

# What We Heard:

## Survivor-Led Strategies to Inform the Implementation of Canada's National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence

YWCA Canada National Research Report  
June 2023

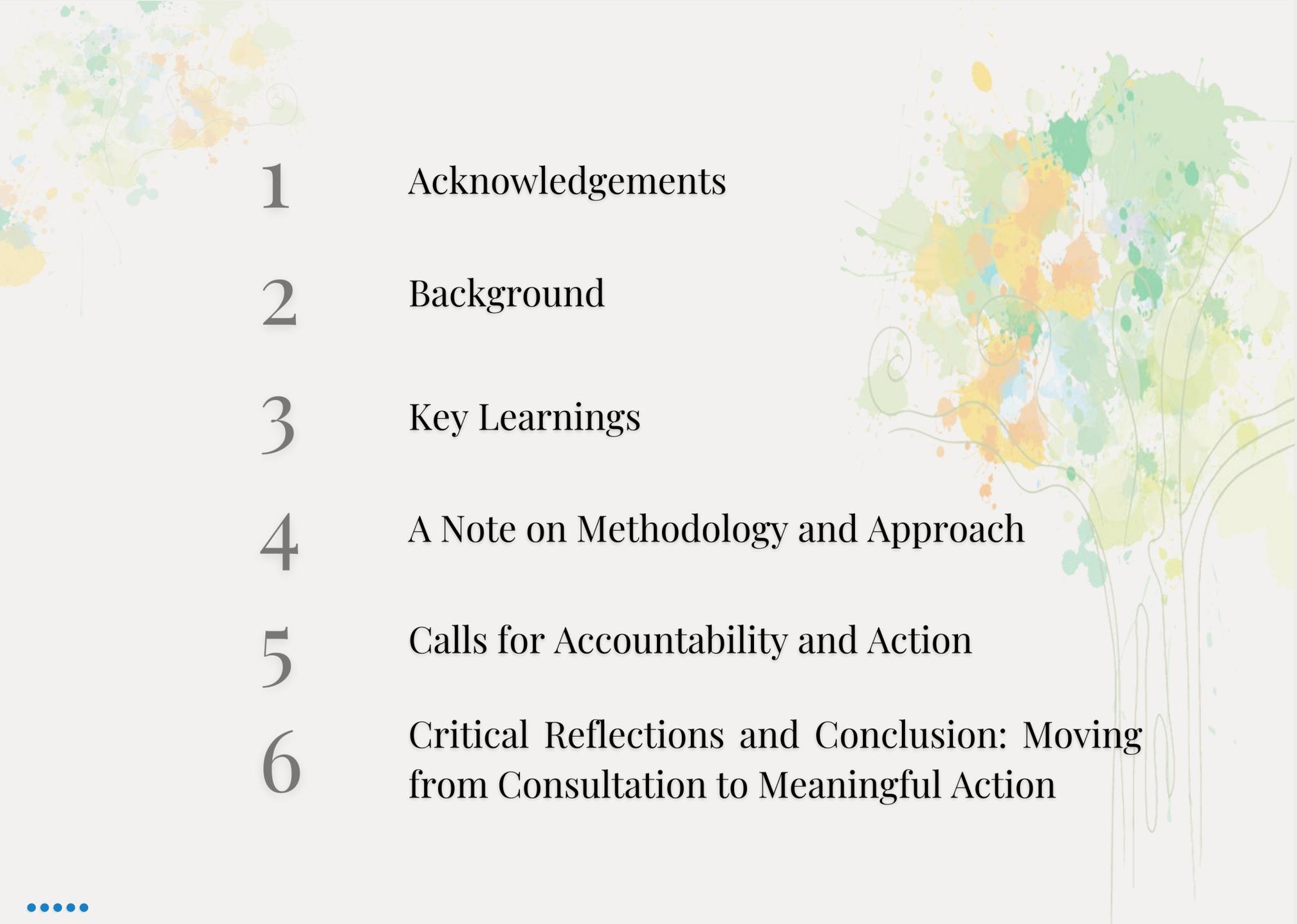


# Land Acknowledgement

The work that informs this report takes place on and across the traditional territories and current homes to many Indigenous nations. YWCA Canada recognizes that preventing and responding to gender-based violence requires us to confront the ongoing cultural genocide of Indigenous peoples and systemic violence against Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit peoples. As an institution that benefited from and contributed to colonial policy, we are committed to continuous learning, advocacy, and action to dismantle deep-rooted systems of oppression, dispossession, extraction, and racism. Through our work on gender equity and gender justice, our objective is to affirm and advance the leadership, safety, and self-determination of Indigenous peoples.

# About YWCA

YWCA Canada is a leading voice for women, girls, Two-Spirit and gender diverse people. For over 150 years, we've been at the forefront of a movement: to fight gender-based violence, build affordable housing and advocate for workplace equity. We work to advance gender equity by responding to urgent needs in communities, through national advocacy and grassroots initiatives. Today, we engage young leaders, diverse communities, and corporate partners to achieve our vision of a safe and equitable Canada for all.

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# Acknowledgements

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This report is rooted in an ethos of reciprocity, community care and co-design. Our gratitude goes to the hundreds of staff, volunteers and advocates from YWCA Member Associations, civil society organizations, and grassroots groups across the country for leading community engagement sessions and sharing insights that shaped this report.

We acknowledge the deep expertise offered by survivors and service providers. Their experiences carry the weight and urgency of this critical work.

YWCA Canada acknowledges the financial support of Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE). The community consultation process was coordinated by YWCA Canada and conducted by 60+ organizations that represent pan-Canadian anti-violence leadership. YWCA Member Associations are embedded in anti-violence and gender justice work, and also contributed significantly to the study.



# Organizations Consulted In Community Engagement Sessions

acte d'Amour  
Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes  
Alberta Council of Women's Shelters  
Antigonish Women's Resource Centre & Sexual Assault  
Services Association  
Archway Society for Domestic Peace  
Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services  
Aura Freedom  
Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic  
Battered Women's Support Services (BWSS)  
BC Society of Transition Houses  
Black Women in Motion| The Neighbourhood Group  
Community Services  
Boys and Girls Clubs of the Foothills  
Butterfly – Asian and Migrant Sex Worker Support  
Network  
Calgary Immigrant Women's Association  
Canadian Arab Institute  
Canadian Council of Muslim Women (CCMW)  
Canadian Labour Congress (CLC)  
Canadian Women's Foundation  
Canadian Center for Women's Empowerment (CCFWE)  
Centre for Sexuality  
Chinese Canadian National Council Toronto Chapter  
Colour of Poverty – Colour of Change (c/o South Asian  
Legal Clinic of Ontario SALCO)  
Cowichan Women Against Violence Society  
Cupid's Sting Non-Profit  
Dixon Transition Society  
Egale Canada  
Ending Violence Association of BC  
Ending Violence Association of Canada  
FCJ Refugee Centre  
Foundation Filles d'action |Girls Action Foundation with  
Platform and Prevention CDN-NDG  
Fresh Start Services For Women Inc. Saint John  
GBV Resource Collective  
Haven Society  
HIV Legal Network  
Howe Sound Women's Centre Society  
Indigenous Friends Association  
Islamic Relief Canada

# Organizations Consulted In Community Engagement Sessions

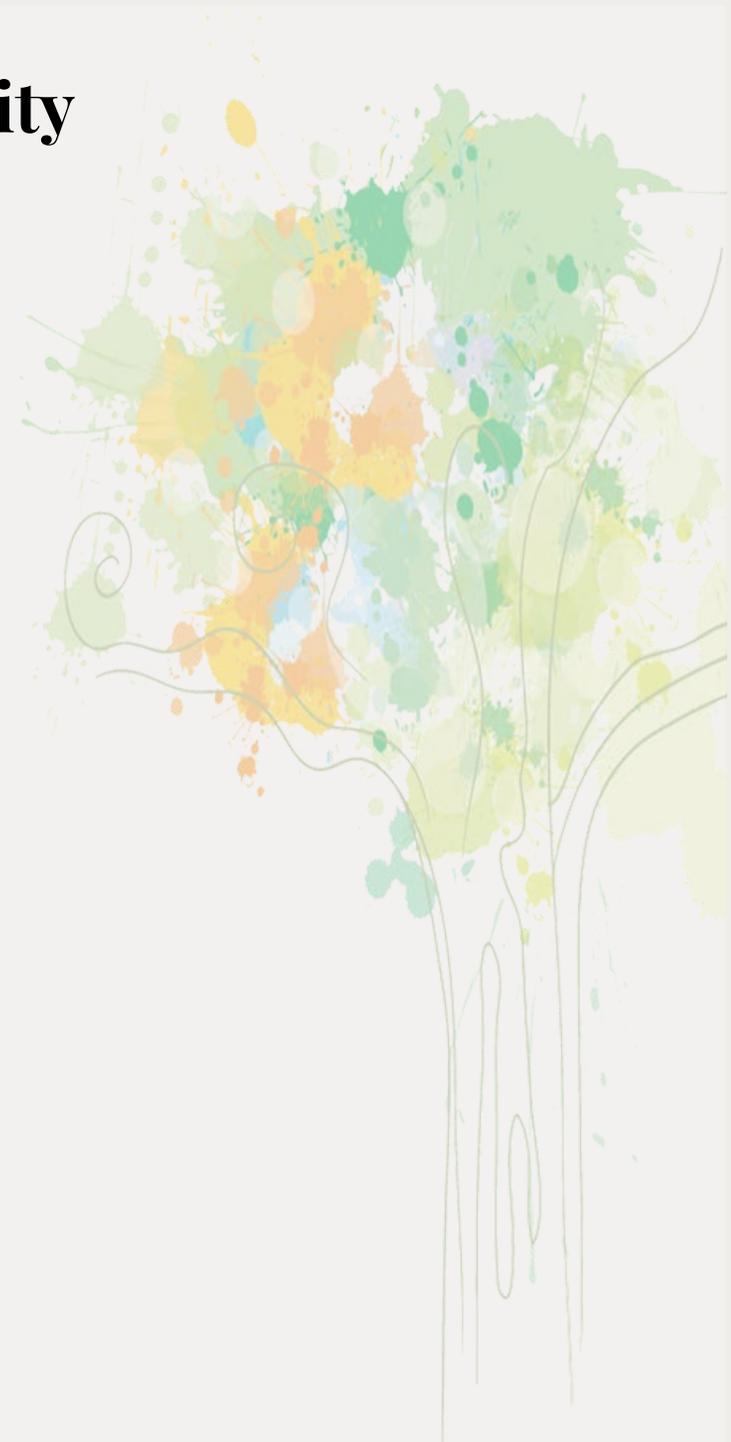
Kingston Anti-Violence Advisory Council | Victim Services of Kingston and Frontenac  
Laadliyan, Celebrating & Empowering Daughters  
London Abused Women's Center  
Manitoba Association of Women's Shelters Inc.  
Muslim Advisory Council of Canada  
Mokami Status of Women Council  
Muslim Resource Centre for Social Support and Integration (MRCSSI)  
Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC)  
Nisa Homes | National Zakat Foundation  
Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI)  
Ontario Association of Interval & Transition Houses (OAITH)  
Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada  
PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Centre (PEIRASC)  
Planned Parenthood Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Health Centre  
Possibility Seeds (Courage to Act), Canadian Federation of Students (CFS), and Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA)

Provincial Association of Transition Houses and Services of Saskatchewan (PATHS)  
Réseau d'action pour l'égalité des femmes immigrées et racisées du Québec (RAFIQ)  
Sagesse Domestic Violence Prevention Society  
Sakeenah Homes  
Settlement Assistance and Family Support Services  
Sistering  
South Asian Helpline Society  
Stop Abuse in Families (SAIF) Society  
Students for Consent Culture Canada  
Tech-Facilitated Violence Working Group (Lindsey MacIsaac, Rosel Kim, Jane Bailey and Rhiannon Wong)  
The Enchanté Network  
Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter with Aboriginal Women's Action Network and Strength In Sisterhood (SIS)  
Wen-Do Women's Self-Defence  
Woman Abuse Council of Toronto (WomanACT)  
WomenatthecentrE  
Yellow Brick House



# Organizations Consulted In Community Engagement Sessions

Y des femmes de Montréal  
YMCA -YWCA Kamloops  
YWCA Agvik Nunavut  
YWCA Banff  
YWCA Brandon  
YWCA Cambridge  
YWCA Edmonton  
YWCA Metro Vancouver  
YWCA Moncton  
YWCA Muskoka  
YWCA NWT  
YWCA Peterborough Haliburton  
YWCA Halifax  
YWCA Hamilton  
YWCA Kitchener-Waterloo  
YWCA Regina  
YWCA St. John's  
YWCA Sudbury  
YWCA Canada Young Women's Leadership &  
Engagement Committee  
YWCA Canada Violence Against Women Staff Network





# Background

Gender-based violence (GBV) [\[i\]](#) is a global issue that affects every jurisdiction, every riding, and every community in what is currently called Canada. This kind of violence is rooted in gendered inequity or power imbalances and directed towards individuals or communities based on their gender, gender expression, gender identity or perceived gender. However, the dire—often deadly—consequences of GBV can impact anyone regardless of gender, age, sexuality, religion, geographical location, ethnicity, or socio-economic position.

Women, girls, and gender diverse people are at heightened risk of experiencing GBV, even more so if they are women, girls, and gender diverse people with visible or invisible disabilities, or belong to Indigenous, Black, racialized, rural, 2SLGBTQQIA+ [\[ii\]](#) or other equity-deserving communities.

**For people that experience gender-based violence (GBV), every day is an emergency.**

**For over a decade [\[iii\]](#), civil society organizations in Canada, including Indigenous and feminist groups and anti-violence agencies, have been calling for urgent federal action to address and prevent gender-based violence in all its forms. [\[iv\]](#)**

This advocacy for a violence-free future resulted in the *Joint Declaration for a Canada Free of Gender-Based Violence* (GBV), endorsed in January 2021, that laid out the high-level framework for joint action—identifying the vision, goals, pillars, and foundation for a ten-year National Action Plan. During the first quarter of 2021, communities across Canada had an opportunity to provide input into Canada’s development of a National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence.

