Theme: Alternatives to criminal justice system responses. Transformative justice models were named throughout the session, problems accessing everything survivors need for those who DON'T report, an increased emphasis on community-based supports/SACs.

PILLAR 2: PREVENTION

Overarching Themes:

- Participants agreed that “prevention” is often positioned as a discreet activity, unanchored to other social and structural features. In particular participants pointed to the strong preventative impact of a robust, equality-seeking and intersectional social infrastructure and enabling environment framework as being key to prevention (e.g. safe and affordable housing, access to safe transportation, etc.)
- Participants also highlighted that the most frequently cited reason given by survivors for reporting to the criminal justice system (CJS) is to prevent future violence against others (e.g. “I don’t want him to do it to someone else”). Failures of the CJS to respond thus constitute one of the greatest challenges to survivors’ many protective attempts to improve prevention



Participant responses fell broadly into five categories or priority areas relevant to prevention for addressing sexual violence:

- Structural Change
- Information
- Education and Awareness
- Engaging Men, Boys, and Allies
- Supports, Health, and Mental Health

Below we highlight some of the key points in each of these categories.

STRUCTURAL CHANGE:

- Develop a national gender-based violence steering committee with front line representation
- Implement the MMIWG National Inquiry’s Calls for Justice
- Address challenges and issues in foster care
- Adult survivors with the most complex trauma impacts and needs are survivors of child sexual abuse and neglect. One suggestion is for nationally funded community-based and culturally safe resource centres to build and support resilience in families with children focusing on keeping children safe from violence, abuse, and neglect, that include programs for adequate minimum income, food security, early childhood education and care, prenatal care and nutrition, and so on.
- “Sexual harassment and sexual assault been divided by the way the laws deal with them. So much prevention could happen by having work and learning spaces be held to different standards.”

- Shrink prisons out of existence by building and investing in robust communities.
- Addressing the criminalization of women is an important part of prevention
- Recognize and address the ways in which prisons can be sites of sexual violence between staff and prisoners.
- Look at continuum of sexual harm within prevention initiatives
- Advocates, supports and sexual violence change agents need discretionary funding that is not attached to short-term project grants. This will allow workers be paid better, have control over how funds are spent in support of survivors, and be responsive to changing community needs
- Human trafficking – giving money to criminal justice system isn't helping

INFORMATION:

More research and data on sexual violence was widely identified as necessary to enhance prevention efforts. In particular, participants noted the following needs related to information and data:

- Need to address lack of consistency in data collection on sexual violence.
- Improved collection of and access to disaggregated data
- Development of an information clearinghouse on relevant laws, research, policies maintained by federal government
- Data that reflects and looks at the continuum of sexual harm

EDUCATION:

Education and awareness initiatives were identified as an important piece in sexual violence prevention. Participants noted the following strategies and priorities for building education and awareness initiatives:

- Reoccurring national campaign targeting those who commit gender-based violence as well as the public at large in order to minimize acceptance of GBV
- Enhanced promotion of the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights as well as provincial counterparts.
- Consent work beginning early in child care settings
- Core curriculum on gender-based violence beginning in public school
- Prevention and education campaigns targeting institutional awareness to encourage cultural change

- Healthy relationship and consent education in many formats and that is age appropriate (teaching consent, conflict resolution, and positive communication).
- Health relationship education beyond the education system to reach all those adults who went through a system that treated healthy relationships, sex, and consent as taboo topics.
- Any prevention and awareness needs to be feminist informed and go beyond just focusing on consent. For example, it needs to address gender roles, positive/negative masculinity, tech-facilitated forms of violence (e.g. non-consensual distribution of intimate images, online stalking), and the continuum of sexual harm.
- Designated advisors / supports on sexual violence within educational institutions in Ontario before university and college.

