



PROTECTING

Our

women

Strategic Plan

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Southern Chiefs' Organization Mandate

Established in 1998, the Mandate of the Southern Chiefs Organization (SCO) is to protect, preserve, promote and enhance First Nation peoples' inherent rights, languages, customs and traditions through the application and implementation of the spirit and intent of the Treaty-making process.

Southern Chiefs' Organization Member First Nations

Berens River First Nation	Keeseekoowenin Ojibway Nation	Pine Creek Anishinabe Nation
Birdtail Sioux First Nation	Kinonjeoshtegon First Nation (Jackhead)	Poplar River First Nation
Black River First Nation	Lake Manitoba First Nation	Rolling River Anishinabe Nation
Bloodvein First Nation	Lake St. Martin First Nation	Roseau River Anishinabe First Nation
Brokenhead Ojibway Nation	Little Grand Rapids First Nation	Sagkeeng First Nation
Canupawakpa	Little Saskatchewan First Nation	Sandy Bay Ojibway First Nation
Dakota Tipi First Nation	Long Plain First Nation	Skownan First Nation (Waterhen)
Dauphin River First Nation	O-Chi-Chak-Ko-Sipi First Nation	Swan Lake First Nation
Ebb And Flow First Nation	Pauingassi First Nation	Tootinaowaziibeeng Treaty Reserve (Valley River)
Gamblers First Nation	Peguis First Nation	Waywayseecappo First Nation
Hollow Water First Nation	Pinaymootang First Nation (Fairford)	



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 - Birdtail Sioux First Nation
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 - Brokenhead Ojibway Nation
 - Dakota Tipi First Nation
 - Ebb & Flow First Nation
 - Hollow Water First Nation
 - Little Black River
 - Long Plain First Nation
 - O-Chi-Chak-Ko-Sipi First Nation
 - Peguis First Nation
 - Rolling River First Nation
 - Roseau River First Nation
 - Sandy Bay Ojibway Nation
 - Skownan First Nation
 - Swan Lake First Nation
- First Nation Justice Strategy
- Ikwe Safe Ride
- Jordan Stranger
- Ka Ni Kani Chichk's Restoring the Sacred Program
- Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre
- Manitoba Moon Voices Inc.
- Native Women's Transition Centre
- Protecting Our Women Oversight Committee
- SCO's Health Research and Engagement Program
- SCO's Health Services Integration Fund Program
- SCO's Non-Insured Health Benefits Navigator Program
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- University of Winnipeg Aboriginal Student Services Centre
- West Central Women's Resource Centre
- Winnipeg Police Services Indigenous Partnership Section
- Women's Correctional Centre of Manitoba

Introduction

Southern Chiefs' Organization (SCO) representing 32 Southern First Nations in Manitoba is committed to promoting safety for all community members located on and off-reserve. The Violence Prevention and Safety Planning program works in partnership with the Southern First Nations to address community needs in the areas of violence prevention and safety planning. SCO collaborates with First Nations and community stakeholders to identify root causes of violence and develop plans of action to end violence, and promote safety with an emphasis on empowering Indigenous women. SCO promotes equality and equity for all Indigenous women while addressing community needs to eliminate violence.

In June 2015, SCO's Violence Prevention and Safety Planning Program was granted project funding through Status of Women Canada under the theme "Working in Partnership to End Violence against Women and Girls". SCO developed a three year project, *Protecting Our Women*, which is designed to work in partnership with member First Nations and community stakeholders to develop a community based safety plan and tool kit for Indigenous women and girls moving to, travelling to, or residing in Winnipeg. Currently, Indigenous women and girls relocate from their First Nation for various reasons including seeking access to education, health care and employment. Some women also relocate to Winnipeg as they transition out of incarceration.

SCO conducted sharing circles, engaged with First Nations community members and consulted with service providers in Winnipeg to determine what resources are currently available to protect newcomer Indigenous women and what needs this project should fulfill. SCO identified that racism and discrimination creates environments where Indigenous peoples and specifically Indigenous women are more vulnerable to interpersonal violence and systemic violence. The above stakeholders illustrated a need for a safety plan style toolkit for Indigenous women and girls moving to, travelling to or residing in Winnipeg. SCO has identified that there are few resources available to support the transition that women and girls make to urban life. However, there are services available within the city to support women in various capacities including, counselling, laundry facilities, resume writing workshops, cultural supports and much more. Service providers, community members and First Nations are not always aware of the variety of services available in Winnipeg. Therefore, they have called for a resource guide in the toolkit where women and girls can learn about services and resources within the City of Winnipeg.