# Background

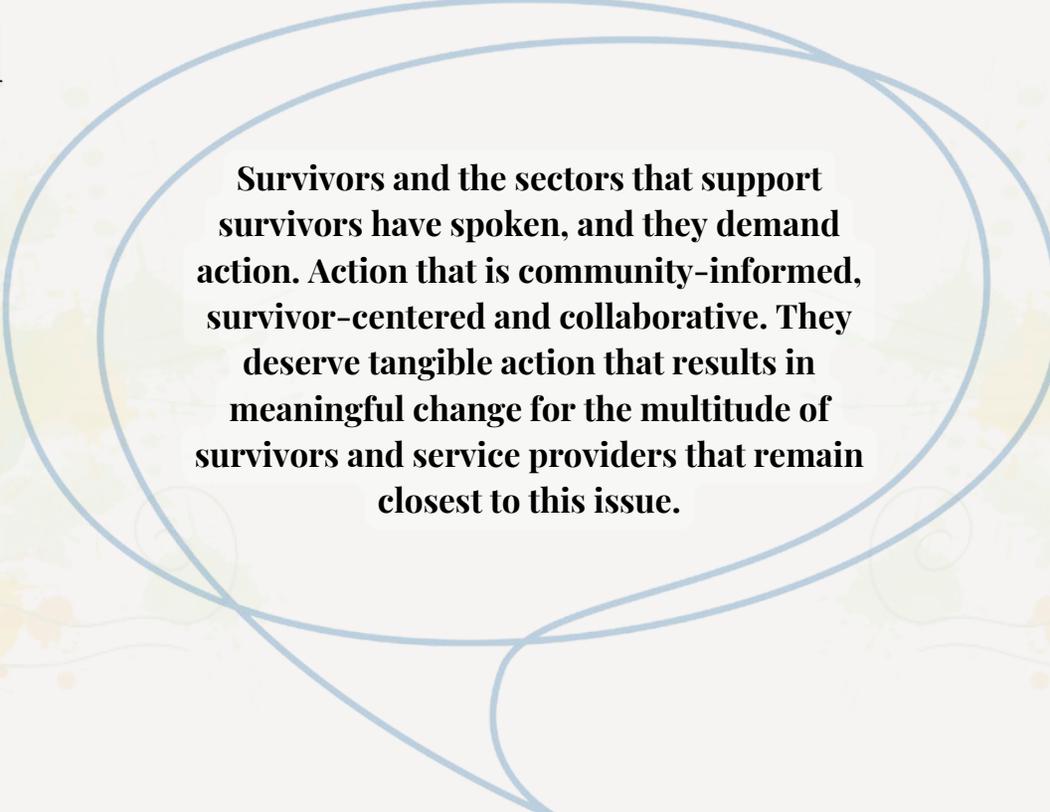
**In November 2022, the federal government released the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence.**

The National Action Plan builds on the core concerns and priorities identified by community actors and advocates and incorporates attention to nuance and context. However, in outlining broad opportunities for action, the plan falls short of demonstrating guaranteed and actionable commitment towards program, policy and financial shifts needed to end and prevent GBV by addressing both its causes and effects nation-wide. In its current form, the framework communicates intention without adequately outlining how their five identified pillars for action were going to be implemented and what corresponding funding commitments they were making.

**As a part of a national Community Engagement Initiative (CEI) funded by Women and Gender Equality (WAGE) Canada, YWCA Canada coordinated consultations with civil society organizations and grassroots groups to ensure community insight and expertise was considered and incorporated into the creation of a National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence.**

These Community Engagement Sessions culminated in the *‘Not One More’ – Informing the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence: What We Heard Report*, presented to the Government of Canada in April 2021. These national conversations took place in early 2021, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic that exacerbated gender-based violence and disproportionately impacted equity-deserving groups as well as the sector that serves, supports, and works alongside them. Even amid the staggering personal and institutional toll of the pandemic, survivors and service providers clearly articulated the need for urgent and immediate action.

# Background



**Survivors and the sectors that support survivors have spoken, and they demand action. Action that is community-informed, survivor-centered and collaborative. They deserve tangible action that results in meaningful change for the multitude of survivors and service providers that remain closest to this issue.**

**As the National Action Plan (NAP) to end Gender-Based Violence is being phased in, and over the course of the ten-year commitment, it is necessary to keep our collective attention on survivor-led recommendations for systems level change.**

This report draws from the cornerstone community engagement work that YWCA Canada coordinated at the onset of the pandemic and highlights concrete calls to accountability and action co-developed by 60+ civil society organizations and the communities across Canada that they engage and represent. They shared the solutions, so we must meaningfully listen and act on their expertise and experiential learnings.



# Key Learnings

# Key Learnings

**To achieve the objective of a GBV free Canada, the outcomes and indicators included in the National Action Plan need to be specific, measurable, and adequately funded.**

Tangible and time-bound targets are necessary to assess and demonstrate the impact of the plan and to ensure accountability and oversight through independent monitoring and evaluation. Accountability mechanisms that are transparent, evidence-informed, and are designed to include the various ministries, agencies, and organizations involved in this work will enable successful implementation. Crucially, the allocation of robust and ongoing funding is essential to meet these objectives and to maintain the trust and relationship with communities and survivors.

**GBV cannot be addressed without a holistic approach to healing and harm reduction that involves multi-sectoral coordination.**

We need a systemic approach to systems change. This would require the various types of social infrastructure and institutions in our society to work in concert to ensure a coordinated prevention and response system that considers the multiple needs of those harmed by gendered violence. The current “organizational silo” effect is re-traumatizing survivors and rendering service providers less effective; it is fundamental to have a framework of engagement and collaboration between federal government, provinces, territories, and national and local organizations at the forefront of this work.

# Key Learnings

**The cornerstone of a National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence must lie in commitment to feminist intersectionality, respect for human rights, and decolonial action.**

An intersectional feminist framework with a focus on substantive equality, Indigenous rights, human rights more broadly, and an understanding of overlapping oppressions, intersections of harm, and the workings of systemic power is imperative to implement effective prevention and support strategies geared towards decolonization and ending gender-based violence for all. This includes demonstrating a commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion and making our workplaces, communities, and online spaces safer for everyone, especially those most impacted by oppressive systems.

# Key Learnings

**The strategy must fully consider and respond to the many ways violence manifests in different contexts and communities.**



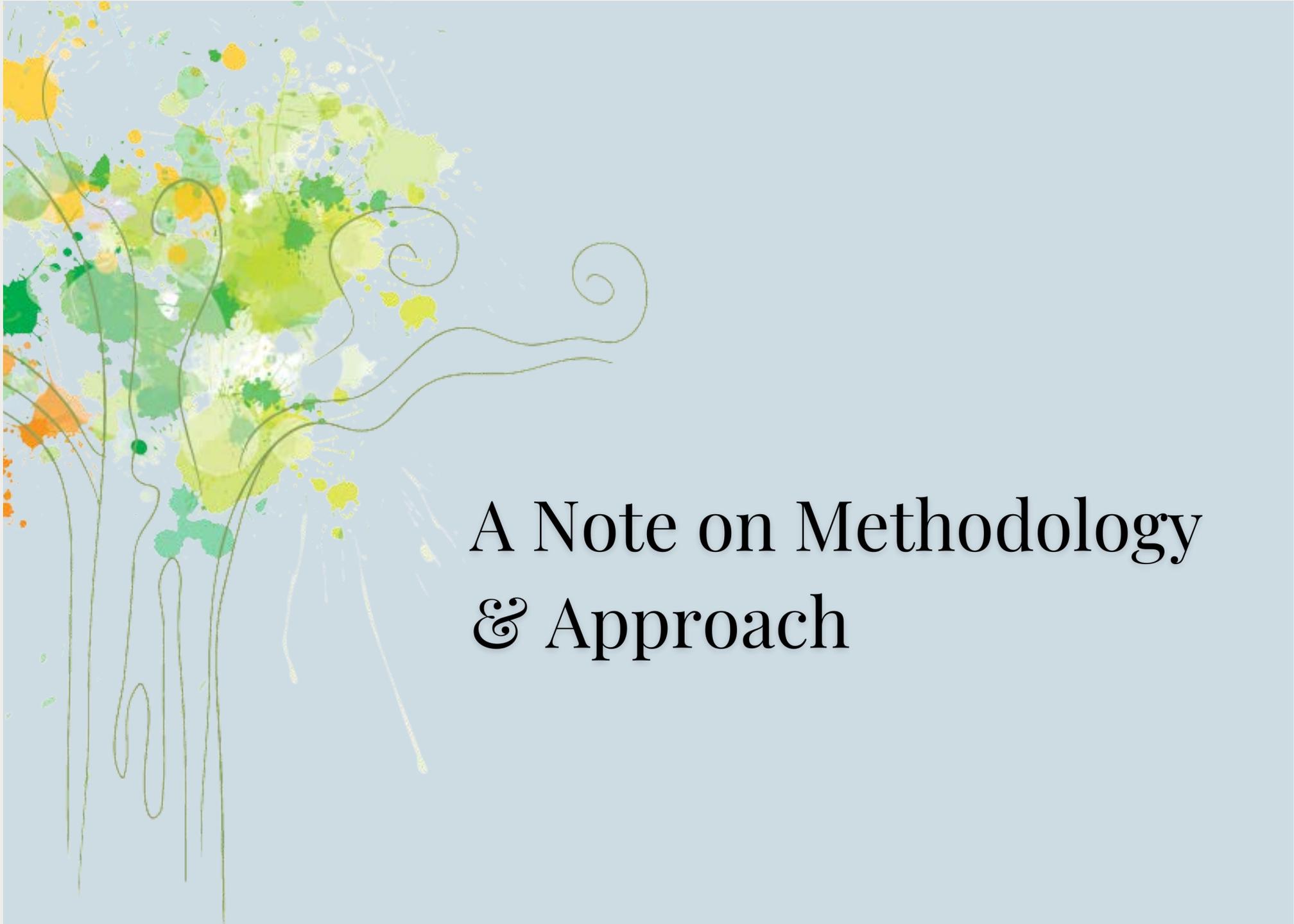
A comprehensive response to GBV must include all forms of gender-based violence that survivors, frontline anti-violence and anti-GBV workers, and researchers know to be a reality – including colonial violence, coercive control, systemic violence, economic violence and financial abuse, physical violence, psychological/emotional violence, technology-facilitated violence, intimate partner violence, familial violence, sexual violence, spiritual violence, workplace violence, transphobic and transmisogynistic violence, elder abuse, intergenerational violence, GBV against people with disabilities, GBV against sex workers and (im)migrants, human trafficking, femicide, and gendered violence outside of family, romantic or sexual relationships. We must consider the breadth of GBV in our communities including the specific ways GBV and lateral violence [\[v\]](#) intersect and manifest (particularly for Black, Indigenous, racialized, queer, trans, rural communities, and people with disabilities). The implementation of the NAP to end and prevent GBV must also be harmonized with the 2021 Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People NAP and the development of a national strategy for sexual violence that is specialized and distinct from a gender-based violence strategy. Failure to recognize the different ways GBV manifests and impacts marginalized groups may hinder the effectiveness of prevention efforts and result in the exclusion of survivors of a range of violences from accessing interventions, supports, and legal and other protective mechanisms.

# Key Learnings

**Contributions of community and civil society organizations are critical to societal transformation.**



While the intentions laid out in the NAP include community insight at every level, its implementation must also be driven by the directives and direct participation of community and frontline staff of the anti-violence sector and Indigenous and feminist movements that have been tackling the complex, pervasive, and systemic root causes of GBV. A robust strategy to confront GBV cannot be actualized without the full and direct participation of members of the groups advocating for and affected by the plan. Comprehensive training should be provided to align national, provincial, and local service provider and civil society mandates and social infrastructure with NAP priorities.



# A Note on Methodology & Approach

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**Through a series of selected quotes from survivors and service providers, we invite you into this important dialogue**

**Eliminating gender-based violence is a priority initiative of YWCA Canada. We cannot do this alone. It requires coalitional advocacy and multi-sectoral action.** To recognize the constellation of contributors that move this critical work forward, we are releasing part of our response to Canada's National Action Plan to end gender-based violence as a curated conversation among collaborators that came together at different phases of this effort. Through a series of selected quotes from survivors and service providers, we invite you into this important dialogue.

## Community-Engaged

The core concerns and clear asks of survivors, community members, sector partners, and service providers animate this report. YWCA Canada recognizes that ending and addressing GBV is a community-led endeavour. To facilitate a cross-sectoral understanding of, and response to GBV, in all its forms, YWCA Canada engaged over 60 community-based organizations with longstanding expertise in addressing various forms of gender-based violence and supported them to run community consultations sessions over 10 weeks in 2021.

Organizations that participated in the consultations included feminist, frontline, Indigenous, Immigrant-serving groups, student-led collectives, and Gender-Based Violence/Violence Against Women (GBV/VAW)

agencies and gender justice organizations that deliver services and programming to diverse communities including 2SLGBTQQIA+, newcomer/immigrant, rural, remote, language minority, people with disabilities, and racialized communities.

Organizations were supported to translate materials into multiple languages, offered training, and encouraged to make room for representatives from different regions to achieve geographical representation and racial and linguistic diversity.

In addition to community engagement sessions, organizations and communities were provided with a range of ways to share insight—through video testimonials, virtual round tables, online surveys, bilingual Action Labs facilitated by the Institute for Change Leaders, organizational reports, and online submissions.

We supplemented this with knowledge exchanges and listening sessions led by YWCA Member Associations across the country.

We are grateful to the thousands of people involved in these sessions as organizers, as participants, and as facilitators in this complex initiative. Despite deep unpredictability and onerous demands during a global pandemic, communities and organizations contributed significantly to the process of informing a national action plan to end and prevent gender-based violence.

## Survivor-Centric

YWCA Canada believes in the wisdom of story and honours lived experiences and personal circumstances as core to our advocacy. This report prioritizes survivor stories and strategies, scaffolded by the knowledge shared by the sector that serves, supports, and works alongside them.

**A survivor-centered approach places survivor narratives, personhood, and autonomy as priority.**

A survivor-centric approach to GBV means acknowledging the diverse and complex

circumstances and responses to GBV and the different needs and desires arising from that to design appropriate, tailored, and empowering supports. This could include health care, social and community support, psychological and emotional care, security, increased access to legal support or community-based intervention services. A survivor-centric approach is critical to ensure initiatives, legislation and services are developed, implemented, and evaluated by the people who use and need them.

Some key aspects of this approach include confidentiality, survivor autonomy, safety, respect, non-discrimination, honesty, intersectionality, dignity, and care. In particular, when working with Black, Indigenous and other racialized women and gender diverse survivors, such an approach must reconcile that the dominant focus on “damage” and harm within/against these communities furthers stereotypes and can make experiences of violence more prevalent.

Further, processes of “consultation” can be extractive and extend the exploitation of these communities.

During this consultation process, community

participants and providers were not required to disclose personal or sensitive information, nor directly asked about their own histories of gender-based violence, or expected to divulge survivor status or stories of trauma. In sharing their strategies for change some chose to reference experiences to add context. Spaces were held by trusted community members and consultation guides were developed in accordance with trauma-informed principles. Participants included members of marginalized communities as well as community leaders, service providers, advocates, and activists.

Clear distinctions cannot be made between survivors and service providers; many participants mentioned holding multiple identities, among them both service provider and survivor.

**All participants were empowered to share on their own terms, provided access to supports that enable them to exercise their rights, and connected to recovery resources that correlated to their needs and desires.**

## Gender-Based Analysis+

While the impacts and experiences of GBV cut across all social groups, populations that already disproportionately experience socio-economic inequities (for example, criminalization, poverty, homelessness or housing precarity, food insecurity, inequitable access to health care, education and social services) are at higher risk of experiencing GBV. A Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) approach to GBV examines how sex and gender intersect with other identity factors, such as race, national and ethnic origin, Indigenous origin or identity, age, sexual orientation, socio-economic condition, place of residence and disability to impact the frequency and severity of the violence or systemic inequities that individuals and communities experience.

**Taking a GBA+ approach to policy and program analysis involves understanding context and community specific constraints as well as the impact of social services including health and social programs, childcare, long-term care, policing, education, healthcare and GBV survivor supports.**

Such an analysis allows consideration of the root causes of GBV, and how and why certain groups have more access to and control over resources, while others have lower participation and less influence in decision-making processes. There is a need for all levels of government, not just federal, to be applying a GBA+ lens to the development of new services and programming in response to the national action plan on GBV.

**GBA+ tells us which communities are especially impacted by gender-based violence and related vulnerabilities and allows policymakers and service providers to develop and aim interventions towards the most-impacted communities.** These include, but are not limited to, Black, Indigenous, racialized, trans and non-binary people, newcomers/immigrants and migrant workers, refugees, non-status, and asylum seekers, sex workers, students at post-secondary institutions and campuses across Canada including international students, youth, 2SLGBTQQIA+ and sexual and gender minority communities, people with visible and invisible disabilities, people living in rural and remote areas, survivors of child abuse, and persons with substance use disorder or addictions.