ENGAGING MEN, BOYS, AND ALLIES:

- Funding sexual assault centres for male allyship work and prevention programming, including adequate resourcing to hire additional staff.
- Engaging young boys in conversations around consent
- Supporting allies with how to's and thank you's

HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH, AND OTHER SUPPORTS:

Having appropriate health, mental health and other supports in place is part of an effective approach to prevention. Some of these supports highlighted by participants include the following:

- Incorporate the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) research into real prevention work through the health and mental health system
- Adopt a public health approach to addressing sexual violence. This will support us in growing and supporting healthy people.
- Increase access to mental health services to help break the cycle of violence
- Create options for survivor-led peer support
- Increase funding for programs for male survivors/all gender programming
- “Looking at who we are not supporting. Even while many are shifting to inclusive language, the way we look at talk about sexual violence is from a cis heteronormative lens. How are trans and gender inclusive survivors supported? How are queer survivors supported? Not just included, but actively supported.”

PILLAR 3: PROMOTION OF RESPONSIVE LEGAL AND JUSTICE SYSTEMS



Overarching Themes:

- The criminal justice system (CJS) as it's currently configured is not meeting the needs of survivors. The investment in CJS responses – and associated linkage of services to survivors to a requirement that they access that system – is deeply problematic. Supports to survivors must be decoupled from CJS responses.

- There is a lack of data transparency (and thus transparency and accountability required for informed advocacy) in the CJS, particularly at the policing level.
- An over-reliance on “training” initiatives does not reflect data and research on the impacts of training in the CJS. While training is highlighted in responses, participants stressed that oversight and transparency about results and outcomes is critical to ensure “poor training” is not being scapegoated for “poor oversight/supervision” from outside the CJS sector itself.
- Participants highlighted the Violence Against Women Advocate Case Review (VACR) model (supported by WAGE through national funding) where cases that do not proceed to charge are reviewed by frontline, autonomous, non-institutional feminist groups with core expertise in sexual violence as a promising/best practice. VACR was highlighted as distinct from, and preferred over, other types of case review models in use by some police services.
- Participants highlighted the deep links between women’s criminalization and incarceration as increasing the jeopardy and vulnerability of large groups of women experiencing violence, including exacerbating and compounding the issues.

Participant responses fell broadly into eight categories or priority areas relevant to the promotion of responsive legal and justice systems for addressing sexual violence:

- Training
- Legislation
- Alternatives to Current CJS Framework
- Research
- Centring Survivors
- Funding
- Transparency
- Data & Oversight

Below we highlight some of the key points in each of these categories.

TRAINING :

- Anti-oppressive, anti-racism (AOAR) training in all policing training
- Develop and implement training in consultation with front line sexual assault advocate expertise, and ensure it is kept up to date
- Police response to sexual violence training needs to begin at the college/depot level
- Training for law enforcement, prosecutors, and others in the legal system must include components on sexual assault law, myths and stereotypes, structural violence, sexual assault trauma, and communicating with survivors of sexual violence. The need for training for all actors in the legal system including lawyers and judges was widely supported by all
- Finalize Bill C-3, including recommendations put forth by women's organizations, to have mandatory sexual assault law training for all federally-appointed judges.
- Clarity and mechanisms for oversight on internal training for police must be established. For example, the RCMP gets significant funding to provide internal trainings, but there is not clarity about oversight related to who is providing these trainings or how they are being evaluated. This raises concerns that they will continue to use trainers who are not informed and continue to be a violent system.

Emerging Theme: While many types of training are called for, participants emphasized the need for training to be led, overseen, and evaluated by frontline advocate/survivor-based expertise.

