



BUILDING A
BIGGER WAVE

Ontario Network for VAW
Coordinating Committees

Supporting Truth & Reconciliation
Education for VAWCCs

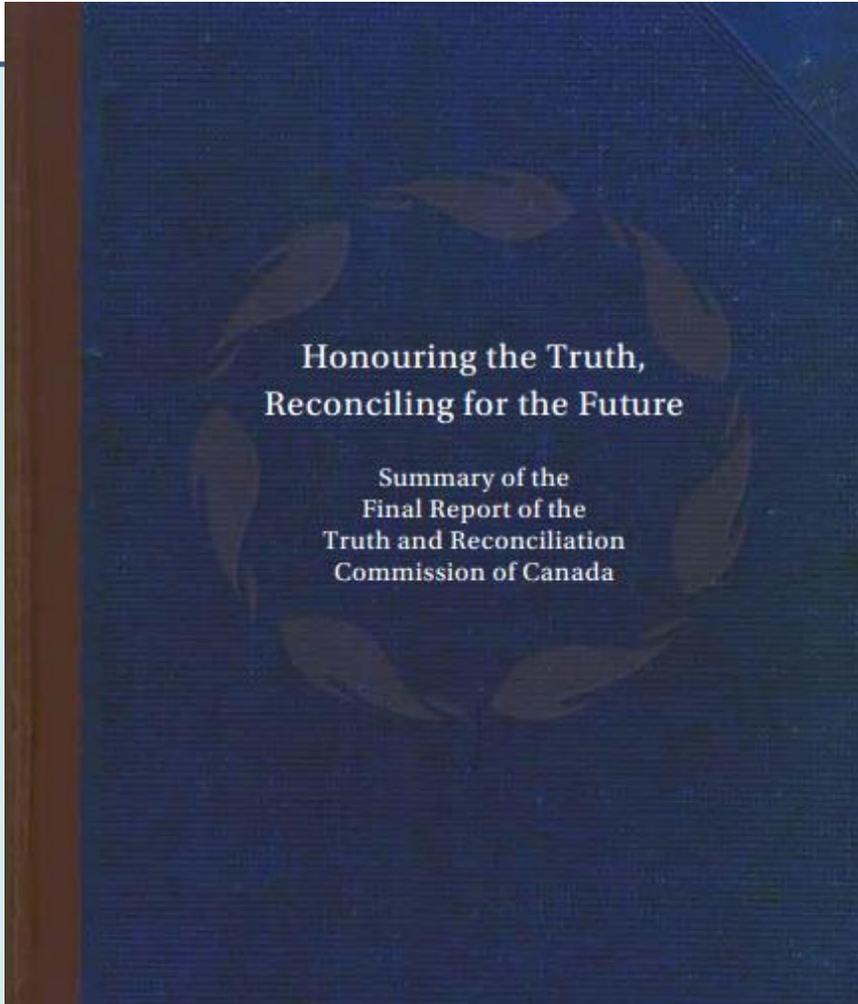
Building a Bigger Wave Fall Forum 2015

The 2015 BBW Fall Forum occurred just after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission published recommendations.

Participants at the Forum indicated strong support for prioritizing actions that support the TRC vision for reconciliation.

This presentation is intended to provide basic information and links for VAWCCs to begin to 'educate ourselves' on Indigenous issues related to violence against women as an important first step in becoming better allies.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission



Spent six years travelling Canada to hear from Indigenous people taken from their families as children and placed in residential schools

Over 6000 witnesses and survivors told their stories

Truth and Reconciliation Commission



The focus on truth determination was intended to lay the foundation for reconciliation.

Now that we know, what can we do?

- Educate ourselves – understand our shared history
- Build relationships in our communities
 - Respect-recognize traditional territories
- Support Indigenous leadership
 - TRC Recommendations
 - Indigenous VAW Strategy
 - Sisters In Spirit vigils
 - Invite local leaders to join VAWCCs

Action: Educate Ourselves



- Truth and Reconciliation Commission
- The Indian Act (racist legislation still in effect)
- Indigenous VAW Strategy
- Kanawayhitowin (Ontario DV public education)
- Sisters In Spirit