# Calls for Accountability & Action

# Calls for Accountability & Action

**This advocacy builds on, leverages, and amplifies a robust history of over 50 years of recommendations, advocacy, service provision, and community action.** Across many community engagement sessions, there was an urgent call to implement past recommendations from the feminist movement as well as the Calls to Action in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission [\[vi\]](#), the Calls to Justice in the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women [\[vii\]](#), Girls, and Two-Spirited People inquiry report and repeated recommendations from the anti-violence sector.

Through a suite of consultative activities, survivors and service providers have made clear to government and the ecosystem of funders and policymakers what they need to see actioned to address GBV.



**Our recommendations also echo those clear and tangible calls to action and justice**

Reflections from community engagement sessions provide a meaningful roadmap in implementing the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence. To this end, we have organized and summarized the recommendations YWCA Canada received along the pillars outlined in Canada's National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence framework.

# Pillar I

## Supporting Survivors & Their Families

**A survivor-centered approach to GBV promotes self-determination and prioritizes survivors' rights, privacy, dignity, and expertise.** All individuals who have experienced and continue to experience GBV need supports that place their stories, lives experiences, personhood, and autonomy at the center. They deserve competent, equitable and culturally responsive supports, services, and programs in their communities that account for the unique needs and systemic barriers experienced by survivors. People experiencing GBV face multiple barriers to accessing appropriate services due to restrictions on their movement; their burden of household and care labour; lack of safety, autonomy or confidentiality at service delivery facilities; absence of tailored and appropriate services; fears that reporting may lead to dual charging or abuser's deportation; onerous documentation and proof requirements; ableism, transphobia, racism, Islamophobia and/or xenophobia; and economic insecurity. People with intersecting identities (race, class, sexuality, disability, etc.) face additional barriers that make seeking help intimidating, stressful, and/or traumatic. [\[viii\]](#) COVID-19 pandemic-related lockdowns, economic insecurity, and mobility restrictions further limited survivors' ability to leave abusive situations leaving many trapped with their abusers and isolated from social contact and support networks. [\[ix\]](#) The COVID-19 pandemic and its economic and social fallout have also laid bare the piecemeal and unpredictable state of funding for organizations supporting survivors of gender-based violence. The rise of GBV since the onset of the COVID-19 crisis has reduced the capacity of organizations to meet these heightened needs and make the required pivots to virtual or hybrid services in some instances. [\[x\]](#)

## What Remains to be Done

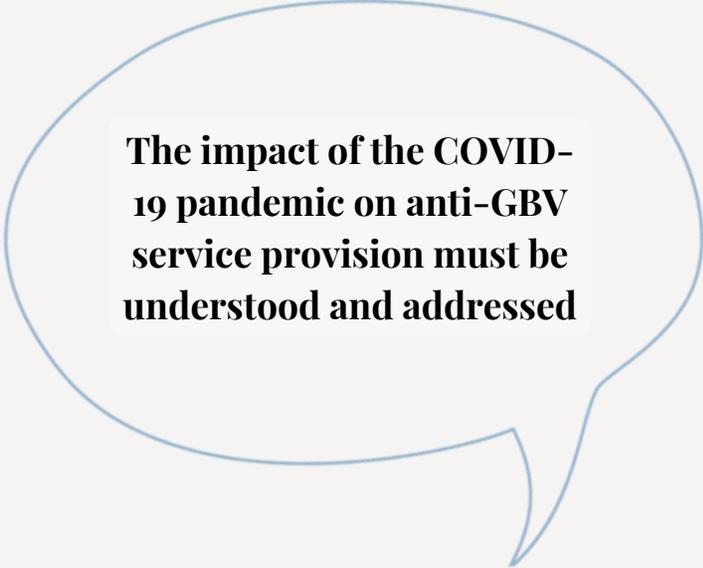
Organizations and participants in community engagement sessions clearly stated the key principles they wanted to see embedded in intersectional and inclusive support of survivors of gender-based violence. **This includes funding and making available safe, accessible, and affordable services. It also requires strengthening existing survivor supports by addressing gaps in services, identifying barriers to access, mitigating capacity constraints, and providing comprehensive training for providers on gender-based violence, social norms, and survivor-centered care.** To be able to access GBV supports and participate in the legal system, survivors need access to wraparound supports including housing, education, childcare, access to technology and internet services as well as culturally safe and linguistically accessible social and community supports, psychological care and counseling, health care, income supports, education and employment services, legal and financial aid and more.

**Further, participants noted that it is key to support survivors and their families where they are at by providing them with public education and systems navigation to gain a clearer understanding of available supports and enable access to relevant services after experiencing GBV.** Many respondents mentioned the need to expand mandatory training, including on trauma and violence, for police and other professionals.

To do this, we must expand the definitions and deepen understanding of GBV in all its forms, including the links between GBV and mass violence. [\[xi\]](#) This requires combatting structural discrimination of survivors and removal of barriers to serving Indigenous communities, religious, and ethno-cultural minorities.

It necessitates the removal of conditional requirements embedded in service delivery that make it mandatory to be in sobriety, have children or police involvement, or immigration status requirements before accessing vital supports and services such as shelters, housing, counseling, or food banks. Furthermore, dismantling access barriers for Two-Spirit, trans and gender diverse communities must be coupled with an acknowledgment of the colonial roots of the gender binary, recognizing that the imposition of narrow and reductive conceptions of gender, heterosexism and patriarchy is, in itself, a systemic form of GBV against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.

**Many participating organizations raised concerns around the sector's continued capacity to meet increasing needs and additional challenges when faced with dire staff shortages and chronic underfunding.**



**The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on anti-GBV service provision must be understood and addressed**

Respondents referred to the exclusionary criteria of the COVID-19 Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) that relied on immigration status and Social Insurance Number (SIN) for disbursement, deeply impacting Non-Status, Refugee and Immigrant (NSRI) communities. Service providers raised concerns around the work involved to advocate for these basic emergency responses for communities and clients in a sector already so limited in capacity.



**Recommendation:** Strengthen Awareness and Public Education around Available Resources, Programs, and Supports

“A lot of the time when you try to access government services, or anything that is out there, the barrier is just not knowing it is there.”  
**(Sistering, provider)**

“The availability of supports in the community is constantly changing and requires continued research to ensure that we are providing people with the right resources.” **(YWCA Cambridge, provider)**

“So many agencies with locked doors! Hard to even tell who is open anymore.” **(Haven Society, participant)**

“Share resources early upon women’s arrival to Canada...Handing out accessible resources, culturally specific guides in the airport to educate newcomers about GBV... Including GBV section in the Welcome to Canada book given to all immigrating families and published online.” **(Boys and Girls Clubs of the Foothills, participant)**

“Women noted there needs to be an informal space just for newcomer women to come together and learn from each other; a space where they can spend time together and share experiences about how they are living; a space where they can learn from each other.” **(Antigonish Women’s Resource Centre & Sexual Assault Services Association, provider)**

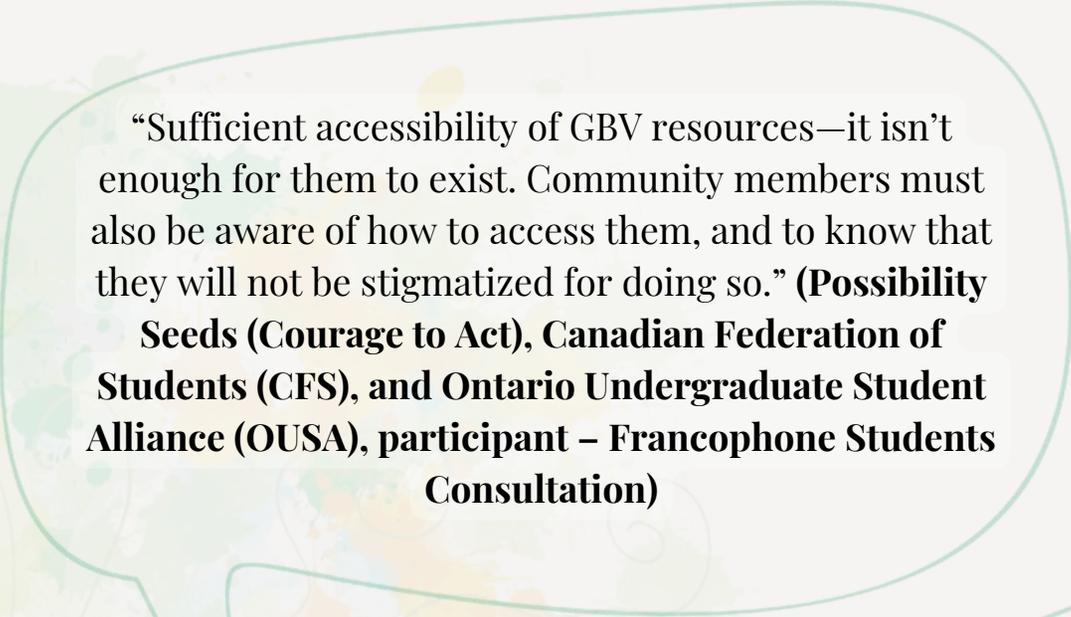
“Immigrants and refugees are unaware of the social systems in Canada that are available to them and how to access them. To reach these people, this information must be accessible in all institutions: religious centers, banks, newcomers’ programs and other institutions.” **(Canadian Center for Women’s Empowerment (CCFWE), provider)**

“Il y a une réelle méconnaissance par les femmes, du système de protection des droits et des types de violences fondées sur le genre ainsi que les conséquences et des ressources existantes.” “There is a real lack of knowledge by women of the rights protection system and the types of gender-based violence as well as the consequences and existing resources.” **(Réseau d’action pour l’égalité des femmes immigrées et racisées du Québec (RAFIQ), provider)**

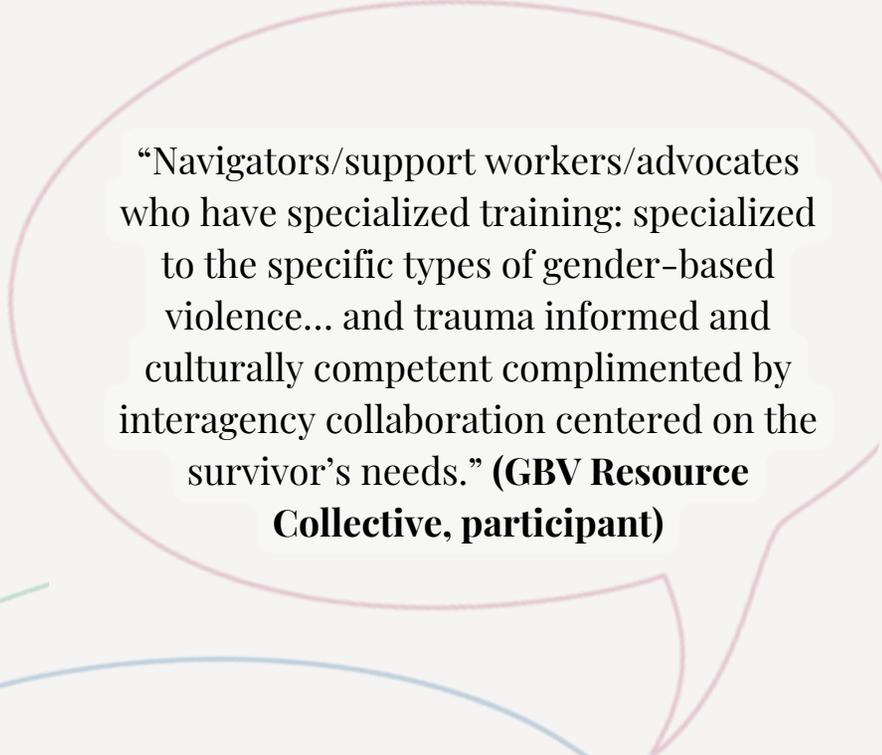
“It is unclear what services different organizations provide, and who is eligible. People must rely on workers to help them navigate the system; the system is not intuitive. Supports and information in all languages need to be readily available. Zoom access to resources for people in more isolated areas. Supports should not be conditional to those accessing services, or the organizations providing services (conditions of the funding).” **(Sistering, provider)**



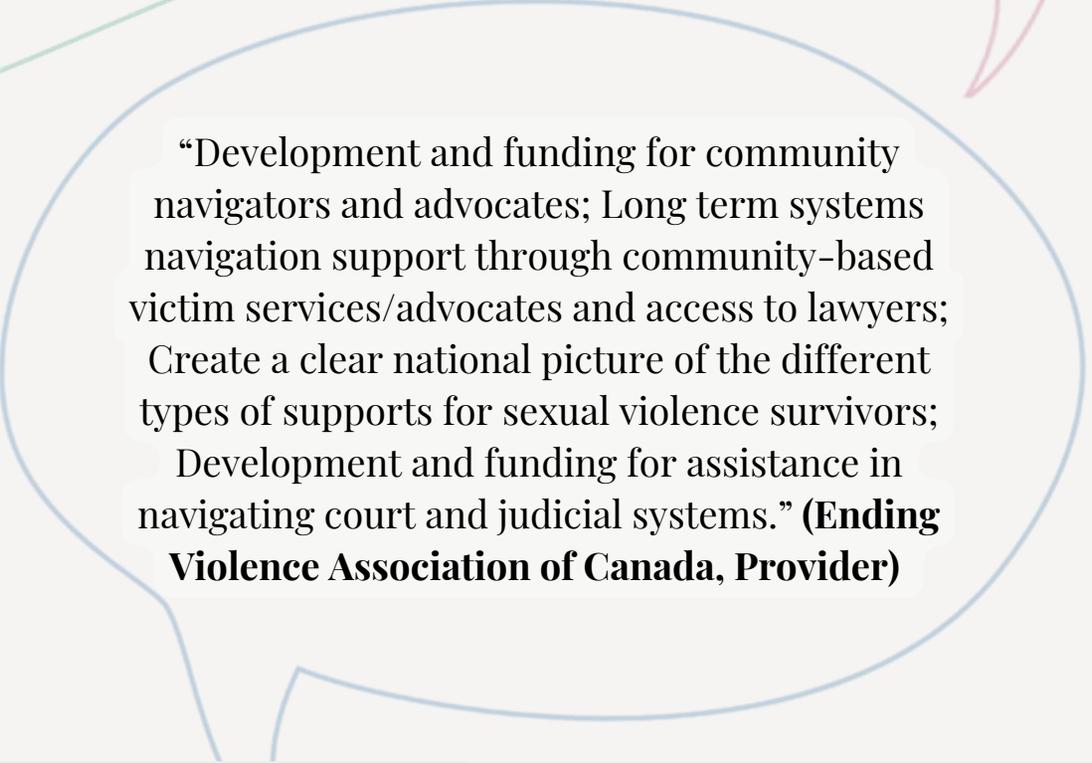
**Recommendation:** Develop, Fund, and Further Resource In-Person and Virtual Navigation Supports, Systems Mapping, and Survivor Advocacy



“Sufficient accessibility of GBV resources—it isn’t enough for them to exist. Community members must also be aware of how to access them, and to know that they will not be stigmatized for doing so.” **(Possibility Seeds (Courage to Act), Canadian Federation of Students (CFS), and Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA), participant – Francophone Students Consultation)**