LEGISLATION :

- Recognize the dangers for rural survivors as federal government backs off on stricter gun legislation. This can have a huge impact on many rural survivors hugely. There is always a weapon in the house.
- Finalize Bill C-3, including recommendations put forth by women's organizations, to have mandatory sexual assault law training for all federally-appointed judges.
- Mandatory minimum penalties should be eliminated and emphasis should be on creating more opportunities for the legal system to understand the complexities of people's lives.
- Ensure that human trafficking legislation is not being used to criminalize or police racialized and immigrant communities

ALTERNATIVES TO CURRENT CJS FRAMEWORK:

- The system is fundamentally broken and does not work for most survivors. How do we make recommendations that acknowledge this reality?
- We need to deepen our critique to acknowledge that the system is functioning exactly as it was set up to as a colonial, patriarchal, heteronormative system which is why it is not supporting survivors.
- We need to recognize that not everyone agrees that reforming the system is possible.
- We need to support alternatives to the existing legal system which is not perceived as providing justice. Some alternatives identified include:
 - Transformative Justice Options
 - Funding community supports for survivors as the end goal, rather than having the end goal be framed as getting a conviction.
 - Other options for survivors to pursue "justice." For example, mechanism that will allow for recognition that what happened to them was wrong outside of current criminal system or civil suits.
 - Shrinking prisons out of existence
 - Funding for alternatives for justice models, separate from traditional legal system, esp. those who move away from prison industrial complex to transform aggressors (through transformative justice processes)
 - Criminal compensation for survivors- alternate civil level of justice

RESEARCH:

- Further research needed on the criminalization of survivors, i.e. those who report violence but then find themselves facing criminal and other legal consequences (family law, sexual assault law, civil lawsuits, immigration/ deportation)
- Fund national research on sexual violence, specifically to identify and “uncover” sexual violence as it occurs within on other crimes, i.e. homicide, domestic violence, etc.
- Review and engagement with the recent report [*Rebâtir la confiance: Rapport du comité d'experts sur l'accompagnement des victimes d'agressions sexuelles et de violence conjugale*](#) for key recommendations on issues surrounding survivors in the legal and justice systems in Quebec.

CENTERING SURVIVORS:

- We need a justice system that puts the same or more emphasis on the person who experienced the crime as the perpetrator of the crime. Some of the strategies identified to do this include:

- Independent legal support for survivors in criminal trials
- Survivors to have standing and representation
- Autonomy-based practice with all levels of CJS; supporting survivors to engage in a meaningful way
- Criminal compensation for survivors – alternate civil level of justice
- Community- Based Legal Support Programs throughout Canada (not contingent on reporting)
- Funding and support soft rooms or spaces for RCMP interviews and innovative partnerships to provide these soft rooms in a safe environment
- Dedicated sexual assault policing including in rural and remote regions
- End the policing of migrant sex workers, Indigenous sex workers, BIPOC sex workers

Emerging Theme – Supports to survivors must NOT be tied to survivor reporting to the CJS, regardless of what kind of service it is (legal advice, counselling, etc).

- Further research and advocacy related to addressing the criminalization of survivors, i.e. those who report violence but then find themselves facing criminal & other legal consequences (family law, sexual assault law, civil lawsuits, immigration/ deportation). In particular, we need to ensure that human trafficking legislation is not being used to criminalize or police racialized and immigrant communities.
- We also need to consider how the state is complicit in sexual violence. For example, if policing and the justice system under-"protect" and threaten the criminalization of women, 2SLGBTQ+, and BIPOC communities is this state violence also violation of charter rights?

FUNDING :

- Funding is necessary to create systemic change within the CJS and to support the development of alternative models. Some key areas where funding is needed were identified as follows:
 - Funding for Court Watch Initiatives
 - Funding for alternatives for justice models, separate from traditional legal system, esp. those who move away from prison industrial complex to transform aggressors (through transformative justice processes)
 - Funding of soft spaces for RCMP interviews
 - Funding and financial support for infrastructure to support alternative streams of justice. These alternatives often rely on the labour of Elders and other community members. This work needs to be compensated so that the systems can remain sustainable and people doing this work are supported.