The *Indian Act*

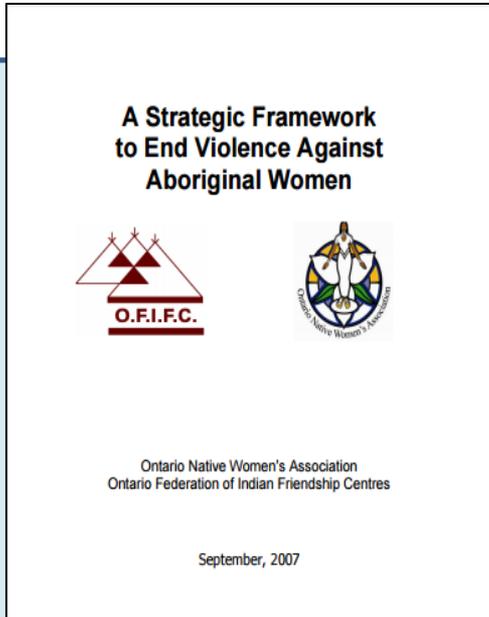
The original *Indian Act* does two things affecting all Indigenous people:

- Dictates how reserves and bands can operate.
- Defines who is, and who is not, recognised as an "Indian".

The Indian Act

- Denied women status;
- Introduced residential schools;
- Created reserves;
- Renamed individuals with European names
- Restricted First Nations from leaving reserve without permission from the government Indian Agent

Indigenous VAW Strategic Framework



Eight strategic directions:

1. Comprehensive research
2. Legal & Legislative reform
3. Comprehensive policy infrastructure
4. Sustained Program Infrastructure
5. Educational Campaign (Kanawayhitowin)
6. Sustaining Capacity
7. Community Leadership
8. Accountability



KANAWAYHITOWIN

TAKING CARE OF EACH OTHER'S SPIRIT

Teaches Historical Context

- Indigenous women have been left extremely vulnerable through both social and economic factors.
- The Indian Act of 1876 rendered Indigenous women to a lower class within their community, and removed their status should they chose to marry a non-Indigenous man.



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TAKING CARE OF EACH OTHER'S SPIRIT

Dependency – loss of status

- Women were in danger of becoming even more dependent on their spouses, and they were frequently unable to return to their home communities for support.
- Although the act was eventually amended in 1985, so that women who lost their status and their children could regain it, there has been a continuing struggle in Canada to have the voices of Indigenous women carry equal weight as the voices of Indigenous men.



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Residential Schools

- Residential schools eroded the sense of identity between the children who attended and their parents.
- Children who were brought to these schools were not allowed to speak their languages or practice their customs.
- They faced inhuman living conditions and suffered all forms of abuse.



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TAKING CARE OF EACH OTHER'S SPIRIT

Residential Schools

- Children raised with violence are much more inclined to become violent, and since the days of residential schools, three and sometimes four generations of Indigenous children have been raised in an environment of widespread violence and abuse.

(Indigenous Domestic Violence in Canada, The Indigenous Healing Foundation, 2005)



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Assimilation

- Indigenous children are also subject to a culture in which violence has been normalized, through popular entertainment, media and prevailing community attitudes and behaviours.
- Young Indigenous men are disproportionately incarcerated, and learn to identify with the beliefs and values of prison gangs and criminal network – beliefs they then introduce into their community. (pg.49, Indigenous Domestic Violence in Canada, The Indigenous Healing Foundation, 2003)



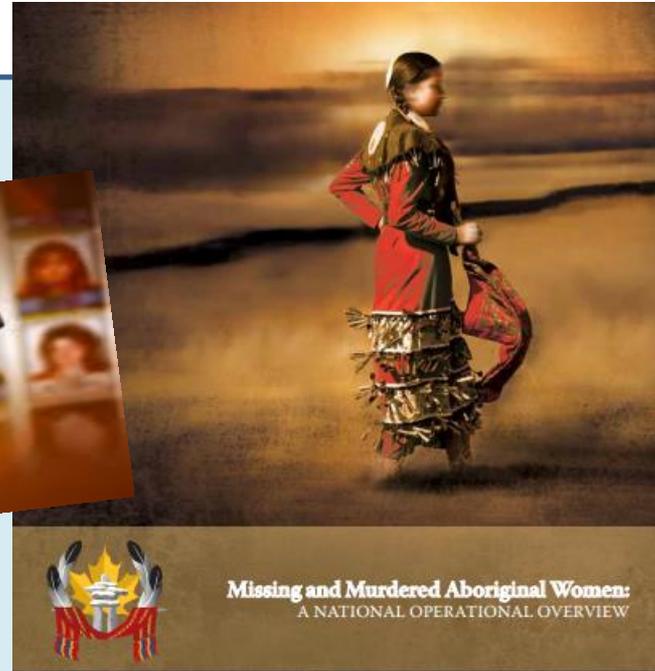
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Increased vulnerability

- The result has been far too many Indigenous women and girls are placed in harm's way, denied adequate protection of the law, and marginalized in a way that allows some men to get away with carrying out violent crimes against them.
- Violence against Indigenous women often goes unreported and unpunished. It affects Indigenous women from all age groups, religions and socio-economic classes.

Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women

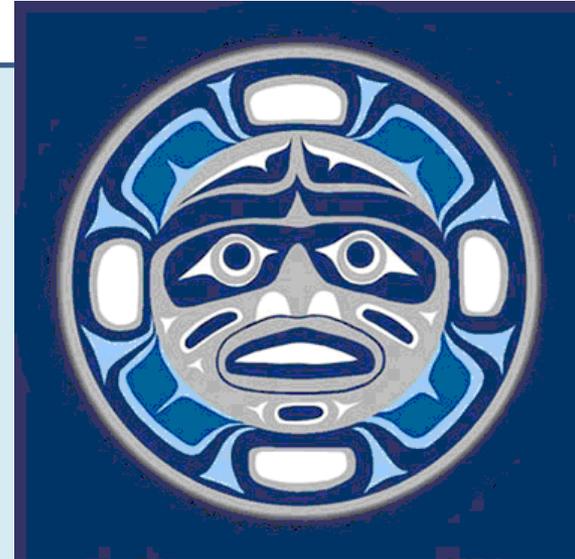
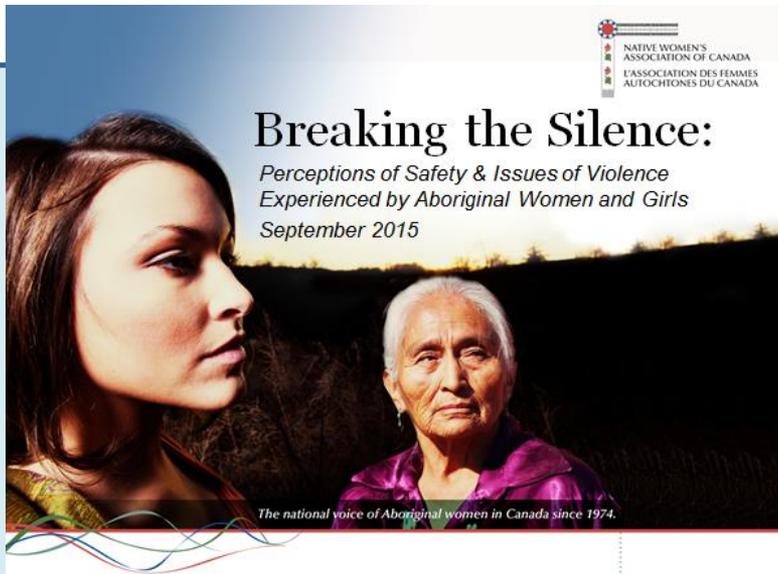


2014 RCMP report:

1,181 Indigenous women missing / murdered:

- 164 missing and 1,017 homicide victims.

Action: Build Relationships



Support / Host Sisters In Spirit vigils – Oct 4th
Since 2011 – VAWCCs in Ontario have been participating and/or hosting vigils to show solidarity. Violence against our indigenous women is a Canadian issue

Support Leadership



Sylvia Maracle – ED of Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres spoke at the 2015 Sexual Violence & Harassment Summit
She made several recommendations...

Take steps to inclusiveness



Sylvia Maracle on what allies can do:

- If Indigenous women are in your agency as clients, the makeup of your organization and board should reflect this
- Invite indigenous leaders to your annual general meetings
- Support full implementation of the Indigenous VAW strategy

Working Together

Sylvia Maracle / cont

- Take cultural competency training from us so that you understand your history. This is not our (indigenous) history, this is a shared experience.
- Review the TRC recommendations and adopt something from it – change the post TRC world by your actions
- Advocate for the missing and murdered Indigenous women
- Our shelters need to be on the same level as your shelters – advocate for that with us
- Be humble in your relationships with us



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Hope

Today, Indigenous women lead the way making the transition from old roles to new lifestyles.

In the words of a Cheyenne proverb, “A nation is not conquered until the hearts of its women are on the ground. Then it is done, no matter how brave its warriors or how strong its weapons.”



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What more can your VAWCC contribute?

...and please share your stories

Even small actions can make a positive difference. Showing this presentation to your organizations is a great start!

Thank You!