SCO has developed this strategic plan for the Protecting Our Women Project which targets key areas as identified in our Needs Assessment.

The *Protecting Our Women* project will aid in:

1. Changing socially constructed attitudes and perceptions about Indigenous women among service providers, Indigenous peoples themselves (building self-identity and self-esteem), and the general public as they continue to perpetuate violence and create institutional barriers to access resources.
2. Empowering Indigenous women to take individual and community action to end violence against women within their community and in Winnipeg through the development of a Safety Plan.

This Strategic Plan will guide the development and delivery of project goals and objectives of the Protecting Our Women Project.

Strategic Goal #1

Change Socially Constructed Negative Perceptions about Indigenous Women

Objectives

- 1.1 Educate First Nations on how negative perceptions about Indigenous women contribute to violence
- 1.2 Educate service providers on how negative perceptions about Indigenous women contributes to violence and creates barriers to access services
- 1.3 Reinforce positive images of Indigenous women
- 1.4 Mobilize community members to empower women to overcome barriers in accessing services

“Although Indigenous women do not share a single culture, they do have a common colonial history. The imposition of patriarchy has transformed Indigenous societies by diminishing Indigenous women’s power, status and material circumstances.”(Shari M. Huhndorf, Cheryl Suzack, Pp. 32). It is generally agreed by historians and experts that prior to contact, Indigenous women were valued as equal members of society. Women were revered for their ability in childbearing; a great responsibility gifted by the Creator. Women contributed to their communities’ success in various capacities including, by conducting hard-labour. This collective system was foreign to European Settlers at contact. “...Many settlers held onto Victorian beliefs that women were delicate and ill-equipped for hard-labour, and thus viewed Aboriginal women who worked the land as proof that Aboriginal men treated women as inferior, for they were doing the men’s work”. (Eric Hanson, 2009). Settler society held cultural norms where women were inferior and were considered property of male heads of households.

In addition to having status and power within communities, Indigenous women were autonomous of their sexuality. Women were able to dismiss a partner through customary divorce if they so desired. This was considered uncivilized according to the cultural norms of European Settlers. Therefore, laws were created to regulate the sexuality of women and to enforce monogamy. Women could be punished through punitive measures, could be removed from their communities, or could be forced into marriage with European Settlers. Indigenous women quickly became labeled as promiscuous, lazy and sexual deviants; misperceptions which continue to this day.

From education to agriculture and from governing structures to women's roles in societies, foreign laws invaded Indigenous communities. It is widely accepted that colonialism subjugated Indigenous peoples and has had a lasting effect. Inter-generational effects of colonialism, and laws created strictly to regulate the lives of Indigenous peoples are for the most part still in effect today. Indigenous communities continue to endure various obstacles in achieving equitable rights in Canadian society: lack of resources, lack of access to services, poverty, inadequate and overcrowded housing, lack of employment, inadequate education systems, and below average health care systems. These problems contribute to a break down in personal health and well-being. Addictions, mental health problems, high rates of suicide and self-harm, and family violence have become normalized among Indigenous communities.

These problems coupled with lasting negative images of Indigenous women foster an environment where Indigenous women are more vulnerable and at risk of victimization. Canadian society consistently reinforces that Indigenous peoples are less-than settler society and Indigenous women are considered less than an Indigenous man. These racist and discriminatory images stem from first contact, and continue to survive in the 21st century. Racism, discrimination, and oppression of Indigenous peoples continue to be normalized. Indigenous women are further marginalized since they suffer from both racism and gender discrimination (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, Pp. 70). "To understand violence against women, we need to attend to all systems of oppression. The beliefs and systems contributing to gender inequality are sustained and reinforced by co-existing systems of oppression." (Linda L. Baker, Marcie Campbell, Anna-Lee Straartman, Pp. 7).

As captured in the Protecting Our Women Need's Assessment, "Changing cultural norms that perpetuate violence is essential to violence prevention (WHO, 2004). In the case of violence against Indigenous women and girls sexist and racist norms must be shifted, however, another norm that must be shifted is the normalization of violence and abuse among Indigenous peoples. The Aboriginal Healing Foundation (2003) acknowledged family violence and abuse as the norm in Indigenous communities in which it is an intergeneration issue and a product of historical and current colonial trauma that Indigenous communities endure." (Jourdain, Tessa, Pp. 14). In order to prevent violence in First Nations, the Protecting Our Women Project will mobilize communities to educate community members on root causes of violence, what violence is, how negative social constructs contribute to violence, violence prevention, and safety planning. Violence within and among Indigenous communities can be broken.