TRANSPARENCY, DATA, AND OVERSIGHT

- Funding and implementation of the Violence Against Women Advocate Case Review (VACR) model was widely supported by participants.
- In addition to implementation of VACR, further accountability measures must be put in place to hold all levels of policing accountable in its handling of sexual assault investigations. These measures include:
 - Support for a national group of sexual violence advocates to work with RCMP to improve their implementation of "Moving Forward"
 - Support for a national organization to advocate for improved justice responses
 - Funding for Court Watch initiatives
 - Establishment and clarity related to the processes and accountability for police officers who have been accused of sexual violence/ misconduct
 - Free access to transcription of court proceedings
 - Safeguards to help correct when things go sideways.
 - Recognition of the role of oversight and accountability measures as necessary in addition to improved training.

PILLAR 4: SUPPORT FOR INDIGENOUS-LED APPROACHES AND INFORMED RESPONSES

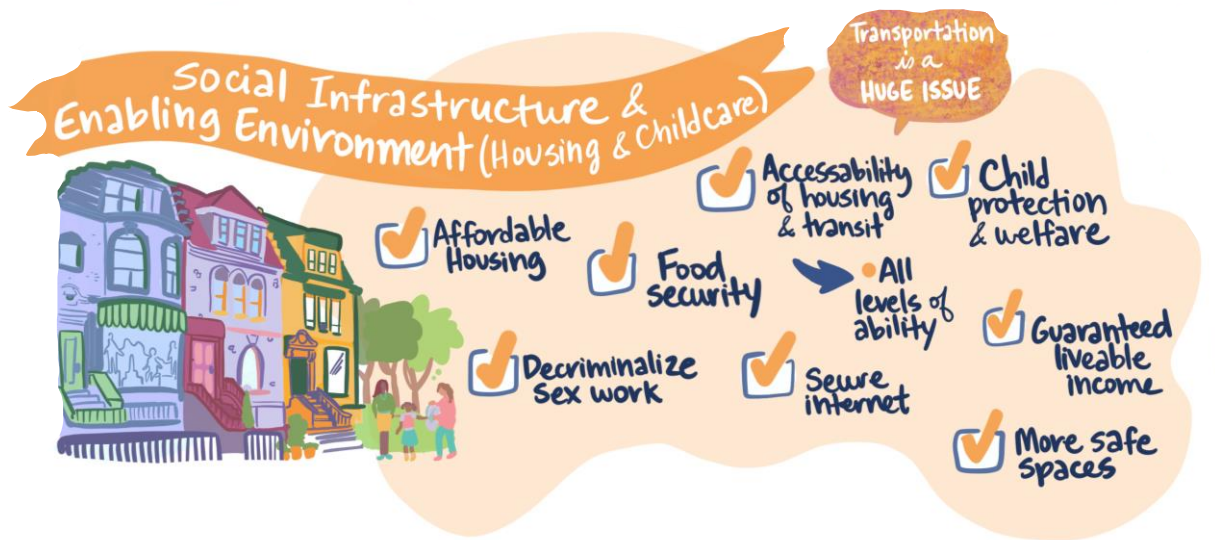
Participants in this engagement session acknowledged that they, as a group, were not strongly representative of Indigenous women's groups or Indigenous nations and were thus cautious about making recommendations in place of or without consultation with the voices of Indigenous women leaders. All participants work in allyship with Indigenous women's leadership and stated their strong call for the NAP to be guided by, and responsive to, Indigenous women's groups, particularly those working and/or leading in issues of MMIWG, TRC, and implementation of recommendations and Calls to Action.

Accordingly, Pillar 4 was not a stand-alone part of this engagement. Instead many participants offered input based in their own ally work, relationship to Indigenous communities, and supports to Indigenous survivors under other pillars. Some of those responses are reproduced below.