“Navigators/support workers/advocates who have specialized training: specialized to the specific types of gender-based violence... and trauma informed and culturally competent complimented by interagency collaboration centered on the survivor’s needs.” **(GBV Resource Collective, participant)**

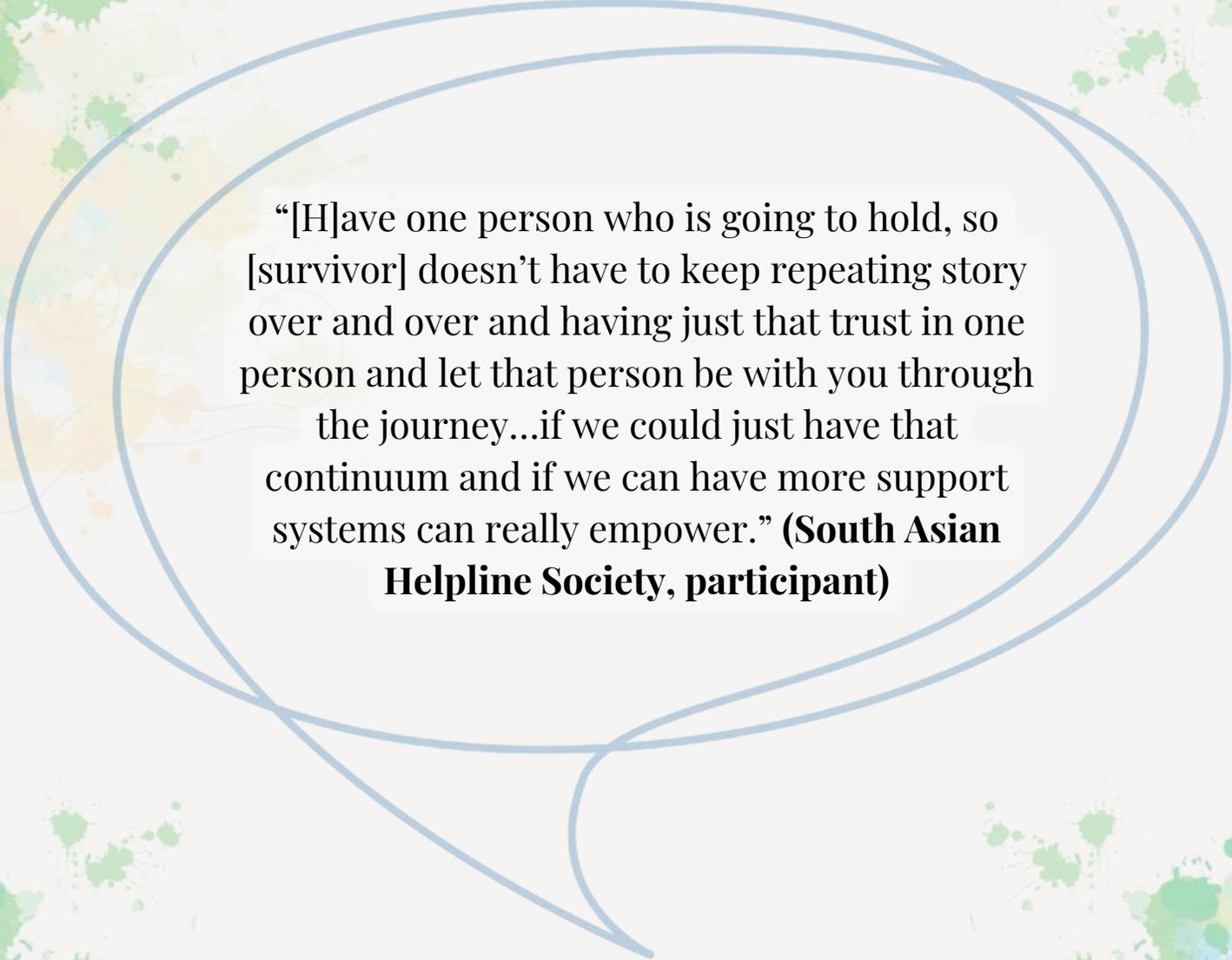


“Development and funding for community navigators and advocates; Long term systems navigation support through community-based victim services/advocates and access to lawyers; Create a clear national picture of the different types of supports for sexual violence survivors; Development and funding for assistance in navigating court and judicial systems.” **(Ending Violence Association of Canada, Provider)**

“There isn't enough digital way finding available at most universities. There need to be centralized, search-engine optimized (SEO) webpages that contain links to a diversity of resources in plain text. I find that a lot of universities use neutral language headers and sidebars meant to soften (or obfuscate) their resources. (e.g., it's "Sexual Violence Prevention" even if you're already a survivor and you can no longer prevent the violence).” **(Students for Consent Culture Canada, participant)**

“No one who has not been through this trauma and abuse and trying to navigate this “system” can possibly have any concept of the stress involved.” **(Archway Society for Domestic Peace, participant)**

“If I could dream it would be that there was a line I could have called when I got out and been appointed a “helper” who guided me through the systems and advocated for me in the workplace. I had to navigate so much on my own- with PTSD, a brain injury, and children who were also suffering from PTSD. I am an educated woman, so I was able to communicate my needs better than some others. I was fortunate and still struggled immensely.” **(WomenatthecentrE, participant)**



“[H]ave one person who is going to hold, so [survivor] doesn’t have to keep repeating story over and over and having just that trust in one person and let that person be with you through the journey...if we could just have that continuum and if we can have more support systems can really empower.” **(South Asian Helpline Society, participant)**



**Recommendation:** Increase Resources for Shelters, Hotlines, and Holistic Wraparound Supports (Including Provision of Childcare, Travel Subsidies, Mental Health Supports, Employment Supports, and Food) to Meet Heightened Demand

“We need to take a holistic approach to the healing for survivors of gender-based violence. Experiencing gender-based violence affects so many parts of a woman's person, sense-of-being, ability to participate in society. Many of the effects can and do affect the woman for the remainder of her life. To assist with the healing the complexity must be recognized, acknowledged, and understood, including the barriers that it brings to reengage successfully in society.” **(WomenatthecentrE, provider)**

“How do we support one client and not trigger another?”  
**(Planned Parenthood Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Health Centre, provider)**

“Reaffirm the prosecutor charging policies; more education to police regarding who is the actual aggressor rather than charging both spouses. Too many victims of violence end up at the wrong end of the system when police are called... Police need to be set up and connected with other service providers to assist in prevention and being proactive rather than reactive. An increase in community outreach teams trained in de-escalation, mental health, crisis counselling, and interpersonal violence need to be more readily available. Community outreach teams are often too small to meet the demand, which causes jaded and burnt out staff who stop providing quality services.” **(Provincial Association of Transition Houses and Services of Saskatchewan (PATHS), provider)**

“Rent here is very expensive, and it is very difficult to survive, women cannot leave because they cannot afford to pay for an apartment on [their] own, so [they] cannot leave.

So while it is a violent relationship it is also a violent system, the system of capitalism. It is one of the biggest issues women face – how can they leave the house to pay at least 1K in a basement apartment or a room? A woman who is in a relationship for many years will not want to leave to live with a stranger.” **(FCJ Refugee Centre, participant)**

“Create a system that specifically helps Indigenous women leave abusive relationships. This system must work to educate women on what is out there as many “are entrenched in an abusive cycle... [and] don’t see a way out”.  
**(Battered Women’s Support Services, provider)**

“24/7 support is needed: counselors available on weekends, 24h emergency response that is not just police (need mental health professionals responding to calls).”**(Sistering, provider)**

“Non-Status, Refugee and Immigrant (NSRI) communities face further oppression and alienation when the response to GBV is policing, especially when dealing with the migrant, sex-worker community. Organizations that receive funding from Immigration department are scared to serve NSRI...[f]unding should not be tied to immigration status or 2SLGBTQQIA+ status.” **(Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI), participant, “No One Is Illegal” Organizer)**

“Women cannot pursue education and training opportunities without childcare. Women in Canada need universal free childcare.”

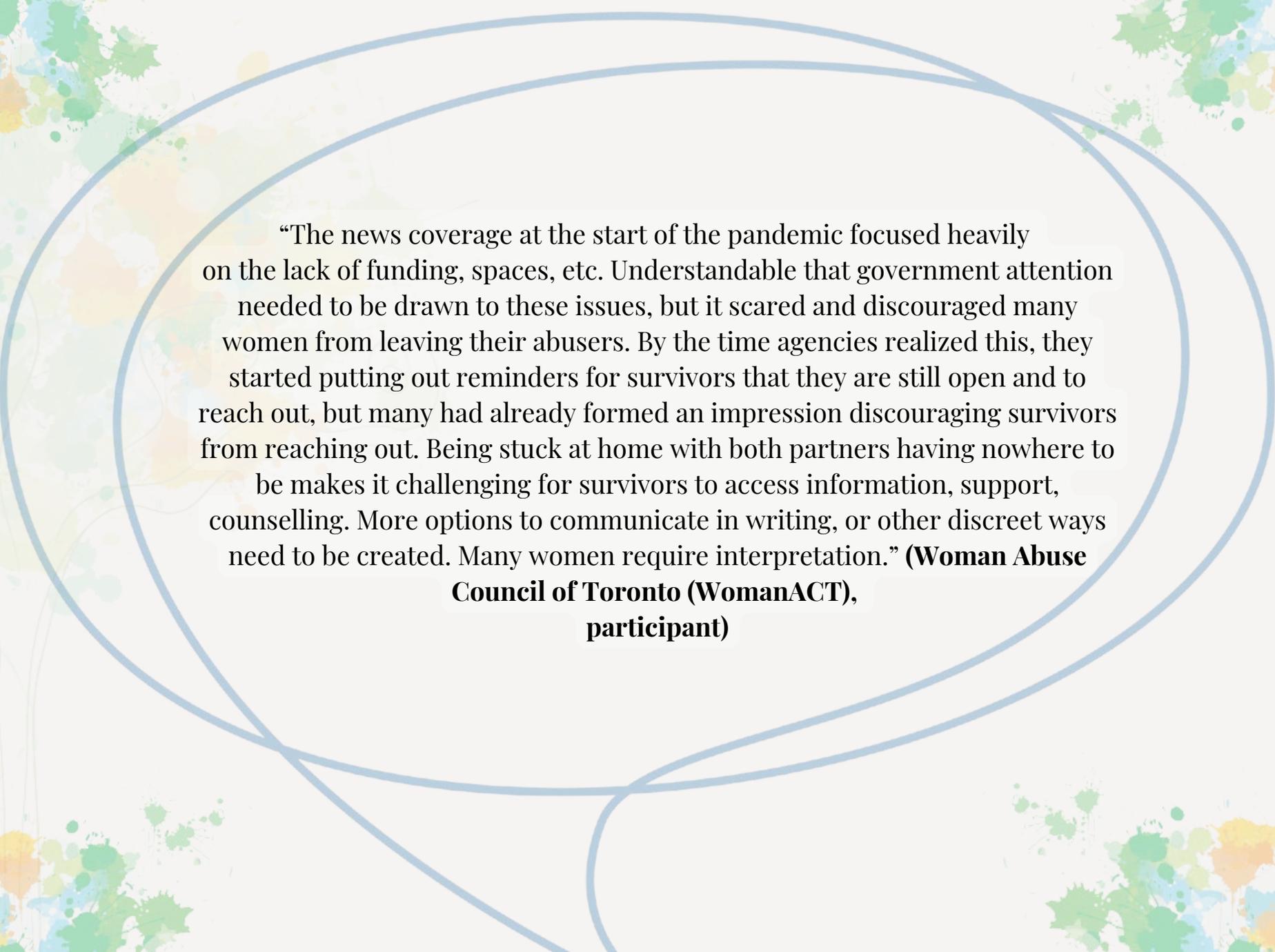
**(Antigonish Women’s Resource Centre & Sexual Assault Services Association, provider)**

“[Anti-violence workers] have someone who’s interested in treatment, but they don’t refer them to non-trauma-informed places. They’ve seen risks of sending people there. [Won’t refer] if they know they’re not working in a safe way.” **(BC Society of Transition Houses, participant)**

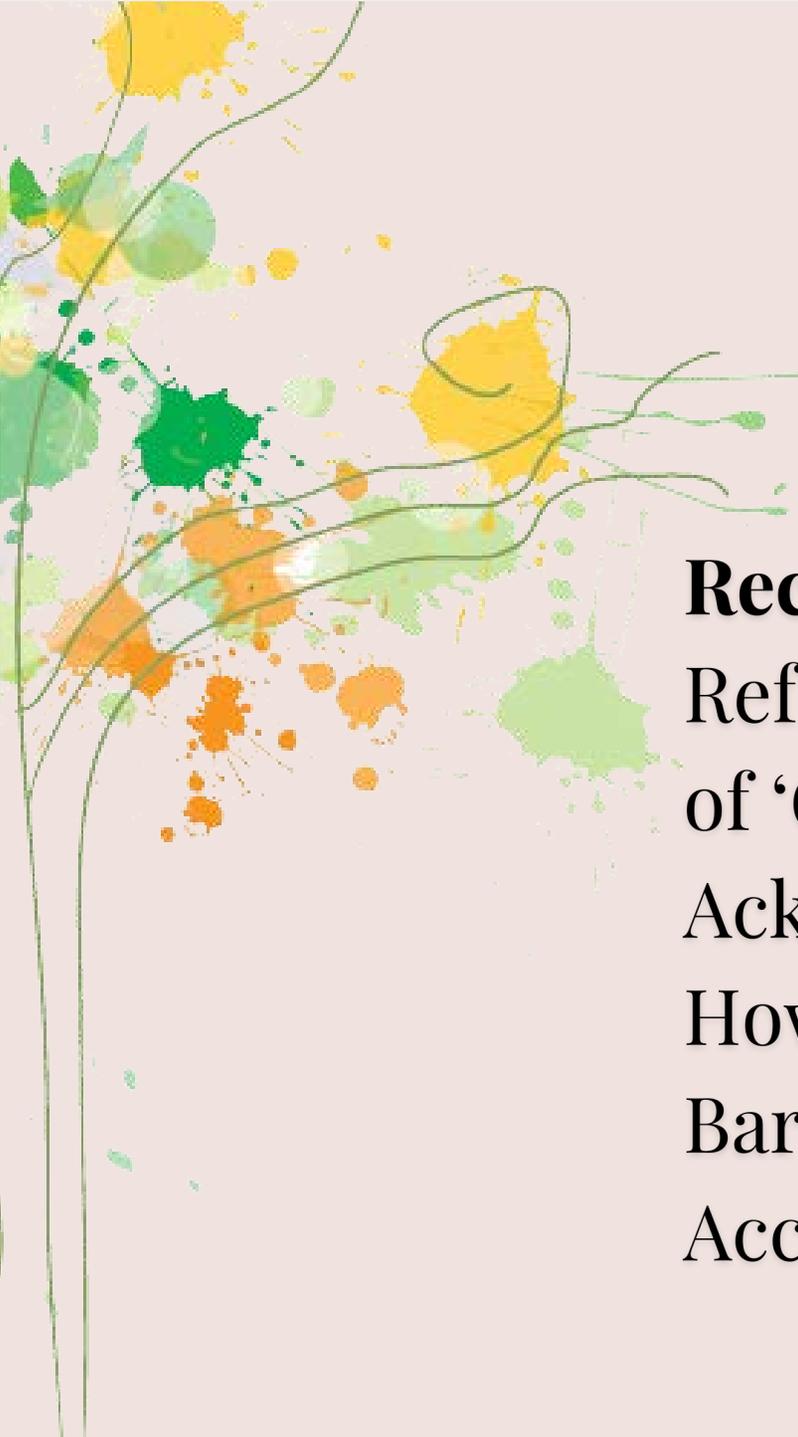
“Many support people in the sector are white women so people who are seeking support may not feel safe or connected. This is a systemic issue.”