Empowering women to reclaim their voices and identity will aid in breaking down negative stereotypes perpetuating violence. Indigenous women are three to five times more likely to be victims of violence. Violent acts against all women are under-reported. Victims of violence live with the trauma when both reported and un-reported. While women can access resources to support their healing, for those victims that do not report, accessing services may be difficult. Indigenous women already have problems accessing services such as counselling,

medical aid, and programs to advance their lifestyles due to historical oppression, racism, and stereotypes. Fear and history of negative experiences prevent these women from accessing services. Service providers need to ensure their environment fosters safety, confidentiality, and is welcoming to all peoples. These providers can foster reconciliation with Indigenous peoples through educating all staff and ensuring the environment is bias-free.

The Safety Plan and Toolkit, which will be shared among service providers, will enhance the skills and knowledge among service providers to ensure that negative images of Indigenous women will no longer create barriers in accessing services. SCO will work on educating service providers through awareness and knowledge transfer. In addition, SCO will aid in working with other service providers in Winnipeg to foster growth and inclusion of trauma-informed practices, and cultural awareness. This includes health services, transportation services, and justice agencies.

Indigenous communities must be empowered to take ownership over their own identity. Women in particular, facing double jeopardy of discrimination, must overcome this challenge to foster change in society overall. SCO will work with First Nations to promote positive images of Indigenous women and to empower women in communities to break down the barriers they face in accessing services.

The Safety Plan and Toolkit, coupled with resources and workshops will aid in eliminating negative images of Indigenous women; breaking the cycle of violence, and empowering women to reclaim their own agency.

Strategic Goal #2

Influence policy makers to create systemic change which does not perpetuate violence against indigenous women

Objectives

- 2.1 Improve community violence prevention service delivery model in First Nations
- 2.2 Improve community safety plans for women to include safety measures for women moving or travelling to Winnipeg
- 2.3 Promote trauma-informed practices among service providers to increase the safety for Indigenous women and girls living in Winnipeg
- 2.4 Promote trauma-informed practices among services providers to eliminate the barriers Indigenous women encounter when accessing services.
- 2.5 Work with municipal, provincial, and federal government level policy makers in promoting policy changes which enhance the safety of Indigenous women and girls

The Protecting Our Women Project will create a Safety Plan and Toolkit for women and girls moving to or travelling to Winnipeg. Based on the Needs Assessment, current community safety measures on reserve do not include women and girls migrating from reserve to urban life. The toolkit will support current violence prevention strategies on First Nations often delivered by Community Health Centre Programs. In addition, it will improve service delivery on First Nations as a tool to educate both service providers and individuals on what violence is, how to prevent violence, what a healthy relationship looks like, and information on other forms of violence. The safety plan will also empower individual women to take ownership and control over their own safety as they will learn their role in creating and maintaining safe environments as well as where they can access supportive services.

Education for service providers on-reserve and in Winnipeg will not only include how negative images of Indigenous women contribute to violence, but will also include how intergenerational trauma is a product of oppressive and colonial systems. Trauma-informed practices will be fostered. According to Klinic's *Trauma Informed: The Trauma Toolkit*, "every system and organization has the potential to re-traumatize people and interfere with recovery, and to support healing" (Klinic, Pp. 15). Trauma-informed practices provide services

that are welcoming to the needs of individuals affected by trauma. Recognizing that colonialism, oppression, racism, and their consequences such as family violence, addictions and more are all considered traumatic to Indigenous peoples, it is critical to work with service delivery providers on and off-reserve to mobilize their organization in taking a trauma-informed approach when assisting Indigenous clients. Equality can be achieved for Indigenous women accessing services as barriers previously in place will be broken down. Furthermore, the safety of women will be promoted as service providers will aid Indigenous women to access services which support their overall well-being. Clinic's toolkit will be shared with communities and other service providers as best-practice in trauma informed approaches.

SCO will further work with policy makers at the community and governmental levels to influence policy that supports the safety of Indigenous women. As Indigenous women are three to five times more likely to become victims of violence, some institutions do not have policies in place to protect them. In fact, some policies embody systemic racism against Indigenous peoples. SCO has already undertaken some of this work, by identifying gaps and needs and through reaching out to policy makers. SCO will continue to influence policy makers to create equitable policies.