- Look to Indigenous leaders and advocates in order to enrich current responses to gender-based violence and to develop best practices for Indigenous communities.
- Implement the MMIWG National Inquiry's Final Report Calls for Justice
- Support access to transformative justice, and work with Indigenous and communities of colour in the creation of these alternatives.
- Fund justice systems and programming that are Indigenous led and created.
- Increased capacity to navigate federal, territorial/provincial, and First Nations jurisdiction and reach
- In Indigenous communities, Elders play a critical role but are frequently overlooked in terms of funding, etc. Need infrastructure and financial support for alternative streams of justice to support Elders who play a vital role in this work but who are often not adequately compensated.
- Hire and engage with First Nations Elders, Healers, and Traditional Knowledge Keepers. Value traditional ecological knowledge and ceremonial knowledge of the elders and healers and medicine people. Understand that the trauma of colonization has to include both Western and Traditional knowledge and must be value and funded equally.
- Increased access to Elders and paid support for culturally affirming healing and knowledge keeping.
- Respect the Treaties
- End Boil Water Advisories and finally ensure safe drinking water for every community in Canada
- Less reliance on colonial boundaries when providing supports
- Safe transportation, especially in rural and Northern communities and that addresses regional issues and concerns, i.e. taxis are dangerous in the Yukon and NWT.

PILLAR 5: SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENABLING ENVIRONMENT



Overarching Themes:

- Participants emphasized the deep connections between social infrastructure and the risks of and protections from sexual violence. As one survey respondent noted, “a healthy environment and healthy communities are safe communities. ... A robust welfare state with supports, national pharmacare, safe/clean housing, and a universal basic income would help meet the basic needs of folks who have already experienced sexual violence, and prevent the vulnerability which exacerbates victimization.” Recognizing the links between housing, environment, social services, food security, and many other issues is fundamental in addressing the root causes that contribute to sexual violence, and to creating systemic change.
- Understanding and acting on the impact of inadequate social infrastructure and environments requires cross-sectoral collaboration that centres the distinct ways these systems can increase the risk of sexual violence and create additional barriers to support for survivors.

Participant responses fell broadly into seven categories or priority areas relevant to social infrastructure and enabling environments for addressing sexual violence:

- Land, Water, & Environments;
- Income Support, Livable Income & Economic Empowerment
- Housing
- Transportation & Communications Infrastructure
- Building Community
- Health Supports
- Legislative Reform

Below we highlight some of the key points in each of these categories.

LAND, WATER, AND ENVIRONMENTS:

- Respect the treaties
- Create safe and accessible built environments
- Provide funding for monitoring of socio-economic impacts of mining
- Ensure safe drinking water for every community in Canada

INCOME SUPPORT, LIVABLE INCOME, AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT:

- Universal basic income / guaranteed livable income
- Quality, affordable, and accessible childcare
- Strengthen equity laws for all employers/workplaces
- Access to realistic income supports
- Less reliance on colonial boundaries when providing supports
- Better coordination between levels and regions of government
- Municipal-level change, lobbying councilors, reallocating funds
- Identification and implementation of measures to support economic empowerment of survivors, such as
 - the ability to break a rental and lease agreement after sexual assault
 - being able to access safe, affordable housing
 - access to paid leave after sexual assault across Canada
 - guarantee confidential leave for survivors
 - support for sex worker labour movements

HOUSING

- Access to safe and affordable housing was widely identified as necessary to support survivors and address sexual violence. This includes:
 - Being able to break rental and lease agreements after sexual assault without economic impact
 - Housing for women and gender-diverse people leaving the prison system. People sometimes choose to go back to prison because they have nowhere to live.
 - Gender-specific halfway housing and safe access to abide by judicial conditions.
 - Support for the independent living model, and the disabled community

TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE:

- Safe and accessible transit and transportation options, including more stringent regulations.
- Recognizing regional distinctions and needs in addressing transportation issues and concerns. For example, taxis can be dangerous option for transportation in the Yukon and NWT.
- Access to data, internet, and safe phones

Emerging Theme: Attention to safe transportation required to promote safety and prevention, particularly in Northern and rural areas; and for criminalized, marginalized and homeless women.