**(YWCA Cambridge, provider)**

“I agree about the need to name the impact of COVID and the impossible choice that women feel they are forced to make regarding, either staying in violent scenarios or potentially exposing themselves to a pandemic. We are seeing violence as a pandemic within a pandemic.” **(Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI), provider)**



“The news coverage at the start of the pandemic focused heavily on the lack of funding, spaces, etc. Understandable that government attention needed to be drawn to these issues, but it scared and discouraged many women from leaving their abusers. By the time agencies realized this, they started putting out reminders for survivors that they are still open and to reach out, but many had already formed an impression discouraging survivors from reaching out. Being stuck at home with both partners having nowhere to be makes it challenging for survivors to access information, support, counselling. More options to communicate in writing, or other discreet ways need to be created. Many women require interpretation.” **(Woman Abuse Council of Toronto (WomanACT), participant)**



**Recommendation:** Expand, Reframe, and Clarify the Definition of ‘Gender-Based Violence’ to Acknowledge the Complexities of How GBV Presents and to Address Barriers that Prevent Service Access

“A key priority of the national action plan should be to look at the language we are using when we talk about GBV. What language feels good for some will not be good for all (“survivor” vs “victim”). The breadth of GBV is not reflected in the discussion around GBV (macroaggressions not in the discussion). Don’t pathologize.” **(YWCA Cambridge, provider)**

“True awareness of gender-based violence cannot be achieved without recognizing all groups that are at risk.”  
**(Students for Consent Culture Canada, participant)**

“Addressing GBV can be a complex task; when people hear the use of the term “gender” used in discourse they automatically assume it references only gender diverse individuals or those who identify as 2SLGBTQQIA+. To address this, it should be made clear that initiatives to combat GBV are inclusive of women therefore a recommended action would be to clarify that it includes violence against women and more specifically, violence against Indigenous women.” **(Native Women’s Association of Canada (NWAC), participant)**

“The term "gender-based violence" has been debated in feminist discourse due to concerns re: diluting the number one risk factor from the term/subject of family violence and abuse, and that is the word "women" - I appreciate the efforts and intentions to be inclusive of violence and abuse across the spectrum of gender and all other risk factors, but perhaps one term will not fully capture the experience of all those with higher risk factors, and intersectional factors of risk. This said, being female is the most significant risk factor, and includes young women, older women, disabled women, LGBTTO<sub>2</sub>\* female-identifying and non-binary, Two-Spirit, Indigenous women and girls, and newcomer women and girls. On the other hand, each risk demographic should be recognized and not neutralized - for instance, it is known that there is a lack of research re: women with disabilities and family violence. Further, it is of utmost importance to not become so fixed upon language that it impedes supportive action for all those experiencing violence and abuse.”

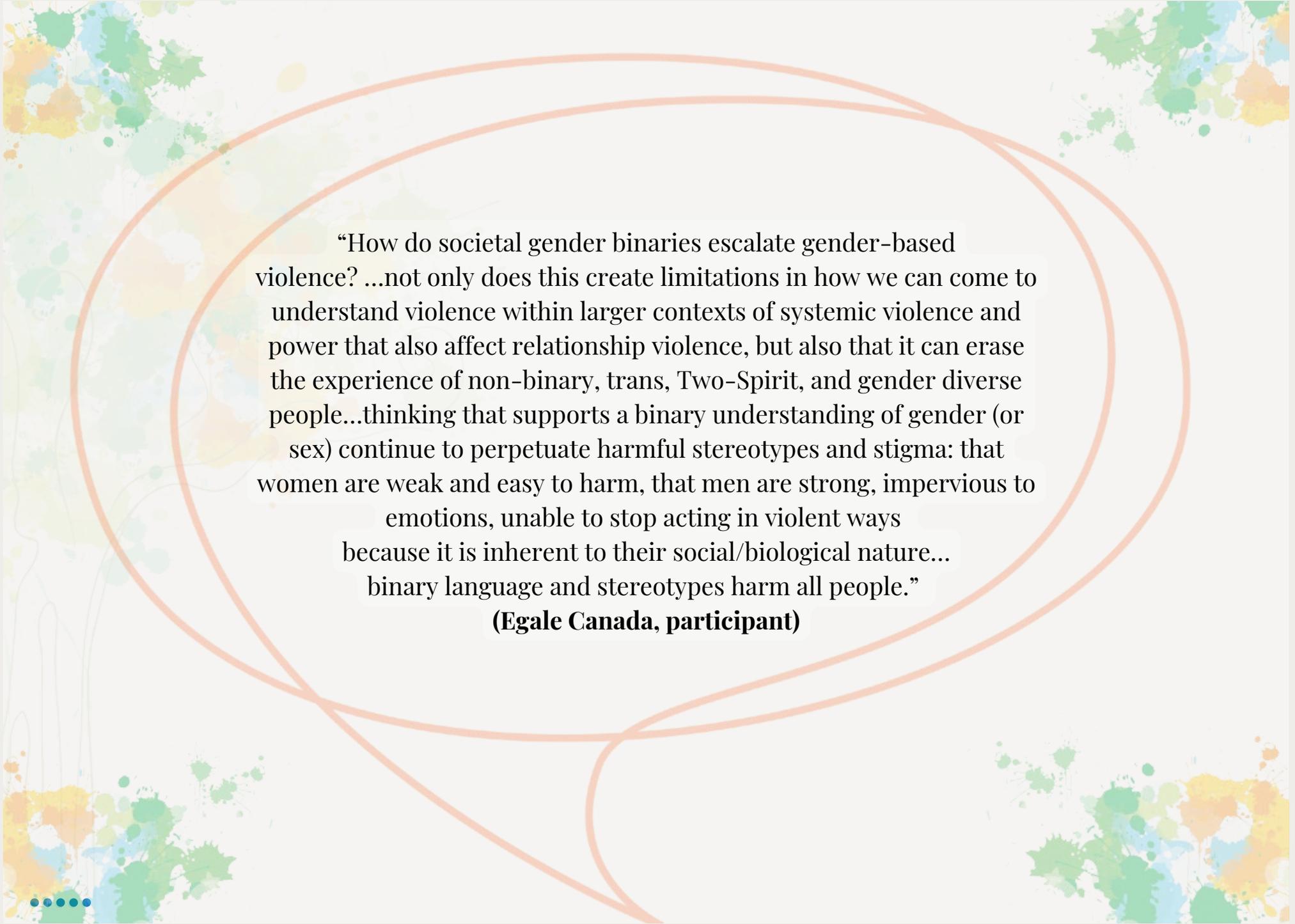
**(Manitoba Association of Women's  
Shelters, provider)**

“I see GBV as an umbrella term for violence against women and girls, 2SLGBTQQIA+, intimate partner violence and sexualized violence. As a counselor I seldom use this term as it seems to soften the disproportionate effect of violence on women and girls as well as the trauma that is experienced. There can be empowerment when women can use clear and decisive narrative of their experiences that is personal and describes their situation.” **(Manitoba Association of Women’s Shelters, provider)**

“Title of women’s shelter is a barrier to accessing shelter...trans survivors often feel they have to pass as female to have access to services.” **(Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters, provider)**

“...the language within the field of GBV still reflects cisnormative and heteronormative binaries.” **(Egale Canada, participant)**

“Service providers need to be aware the people of any gender can be victims and perpetrators, and not be cis-heteronormative in their understanding of violence.” **(Sistering, provider)**



“How do societal gender binaries escalate gender-based violence? ...not only does this create limitations in how we can come to understand violence within larger contexts of systemic violence and power that also affect relationship violence, but also that it can erase the experience of non-binary, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender diverse people...thinking that supports a binary understanding of gender (or sex) continue to perpetuate harmful stereotypes and stigma: that women are weak and easy to harm, that men are strong, impervious to emotions, unable to stop acting in violent ways because it is inherent to their social/biological nature... binary language and stereotypes harm all people.”

**(Egale Canada, participant)**

“Currently, language only covers heterosexual couples, so same-sex living partners do not have the same legal protection if they need to terminate a lease due to unsafe living conditions.” **(Possibility Seeds (Courage to Act), Canadian Federation of Students (CFS), and Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA), participant – Graduate Students Consultation)**

“Precarious status becomes a barrier for accessing various services. Fear of being exiled, deported or reported are fear factors, potentially further perpetuating a woman to face violence.” **(Canadian Arab Institute, provider)**

“I need more acceptance towards non-binary people. There’s no need for someone to call me man or woman. There is no need for labeling someone.” **(FCJ Refugee Centre, participant)**

“Existing barriers and challenges for LGBT2SQ folks – lack of research and data on prevalence of GBV with regards to LGBT2SQ folks, lack of training for services providers, trust in systems and being taken seriously, negative stereotypes, judgments, trans women left out of feminism conversation, inclusive language, gendered systems.” **(Howe Sound Women’s Centre Society, provider)**

“A lot of paperwork still only has “male/female” options. Having that “other” option, even though it seems small, is a huge thing for someone who lives outside the binary.” **(Planned Parenthood Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Health Centre, participant)**

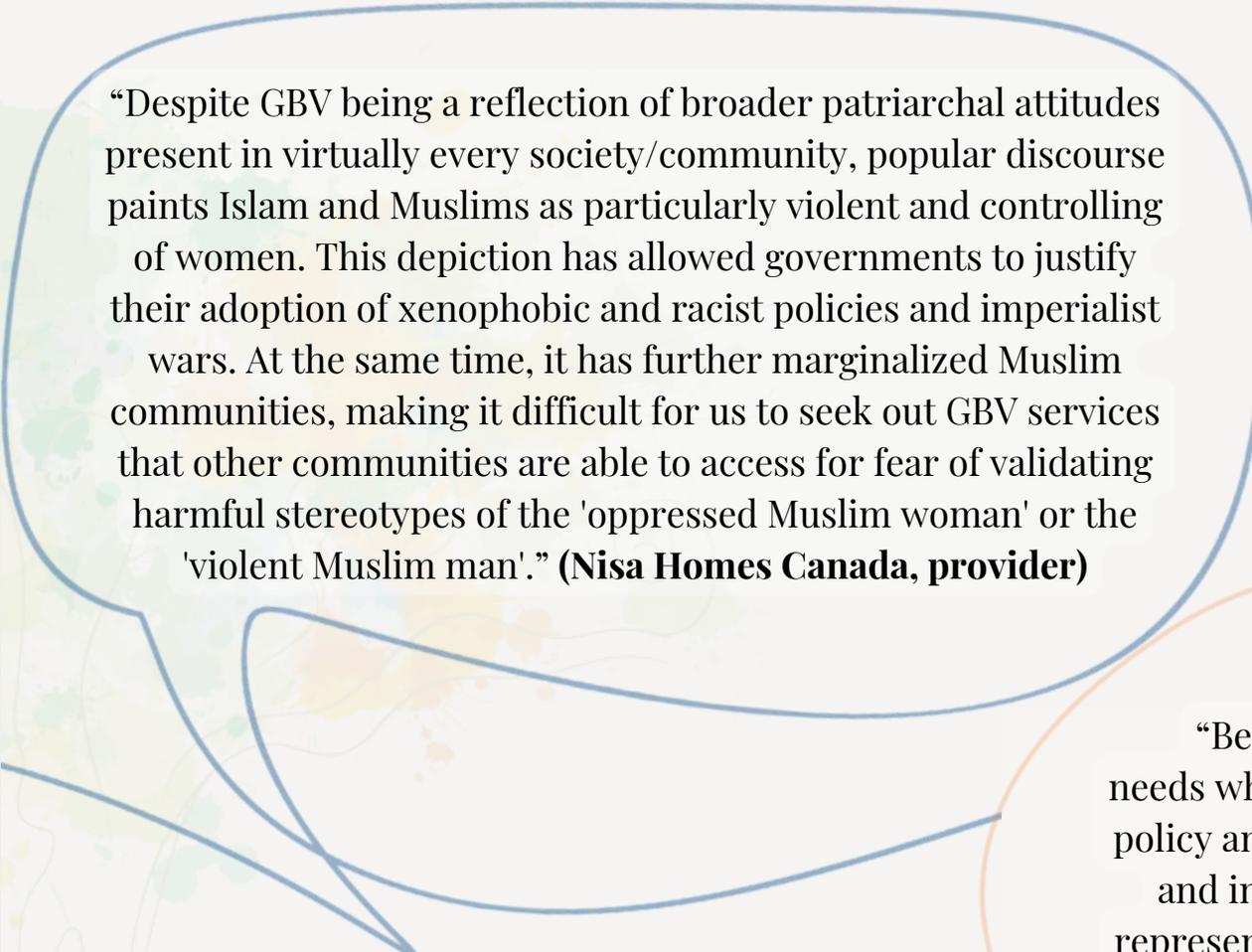
“The violence is not limited to physical violence and can be over phone, online, and social media.” **(Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI), provider)**

“We need to talk about what GBV looks like because sometimes it is invisible and silent.” **(Sakeenah Homes, provider)**

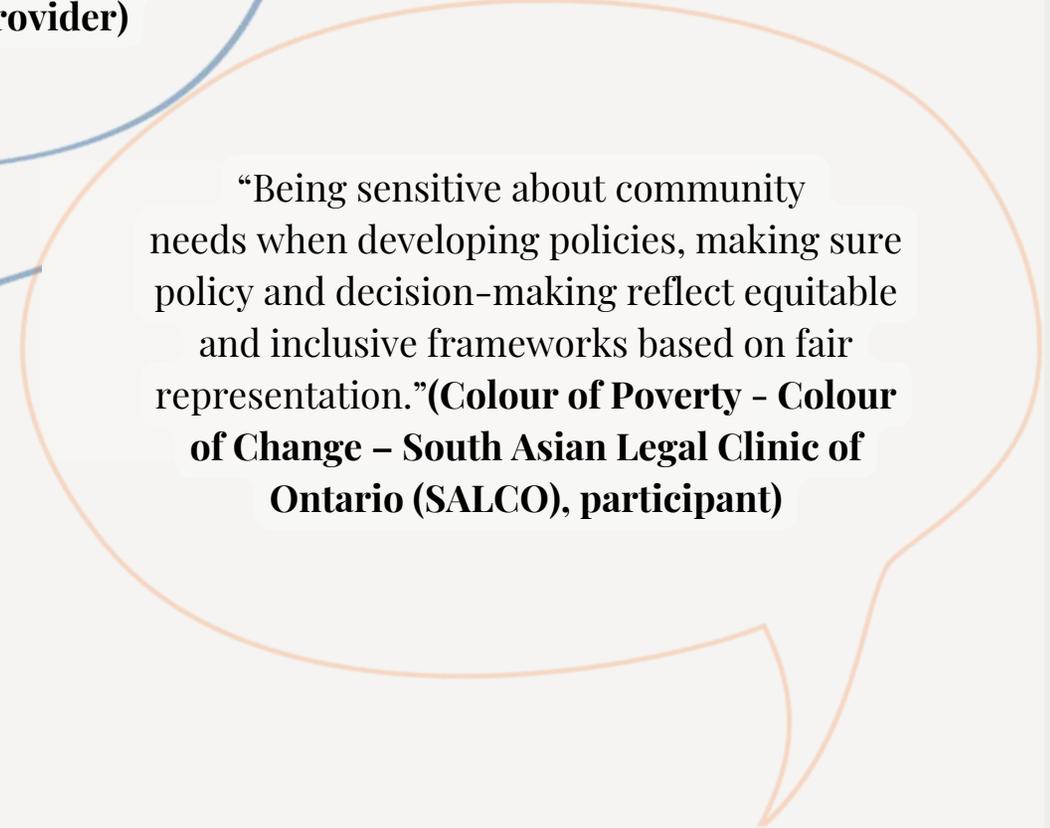
“Only seen as physical violence, Sexualized Violence, or Domestic Violence. The emotional, financial, psychological violence is often not seen or discussed.” **(Planned Parenthood Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Health Centre, provider)**

An abstract watercolor illustration of a woman's profile, facing right. The drawing is composed of thin, dark green lines for the hair and facial features. The background of the illustration is filled with vibrant splatters and washes of green, yellow, and orange, creating a textured, artistic effect. The overall style is soft and expressive.

