



MOVING FORWARD

This report is being brought forward in the wake of several important reports and publications, including the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report* (TRC) in 2015, the *Reclaiming Power and Place Report* from the National Inquiry into MMIWG in 2019, and the *In Plain Sight Report* from the Addressing Racism Review (ARR) in 2020. The path forward for eliminating the barriers to wellness and supporting First Nations women and girls to thrive has been clearly laid out in the 94 TRC Calls to Action, the MMIWG's 231 Calls for Justice, and the 24 Recommendations of the ARR. This report has no further recommendations to add. However, it does underscore the urgency and significance of these actions to the health and wellness of First Nations women and girls and the well-being of First Nations communities more broadly.

There has been increasing awareness about the structural inequities, systemic racism, and misogyny that First Nations women encounter within mainstream systems for education, employment and economic security, housing, health, and justice. There is now greater public knowledge about the disproportionate risks that First Nations women, girls and gender-diverse people face. Recent achievements such as BC's legislation implementing the *United Nations Declaration of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)* and the *Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis Children and Families (Bill C-92)*, have also enhanced understanding about the prevailing inequities as a fundamental issue of human rights for Indigenous peoples.

However, as highlighted by the stories and data in this report, significant work is still necessary to eliminate and transform the colonial and racist foundations of systems at the root of these injustices. These colonial attitudes, policies, and structures are the reasons that First Nations women and girls continue to face challenges to their wellness and go missing from their communities. There could be no greater impetus for action than that.

- This report is intended as a benchmark of actions and collective progress in addressing the TRC's 94 Calls to Action, the MMIWG's 231 Calls for Justice, the ARR's 24 Recommendations, and the *UNDRIP* – all of which are necessary to eliminate barriers to First Nations women's and girls' health and wellness.
- This report is dedicated to the First Nations women and girls who have gone missing or been murdered, as well as their families and communities. These devastating losses are a constant reminder of the acute importance of this work.
- This report is intended as a reference point against which to measure improvements in data collection and First Nations data governance. It has revealed critical gaps in the data available to measure the wholistic health and wellness of First Nations women and girls and those who are gender-diverse. There are also many aspects that are central to First Nations perspectives of wellness for which no suitable indicators exist. The partners are committed to advancing First Nations decision-making and control over their own data.



Work is also underway to account for gender, sexual orientation, Two-Spirit and non-binary status when collecting data, and to develop measures of elements such as self-determination and land connection, which are key determinants of First Nations health. This report will therefore provide a touchstone for measuring progress on these important pieces of work.

- This report and accompanying [website](#) constitute an action on the part of the partners to restore women and girls to the centre of efforts to enhance First Nations health and wellness. They are also steps towards a new approach to reporting on First Nations women's wellness: one that focuses on the aspects that they themselves see as important to their health, and one that holds up the health and wellness of First Nations women and girls as an indicator of the health and wellness of society as a whole. To this end, the website will be a continuing space dedicated to the sharing of information and stories pertaining to First Nations women's health and wellness. Updated data will be provided on this site as it becomes available. It will also be a space to lift up and celebrate new and emerging practices helping to enhance women's wellness.
- Finally, this report is meant to highlight the strength of First Nations women and girls – and to celebrate the fact that many are flourishing in spite of the ongoing legacies of colonialism.



As a growing number of Nations reclaim their traditions, language, laws, and protocols, there are increasing opportunities for women to reconnect with their cultures and for girls to grow up proud and rooted in their First Nations identity. This report highlights the importance of this cultural revitalization and the power of First Nations culture as a source of guidance, strength, and support at every stage of a women's wellness journey, from before conception through to old age. This report also highlights the vital role of matriarchs in this process of reclamation: the role that First Nations mothers, aunts, Knowledge Keepers, grandmothers, and great-grandmothers play in keeping the languages, songs, dances, teachings, and practices of their ancestors alive in the context of today's world.

These matriarchs – current and future – are fundamental to the vision of healthy, vibrant, and self-determining First Nations communities and Nations. The goal is that future reports by the partners will see *all* First Nations matriarchs, women, girls and gender-diverse peoples thriving and self-determining.

The partners are committed to working to track our individual and collective progress towards helping achieve this goal – and we encourage First Nations women and girls to hold us accountable in this pursuit. The partners also invite others in government, industry, the health system, and the public to join in the work necessary to realize this vision.