BUILDING COMMUNITY:

- Strengthening and building communities that foster safety and support are important. Some strategies to accomplish this include:
 - Creating community leadership opportunities
 - Safe, diverse, and accessible spaces and community programming for houseless neighbours (often excluded from community spaces)
 - Support for the independent living model, and the disabled community
 - Access to Elders and paid support for culturally affirming healing and knowledge keeping
 - Access to specialized support services and the establishment peer support

HEALTH SUPPORTS

Providing more accessible health supports in general as well as sexual-violence specific health supports is essential. This includes:

- Increase access to healthcare (primary care as well as specialized sexual violence health services, i.e. Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANEs))
- Attending to regional disparities in health care provision, i.e. SANE programs in the North
- Universal pharmacare
- De-tasking mental health responses off police forces and onto social workers/peer support, community-based responses
- Funded mental health supports
- Access to post sexual assault healthcare outside of the hospital setting across Canada

Emerging Theme: Northern access to what the south has is an issue. Need stand-alone autonomous SACs, SANEs, transportation, etc.

- Need for stand-alone autonomous feminist-run sexual assault centres throughout the country
- Addiction supports
- Access to Elders and paid support for culturally affirming healing and knowledge keeping
- Access to specialized support services and establish peer support
- Access to healthy, fresh food at as minimal cost as possible

LEGISLATIVE REFORM:

- Improved regulations and legislation for employers to address sexual harassment and sexual violence
- Decriminalize and legalize drugs to lessen criminalization of marginalized folks
- Look at child protection/welfare system - generates risks for children and youth
- Abandon the government appeal of the Safe Third Country Agreement (which increases risks for survivors who are asylum seekers trying to cross from US to Canada)
- Immigration and status for newcomers and their ability to work despite not having their paperwork
- Decriminalize sex work and support sex workers labour movements

BUILDING a NATIONAL ACTION PLAN to END GBV

02-16-21

Identifying Priorities for Addressing Sexual Violence

ORGANIZING PRINCIPLES



Foundations
We're NOT starting from scratch

Measurements & Accountability
Any work we do with the government on a NAP needs to incorporate

- ▶ TIMELINES
- ▶ BENCHMARKS
- ▶ TRANSPARENCY
- ▶ ACCOUNTABILITY
- ▶ MECHANISMS

Key Points Focus
Keep our thinking HIGH-LEVEL

Scope
Thinking NATIONALLY

Safe drinking water

Social Infrastructure & Enabling Environment (Housing & Childcare)



Affordable Housing

Food security

Decriminalize sex work

Secure internet

Transportation is a HUGE ISSUE

Accessibility of housing & transit

Child protection & welfare

All levels of ability

Guaranteed liveable income

More safe spaces

Community navigators and advocates

SAC funding

Understand the CAPACITY of government & legislation

SUPPORT for SURVIVORS & FAMILIES

Impacts which supports are available

Intersectionality: Lack of Diversity in Response

We need to be careful... "Everybody has counselling services"

We are SPECIALIZED

We need to ARTICULATE our support for sexual violence

Let's NOT stop at Trauma informed

We aren't capturing the feminist analysis anymore



Responsive Legal Justice Systems

Shrink prisons out of existence

ADAR training in all policing training

Survivor-Centred... Won't be cookie-cutter

Work with aggressors as well

Funding for Court watch initiatives

Sexual Violence Ombudsperson

Mapping Distribution (funding)

Implement Alternative Justice

How do we FIX something so FUNDAMENTALLY BROKEN??

Let's Reimagine

Prevention

Structural change IS prevention

Better data collection is necessary to GUIDE prevention

Increase mental health supports

Engaging MEN, BOYS and ALLIES

Education & Awareness Initiatives

Consent & healthy relationships

Start EARLY

Feminist informed

Addresses the continuum of sexual harm

Indigenous-led Responses

Implement MISSING Calls for Justice

Access to and support for ELDERS

Respect treaties

Culturally affirming healing and knowledge-keeping