**Recommendation:** Create Culturally Responsive, Safe, Informed, Relevant, and Dignified Supports



“Despite GBV being a reflection of broader patriarchal attitudes present in virtually every society/community, popular discourse paints Islam and Muslims as particularly violent and controlling of women. This depiction has allowed governments to justify their adoption of xenophobic and racist policies and imperialist wars. At the same time, it has further marginalized Muslim communities, making it difficult for us to seek out GBV services that other communities are able to access for fear of validating harmful stereotypes of the 'oppressed Muslim woman' or the 'violent Muslim man'.” **(Nisa Homes Canada, provider)**



“Being sensitive about community needs when developing policies, making sure policy and decision-making reflect equitable and inclusive frameworks based on fair representation.” **(Colour of Poverty - Colour of Change – South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario (SALCO), participant)**

“Lack of trust in systems and organizations therefore not wanting to reach out for help”. **(Howe Sound Women’s Centre Society, provider)**

“A challenge is having to take religion and culture into consideration and how to address each cultural and religious need.” **(Sakeenah Homes, provider)**

“Immigration policies and front-liners do not reflect the identities of those accessing various services. This includes but is not limited to immigration lawyers.” **(Canadian Arab Institute, participant)**

“Engaging faith based/religious/spiritual/ethnic community leaders in violence prevention and intervention as many immigrants like to receive support from within the community.” **(Calgary Immigrant Women’s Association, participant)**

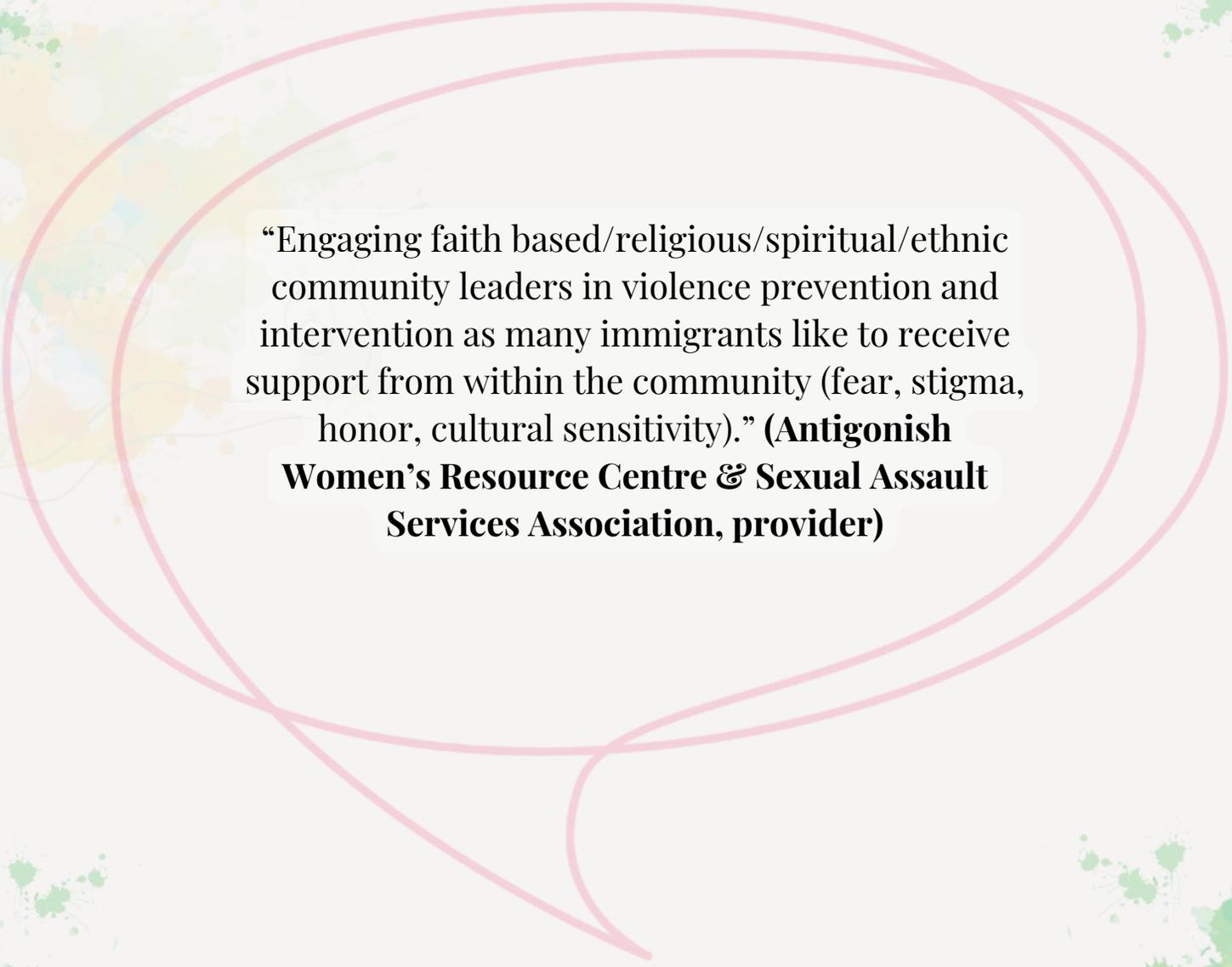
“...more supports on campus that are culturally sensitive, community-led and cognitive of the lived realities of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities.” **(Chinese Canadian National Council Toronto Chapter, participant)**

“It is really hard to talk about these issues to your local Imam or your sisters at the Qur’an group. Will I be believed? Will I be blamed? We need to educate our religious leaders and elders to be receptive to women’s concerns. We need to educate the community. Our seniors don’t believe us and then we lose trust and stay silent.” **(Canadian Council of Muslim Women (CCMW), participant)**

“Communal healing and ceremony based on cultural practices (decolonizing), introduction to transformative healing processes, workshop series built around rebuilding your life after GBV (movement, diet, financial literacy, building a resource list of community services to access, etc.)” **(Black Women in Motion, participant)**

“We need more ceremonial-based services, using cultural elements that support healing. More ceremonial spaces for Two-Spirit and LGBTQIA+ people, who are not sure where they belong in ceremonies/healing ceremonies. It would be able to support all people.” **(The Enchanté Network, provider)**

“A lack of racialized, and specifically Indigenous voices in the GBV sphere contributes to the perpetuation of racist, colonialist and ableist views on gender, sex, consent, rape culture...” **(Possibility Seeds (Courage to Act), Canadian Federation of Students (CFS), and Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA), participant – Black and Racialized Students Consultation)**



“Engaging faith based/religious/spiritual/ethnic community leaders in violence prevention and intervention as many immigrants like to receive support from within the community (fear, stigma, honor, cultural sensitivity).” **(Antigonish Women’s Resource Centre & Sexual Assault Services Association, provider)**



**Recommendation:** Increase the Provision of Accessible, Low-Barrier Resources for All and Affirming Services for Trans and Two-Spirit People Through Person-Centered Design and Removal of Binary Requirements and Conditional Access

“We have been pushed out of spaces on all fronts. Black spaces are not accessible. Women’s spaces are not accessible. Disability is male dominated. There is a second violence. This is when women with disabilities try to access services and they are not welcomed or accommodated.” **(Cupid’s Sting Non-Profit, participant)**

“Documents and education materials must be translated without access to information requests. Language is a huge barrier for victimized people to access services and education.” **(Canadian Center for Women's Empowerment (CCFWE), participant)**

“In terms of programming, participants focused on the need for access to affirming community-developed and peer-lead programming made by and for Two-Spirit and LGBTQIA+ people, including youth. This would include resources to support traditional ceremonial services to promote healing and provide long-term funding for community-led services and support. Francophone participants, in particular, highlighted the need for French language services and support, especially in minority contexts outside of Quebec.” **(The Enchanté Network, provider)**

“Simplified language around resources/resource materials... meeting clients where there are at.” (**Antigonish Women’s Resource Centre & Sexual Assault Services Association, provider**)

“...[T]he need for interval housing with trained workers on site that is physically accessible to all (for example, an accessible elevator).” (**Aura Freedom, participant**)

« Adapter les services aux besoins des survivantes immigrantes et les rendre accessible/ Adapt services to the needs of immigrant survivors and make them accessible. » (**Réseau d'action pour l'égalité des femmes immigrées et racisées du Québec (RAFIQ), participant**)

“Increased access to Elders and paid support for culturally affirming healing and knowledge keeping.” (**Ending Violence Association of Canada, provider**)

“Wen-Do (a form of self-defence martial arts for women) helped me feel more prepared, recognize the strength I possess, reclaim a sense of power, reminded me I am not alone, was affirming and healing.” (**Wen-Do Women's Self-Defence, participant**)



“Systemic barriers for racialized women with disabilities include architectural barriers whereby the majority of shelters are not physically accessible...even homes themselves...you can’t escape a home that isn’t even accessible for you to physically leave. These women are also more than 80% more likely to experience gender-based violence. During COVID-19 this has also been made worse as their personal support workers were not coming. These women often face abuse through activities of daily living such as being left bedridden, not given food or drink, not taken to the washroom, having their assistive devices broken.” **(Muslim Advisory Council of Canada, participant)**

“Women with lived experience have a lot of expertise and creative ways to address existing social and structural limitations within organizations. “Language barrier” isn’t just about limited English or French skills, it’s also about having the flexibility to express in your mother language when talking about stressful situations and feeling more comfortable when expressing in your mother language.” **(Muslim Resource Centre for Social Support and Integration (MRCSSI), participant)**

“Establish routine community engagement/consultation with women (inclusive of Indigenous women, those with disabilities & 2SLGBTQQIA+people) impacted by violence & their families (in other words develop a system to engage & gather info or work with survivors directly) to identify: their priorities, service or program needs, what's worked, what hasn't/ what gaps are there & what other needs of theirs must be addressed to effectively support them & their families.” **(Haven Society, participant)**

## Pillar II

# Prevention of Gender-Based Violence

**Preventing GBV and ensuring a violence-free future requires multi-sectoral, societal, and culture shifts in how we relate and engage with one another across multiple positionalities and the gender spectrum.** This requires us to take a holistic, feminist-informed, public health approach [\[xii\]](#) to addressing gender-based violence that addresses root causes and prioritizes prevention practices as well as early interventions in diverse settings—private spaces, public spaces, community spaces, workplaces, educational spaces, and online spaces. Prevention work must be community-specific, trauma-informed, survivor-centric, culturally responsive, and based on intersectional feminist analyses of GBV mitigation.

## What Remains to be Done

**Across consultations, respondents emphasized the need for increased and sustainable funding for evidence-informed, community-led anti-GBV programming and prevention efforts.** These must be tailored to all ages with a keen focus on specific populations such as men and boys, people with visible and invisible disabilities, Indigenous Peoples, Black and racialized communities, Two-Spirit, trans and gender diverse people, sex workers, and newcomer, immigrant, and refugee populations. This includes comprehensive education at all levels by all provinces and territories that covers content such as consent, healthy relationships, sexual education, self-worth, boundaries, gender diversity, sexuality, domestic violence

awareness, gender roles, technology-facilitated forms of gender-based violence, positive and negative forms of masculinity, ways bystanders can take action, engaging men and boys as active allies, and equipping children with age-appropriate supports. This must be complemented with funding for a national public awareness campaign across all platforms, using a range of formats such as social media, TV advertisements, influencers and more to increase awareness of gender-based violence.

## What Remains to be Done

**Respondents overwhelmingly viewed community support services as sites for strength and healing for survivors and critical nodes of prevention programming.**

Repeated calls were made for enhanced funding for shelters and service providers to put more money towards prevention work in a manner that responds to emerging needs, localized insights, and community dialogue. Prevention work includes (un)learning and rehabilitation with perpetrators to prevent recidivism. Further, expanding models for survivor-led peer support and unique approaches to prevention work can engage unlikely communities (e.g., gaming communities, tourism industries, hospitality industries, ComicCon, etc.).



**Recommendation:** Engage Boys  
and Young Men to Uproot  
Unequal Gender Norms and  
Regressive Attitudes

“Éduquer les garçons dès le jeune âge sur les relations égalitaires, sensibiliser les employeurs, les institutions sur les obstacles que rencontrent les femmes immigrantes, multiplier les campagnes de sensibilisation en plusieurs langues...” “Educate boys from an early age on egalitarian relationships, raise awareness among employers, institutions on the obstacles encountered by immigrant women, increase the number of campaigns awareness in several languages...” **(acte d'Amour, participant)**

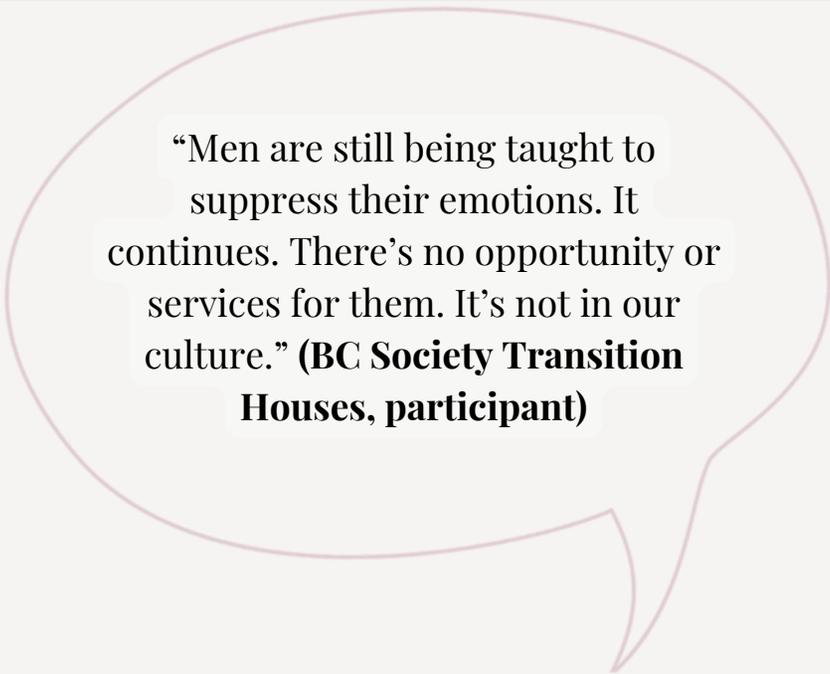
“We miss teaching boys about repair work – how can we teach boys when they become men that all relationships have challenges, and that repair work is always available?” **(BC Society of Transition Houses, participant)**