Systemic Goal #3

Empower First Nations to support and educate their community on violence prevention

Objectives

- 3.1 Respond to community identified need in developing the safety plan
- 3.2 Promote education among community members on violence, violence prevention and safety planning
- 3.3 Improve awareness and access to programming, services, education and supports
- 3.4 Foster relationship building between First Nations and inner-city service providers to support the safety of Indigenous women.

As captured in the Protecting Our Women's Need's Assessment, "Specific to violence prevention, a challenge to developing and implementing successful interventions is the creation of a sense of ownership and responsibility for addressing violence at the community level. Community empowerment is imperative as many of the most important solutions must be implemented locally." (Jourdain, Tessa, Pp. 14). The fifteen First Nations partnered in the Protecting Our Women Project, have ownership over the violence prevention and safety strategy to be developed in the Safety Plan and Toolkit. Communities have outlined and identified their needs regarding safety planning for women and girls when moving to or travelling to Winnipeg, which includes reintegrating from incarceration. SCO as a support to enhance services and programs within our member First Nations, will develop the safety plan and toolkit based on the findings of the Needs Assessment.

The safety plan and toolkit will be exactly that, a safety plan and tool for communities to utilize for educating community members on violence, violence prevention and safety planning. This tool will support current community initiatives on violence prevention, including working in schools to educate youth on healthy relationships, violence prevention workshops, and in collaborating with leadership on safety plans for the entire community. The Resource Guide of the toolkit will improve awareness and access to programming, services, education and supports for community members living or travelling to Winnipeg. Inner-city service providers will also be able to use the tool to inform their clients on other services and resources available out of their own scope. Therefore, the objective will be to foster relationship building between First Nations, service providers, and Indigenous women through making linkages to resources available for Indigenous women and communities. The delivery of the Safety Plan and Toolkit will harness existing networks for effective delivery.

Strategic Goal #4

Empower Indigenous Women to enhance their personal safety and wellbeing

Objectives

- 4.1 Improve awareness on programming, services and supports for the safety and wellbeing of women
- 4.2 Improve awareness on potential dangers in urban settings, various forms of violence and strategies of maintaining safety
- 4.3 Promoting peer support system among women to enhance personal safety and knowledge of resources

Violence prevention and safety planning are strategies in which communities can protect their members to decrease negative health and social outcomes, including victimization, incarceration, addictions, mental health problems and codependency on Chief and Council. These strategies also aid external agencies like Health Canada, Non-Insured Health Benefits, Department of Justice and others as preventative measures not only to reduce violence but to also reduce expenditures at the institutional, regional, provincial, and federal levels. Community ownership and control on the delivery of the safety plan, will improve individual strategies of safety and aid governing structures in goals to eliminate violence.

As outlined in the needs assessment, "Our research consistently illustrated the importance of having a support system for a healthy and successful transition into city living of which it was found that services in the city currently provide. Thus, an essential role of the Safety Plan and Toolkit and its delivery is to connect women and girls to resources and services that provide support and facilitate a peer support system." (Jourdain, Tessa Pp. 43) The Safety Plan and Resource Guide of the Protecting Our Women Toolkit will improve awareness of services, supports, and the overall safety of Indigenous women and girls. This will contribute to the empowerment of women as they will have agency over their own safety plan with the ability to identify risks, potential dangers, signs of violence and also knowledge on where to access supports.

Indigenous communities are closely connected where networks of support are generated through these connections. The delivery of the Safety Plan and Toolkit will draw upon this strength to support the empowerment of women. A peer-to-peer mentorship model will be adopted where women share information and advise other women about the Safety Plan and Toolkit. This will harness the goal of empowering women to take individual action on personal safety.

Monitoring Progress

This Strategic Plan outlines 4 strategic goals of the Protecting Our Women Safety Plan and Toolkit for Indigenous women and girls moving to, travelling to or transitioning from incarceration to the City of Winnipeg. The objectives to achieve these goals has been outlined based on community and service provider consultations. The Protecting Our Women Needs Assessment captures the information community members, First Nations and inner-city service providers identified as critical to the success of the development and delivery of the Safety Plan and Toolkit.

As a requirement of the Protecting Our Women project, a Results Framework, Performance Measurement Plan, and Evaluation Plan have been created and approved by Status of Women Canada in the first year of project. These plans will aid in the monitoring and success of the project. Throughout the next phases, SCO will continuously refer to these plans as guidelines to ensure goals and objectives of Strategic Plan are being achieved. Under circumstances where goals and objectives are unsuccessful, SCO can adjust the delivery approach of the project to ensure successes are being achieved.

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