“Challenge ideologies about masculinity and how boys should act. Develop more opportunities for male-to-male support.” **(BC Society of Transition Houses, provider)**

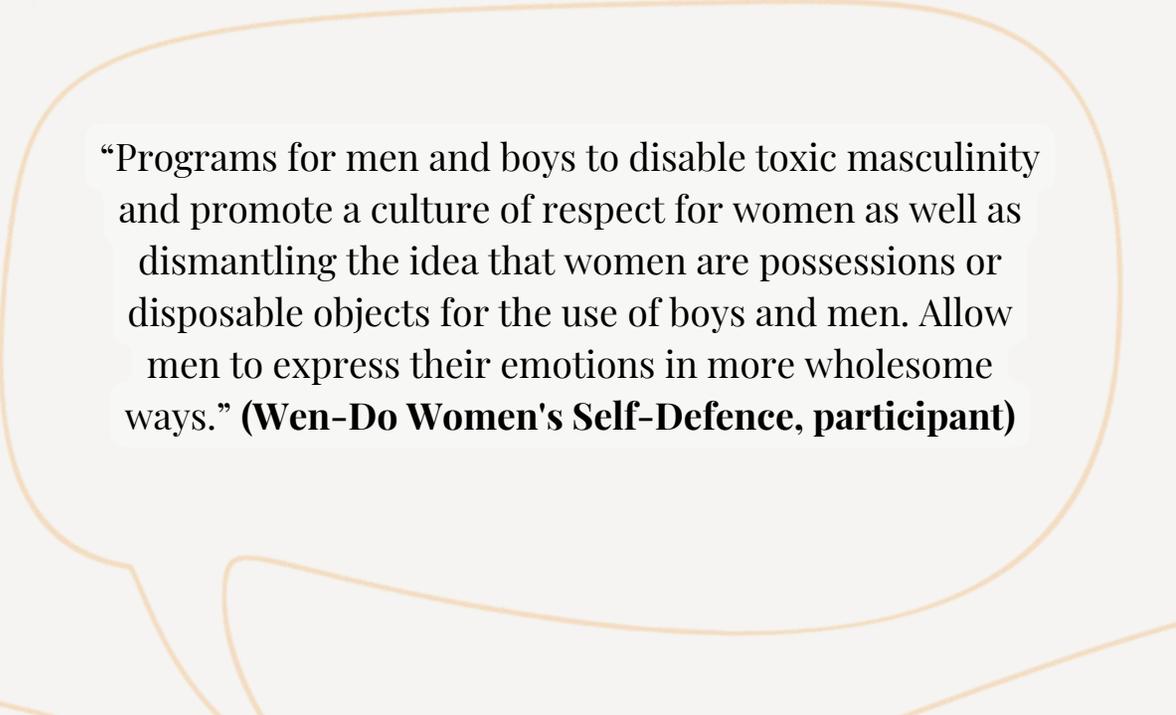
“Involve men and boys as allies and advocates...[unpack] the social construction of masculinity and manhood. As well, implement sex education curriculum that is comprehensive and emphasizes mutually respectful sexual relationships.” **(Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter, participant)**



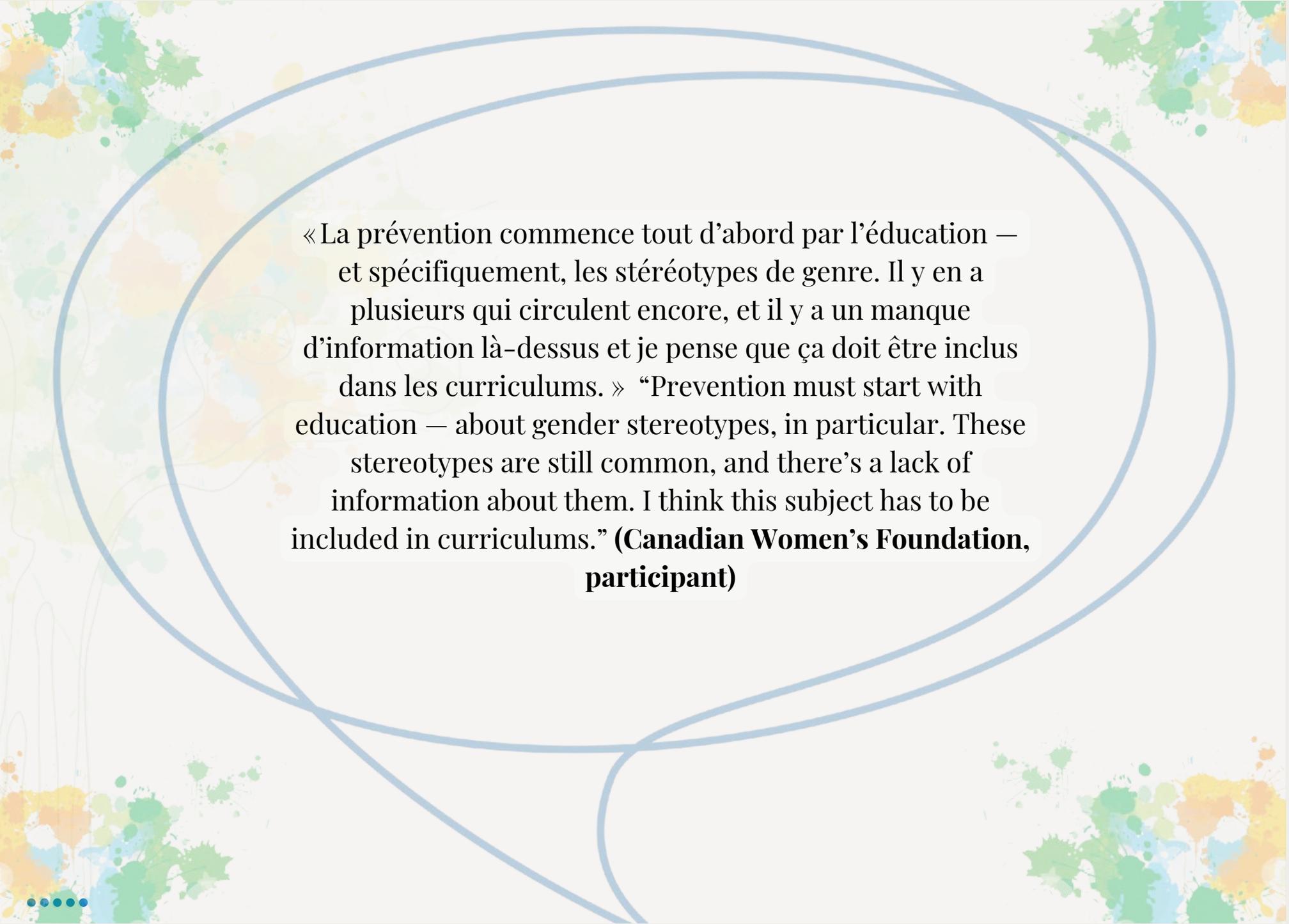
“I think a significantly overlooked component of prevention is engaging with the ideas behind toxic masculinity. I think that men's groups, speaking circles, and speakers' events can be really powerful agents of change because it addresses components of rape culture directly at the source.” **(Students for Consent Culture Canada, participant)**



“Men are still being taught to suppress their emotions. It continues. There's no opportunity or services for them. It's not in our culture.” **(BC Society Transition Houses, participant)**



“Programs for men and boys to disable toxic masculinity and promote a culture of respect for women as well as dismantling the idea that women are possessions or disposable objects for the use of boys and men. Allow men to express their emotions in more wholesome ways.” **(Wen-Do Women's Self-Defence, participant)**



« La prévention commence tout d'abord par l'éducation — et spécifiquement, les stéréotypes de genre. Il y en a plusieurs qui circulent encore, et il y a un manque d'information là-dessus et je pense que ça doit être inclus dans les curriculums. » “Prevention must start with education — about gender stereotypes, in particular. These stereotypes are still common, and there's a lack of information about them. I think this subject has to be included in curriculums.” **(Canadian Women's Foundation, participant)**



**Recommendation:** Integrate Age-Appropriate Curriculum and Prevention Programming into Public Education and Across All Platforms

“Elles/iels/ils ressentent qu’il n’y a pas suffisamment d’espace dans les milieux scolaires secondaires pour aborder les violences sexuelles, les trajectoires de guérison ainsi que les options de dénonciation possible. “They feel that there is not enough space in secondary schools to address sexual violence, healing trajectories as well as possible reporting options.” **(Girls Action Foundation| Foundation Filles d’action, participant)**

“Empowerment programming for girls/female-identifying students between the ages of 10–18, focused on healthy relationship building/spotting the warning signs, self-esteem, body image, etc.” **(Planned Parenthood Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Health Centre, provider)**

“They would need to ensure they are including voices of the people (Black women and femmes). The people who experience GBV should be the ones to have a say on how the campaign should be designed.” **(Black Women in Motion, participant)**

“Education is central to prevent GBV. Trained facilitators of all genders should be invited to speak about findings from research carried out on an ongoing basis, to motivate youth and to bring about significant and meaningful change. The information-sharing will have no value if it is for a short 6–8-week period. It must be consistent and prolonged to have a lasting impact”. **(Settlement Assistance and Family Support Services, participant)**

“A robust awareness and prevention curriculum is urgently needed at the Junior and Senior High levels to be integrated into the current Health and Physical Education curriculums... developed in a layered approach.” **(GBV Resource Collective, participant)**

“Victim shaming is extremely powerful; we need more direct education in relation to what violence looks like to help reduce the shame survivors have.”  
**(Sistering, provider)**

“Providing outreach and education on resources to get out of a DV situation, or what the warning signs are and how to be safe.” **(Planned Parenthood Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Health Centre, provider)**

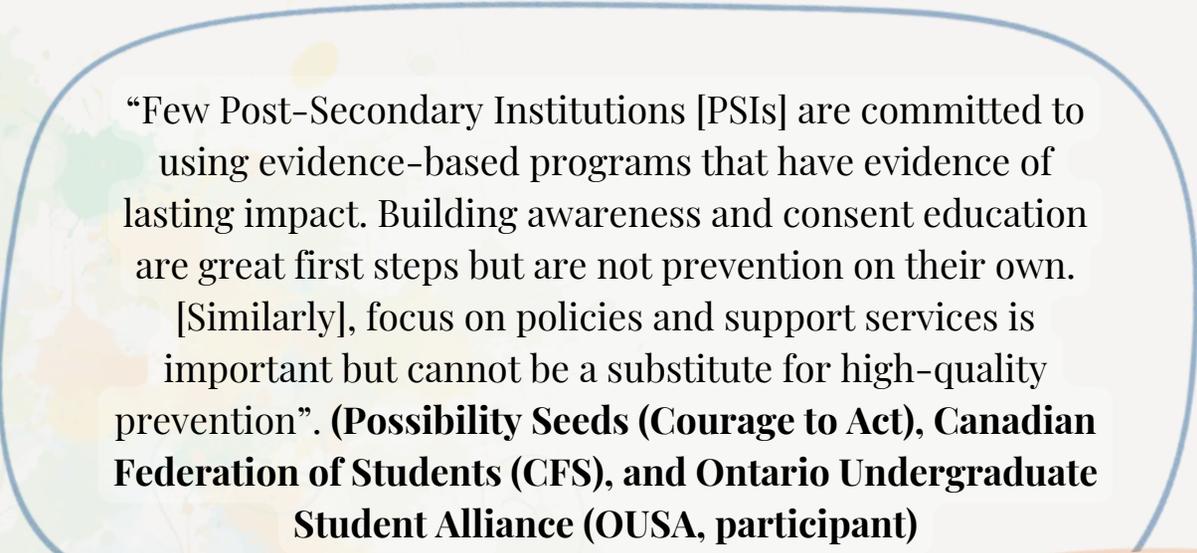
“Providing outreach and education on resources to get out of a DV situation, or what the warning signs are and how to be safe.” **(Planned Parenthood Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Health Centre, provider)**

“[B]ystander intervention initiatives have an opportunity to teach people how to address varying forms of systemic and interpersonal violence outside of the purview of dating or relationship violence, including: intervening in instances of racist violence or microaggressions, colonial violence, transphobic violence, violence in long-term care contexts, or other forms of harassment.” **(Egale Canada, provider)**

“Train boys, dads, hairdressers, bartenders.”  
**(BC Society of Transition Houses, participant)**

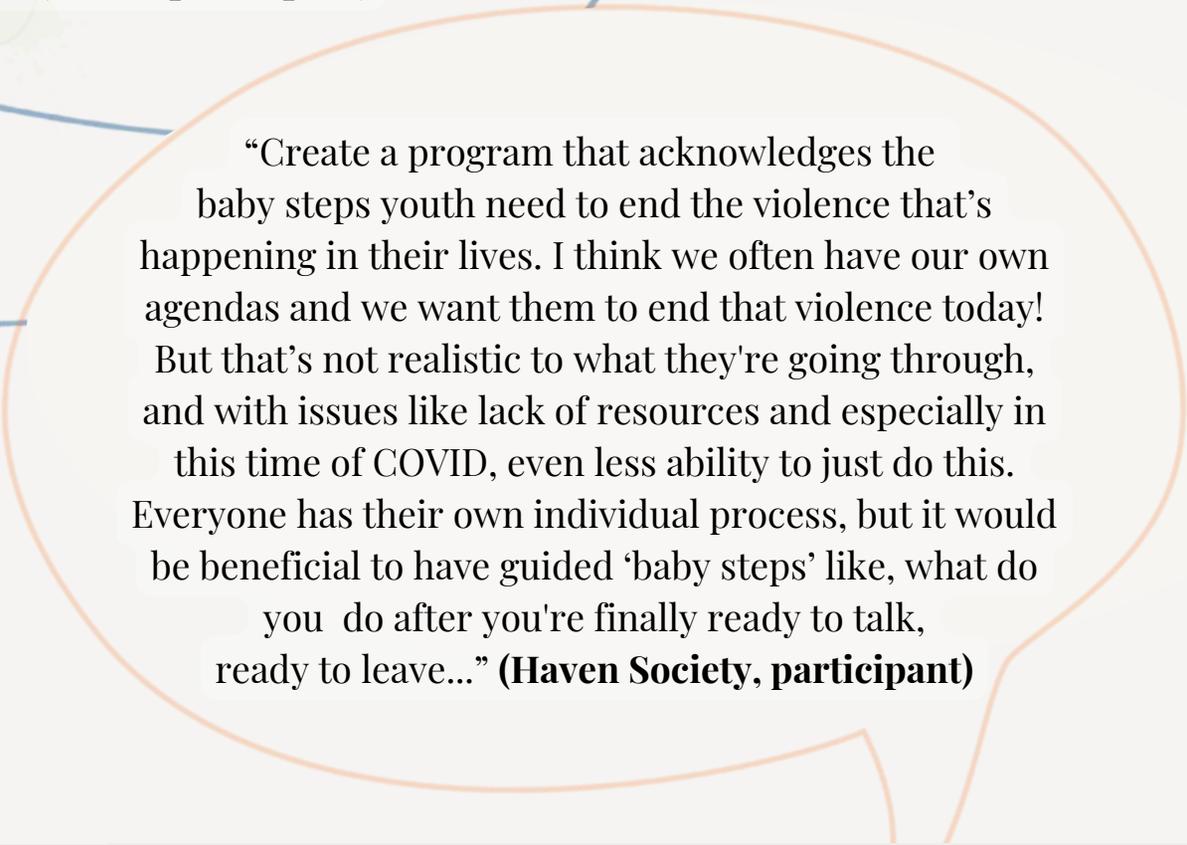
“Put it on the curriculum...it could just be intertwined throughout like math is.”  
**(Sistering, participant)**

“Bystander intervention trainings is important and we should consider making this mandatory in key [sectors] (higher education system for example).” **(YWCA Cambridge, participant)**



“Few Post-Secondary Institutions [PSIs] are committed to using evidence-based programs that have evidence of lasting impact. Building awareness and consent education are great first steps but are not prevention on their own.

[Similarly], focus on policies and support services is important but cannot be a substitute for high-quality prevention”. **(Possibility Seeds (Courage to Act), Canadian Federation of Students (CFS), and Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA, participant)**



“Create a program that acknowledges the baby steps youth need to end the violence that’s happening in their lives. I think we often have our own agendas and we want them to end that violence today! But that’s not realistic to what they’re going through, and with issues like lack of resources and especially in this time of COVID, even less ability to just do this. Everyone has their own individual process, but it would be beneficial to have guided ‘baby steps’ like, what do you do after you’re finally ready to talk, ready to leave...” **(Haven Society, participant)**



**Recommendation:** Early Focus  
on Building Children's  
Resilience and Resistance to  
GBV

“We would like to see prevention programs, start young, have them be taught by peers, there should be something for all grades on how to communicate with each other and antibullying programs. It is easier to relate to someone your own age.”

**(Dixon Transition Society, participant)**

“Children’s Aid Societies across the country should NOT be the only given authority over children at risk of harm – not enough proper care is given especially for victims of trafficking who are under 18.” **(London Abused Women’s Centre, provider)**

“I feel preserving and carrying forward seeds can teach ourselves the importance of carrying love and kindness forward in our children.” **Indigenous Friends Association, participant)**

“It’s easier to build strong children than to fix broken men.” **(YWCA Cambridge, participant)**

“Providing children with education and support in understanding acceptable behaviour, for example how to handle their anger, can be important for prevention. Otherwise, there is a sense that they will have learned patterns and behaviours from abusive situation[s].” **(Islamic Relief Canada, participant)**

“Kids is where it needs to start. If we can give them tools to understand when a situation is unacceptable and ways to get themselves out of those situations. And also educate them about what is acceptable and what isn't, so ‘don't touch people without their permission,’ stuff like that.”

**(Sistering, participant)**

“Develop a national response for children and youth who experience GBV.” **(BC Society of Transition Houses, provider)**

“Devote resources to supporting children who experience Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES), as soon as possible in their lives. There are very few mental health and therapeutic services available for children in these situations, long waiting lists and limited duration for publicly funded services. And we know that children exposed to ACE's are at dramatically greater risk for becoming victims or perpetrators of violence as adults.” **(YWCA Halifax, provider)**



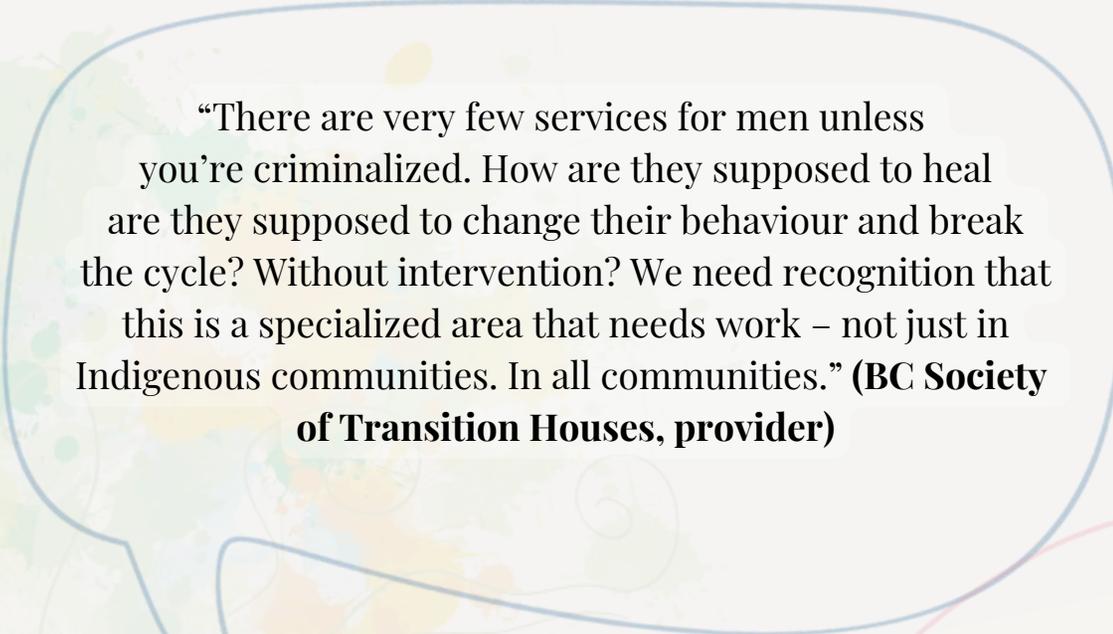
**Recommendation:** Engage and Work with Perpetrators to Promote Rehabilitation and Prevent Recidivism and Re-offense

“The importance of working with perpetrators was informed by an awareness that racialized perpetrators/fathers (Black, Indigenous, Muslim) are more likely to be written off or incarcerated than white fathers, and that racialized children are more likely to be removed from the home.” **(Islamic Relief Canada, participant)**

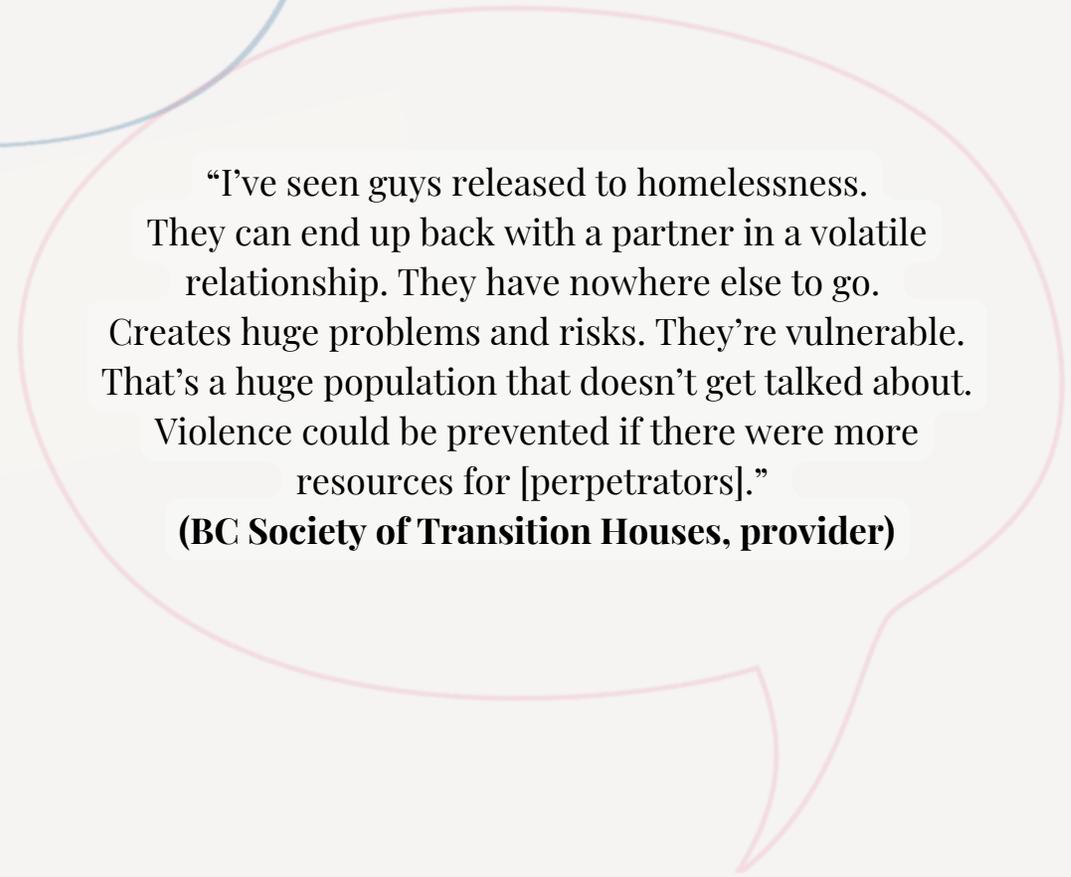
“Currently, only perpetrators who are convicted are required to go through counseling to understand what they did as wrong, all perpetrators need to go through this.” **(Sistering, provider)**

“...resources and spaces for past perpetrators to access supports on how to cope with anger and conflict; reduce the re-offense rate.” **(WomenatthecentrE, participant)**

“Focus on the perpetrator. Who commits violence ...? Identify the problem and address the underlying patriarchy and racism that results in gender-based violence. Men need to be educated and told explicitly that this behaviour is not tolerated, accepted or condoned.” **(Provincial Association of Transition Houses and Services of Saskatchewan (PATHS), participant)**



“There are very few services for men unless you’re criminalized. How are they supposed to heal are they supposed to change their behaviour and break the cycle? Without intervention? We need recognition that this is a specialized area that needs work – not just in Indigenous communities. In all communities.” **(BC Society of Transition Houses, provider)**



“I’ve seen guys released to homelessness. They can end up back with a partner in a volatile relationship. They have nowhere else to go. Creates huge problems and risks. They’re vulnerable. That’s a huge population that doesn’t get talked about. Violence could be prevented if there were more resources for [perpetrators].” **(BC Society of Transition Houses, provider)**

An abstract watercolor illustration of a woman's profile, facing right. The drawing uses thin, dark green lines for the outline of the face, neck, and hair. The hair is depicted with a dense, vibrant splash of colors, including shades of green, yellow, and orange. The background is a light, neutral tone.

**Recommendation:** Expand and Evaluate Structural Mechanisms to Prevent Gender-Based Violence

“[Change] how non-profits are funded.

So many projects are tied to particular types of funding, which means funds can't be used for capacity building. We need that flexibility to support our communities [in] the best ways possible. COVID has lessened those restrictions “which has been beautiful”, but there's fear around what happens if they come back.” **(Planned Parenthood Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Health Centre, provider)**

“In trying to prevent GBV, enforcement gets more funding; “cycle of precarity – the sector that tends to the people with precarious status is kept in a precarious manner with no steady funding. Running an organization for 35 years, but no steady funding!” **(Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI), provider)**

“The funds to prevent GBV needs to be allotted towards community-based prevention mechanisms, rather than increasing policing budgets.” **(Butterfly– Asian and Migrant Sex Worker Support Network, provider)**

“Children's Aid Society (CAS) seems to be overcompensating for historically taking children out of homes; now they may be too quick to keep children in unsafe homes. [We] need safe and adequate temporary foster family homes for children to stay while the investigation occurs; healing work needs to be done during this time as well, especially when they are young.” **(London Abused Women's Centre, provider)**

“The National Action Plan’s Prevention pillar should include resources for employers and unions to deliver comprehensive anti-violence training, and expand the training mandate to workplaces that are not federally regulated to ensure equal access for workers in other jurisdictions.”  
**(Canadian Labour Congress, provider)**

“Address challenges and issues in foster care.”  
**(Ending Violence Association of Canada, provider)**

“Increase age limits for youth in care.” **(The Enchanté Network, provider)**

“Keep track of known abusers, and ensure new partners are informed of [their] history.”  
**(PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Centre, provider)**

## Pillar III

# Promotion of Responsive & Legal Justice Systems

**Survivors of GBV need access to responsive systems of redress throughout their recovery process. For many, the complaint process and legal proceedings were too intimidating, adversarial, complex, or lengthy to pursue.** Indigenous, Black, racialized, disabled, immigrant and 2SLGBTQQIA+ survivors are even less likely to report GBV due to entrenched discrimination. Several organizations highlighted that among the most pressing issues limiting survivors' faith in legal and justice systems are the low conviction rate of perpetrators and the high criminalization rate of survivors and structurally marginalized communities. Respondents largely held disparate views pertaining to criminalization as either a necessary deterrent to gender-based violence or as amplifying survivor's potential risks for harm. Community organizations frequently called for government action to acknowledge and address the impact of the criminal justice system that funnels GBV survivors and resistors to prison owing to over-policing of Black, Indigenous, and racialized communities; criminalization of sex work, HIV non-disclosure, and immigrant status; and the punitive imperatives of dual charging and mandatory charging.

## Pillar III

# Promotion of Responsive & Legal Justice Systems

It was also noted that when support services engage in non-consensual active rescue and call emergency services or law enforcement without the client's consent, it can lead to further violence, especially for survivors from equity-deserving groups.

**Current legal and justice systems are not adequately survivor-centered or trauma-informed and are fraught with violence of their own making.** Complainants often need to interact with multiple legal systems (criminal, family, child protection) owing to the lack of consistent information collection and coordinated action. Survivors risk retraumatization from having to retell their stories, having their accounts repeatedly dissected, and needing to prove themselves by providing invasive evidence through multiple examinations. Survivors with precarious immigration status and (im)migrant sex workers remain concerned that accessing supports or reporting violence will increase the risk of deportation or detention.

## What Remains to be Done

**We need to reform and retool existing law enforcement and criminal justice systems by employing alternative models such as restorative justice practices, community support interventions, community safety planning, and survivor-centered and trauma-informed training to achieve 'justice' as survivors define it.**

Recurring themes from consultations included the need for legal reform relating to revictimization in the criminal justice system; access to justice, family court, policing, and accountability for perpetrators of GBV; decriminalization of sex work and HIV non-disclosure; and other legislative and legal remedies. Recent legal instruments and regulatory reforms (such as Clare's Law [\[xiii\]](#) and Keira's Law [\[xiv\]](#)) should be implemented nationally and provincially cross every jurisdiction, with participation by RCMP, municipal, and First Nations police forces to

ensure equal access to safety and support for people who may be at risk, no matter where they may live. Substantive changes to the Family and Criminal Court systems are needed to address survivors' concerns that our legal systems fail them, that restraining orders are ineffective in protecting survivors and their children, and that GBV and sexual assault cases are routinely mishandled and wrongly labelled as unfounded.

Some respondents noted the need for police to collaborate with other professionals and for increased community policing to prevent (rather than just respond to) violence. Others were in favour of rethinking punitive and carceral systems and the wider ecosystem of public safety, reducing the overreliance on police, and redirecting funds from policing to better resource frontline supports as well as

## What Remains to be Done

invest in a wider array of community safety partners and transformative justice practices. **There were consistent calls for increased training and awareness-raising around the legal rights of survivors, especially within family law and immigration law, and the need to prevent the spread of misinformation which can be accomplished through increased and consistent funding for community legal supports.**



**Recommendation:** Increase In-Depth, Trauma-Informed Training for Service Providers, Law Enforcement, Legal and Health Professionals, and all other Workers Interacting with Survivors

“Comprehensive training for members of agencies survivors are likely to encounter so they can get help that is compassionate and useful (child protection, police RCMP, family lawyers, family court judges, income assistance as examples).”

**(Provincial Association of Transition Houses and Services of Saskatchewan (PATHS), provider)**

“[I]t should be mandatory for judges, police, and lawyers to receive training in gender-based analysis of family and sexual violence. In particular, police forces on reserve should receive expanded cultural awareness of the impact of violence on Indigenous communities.” **(Yellow Brick House, participant)**

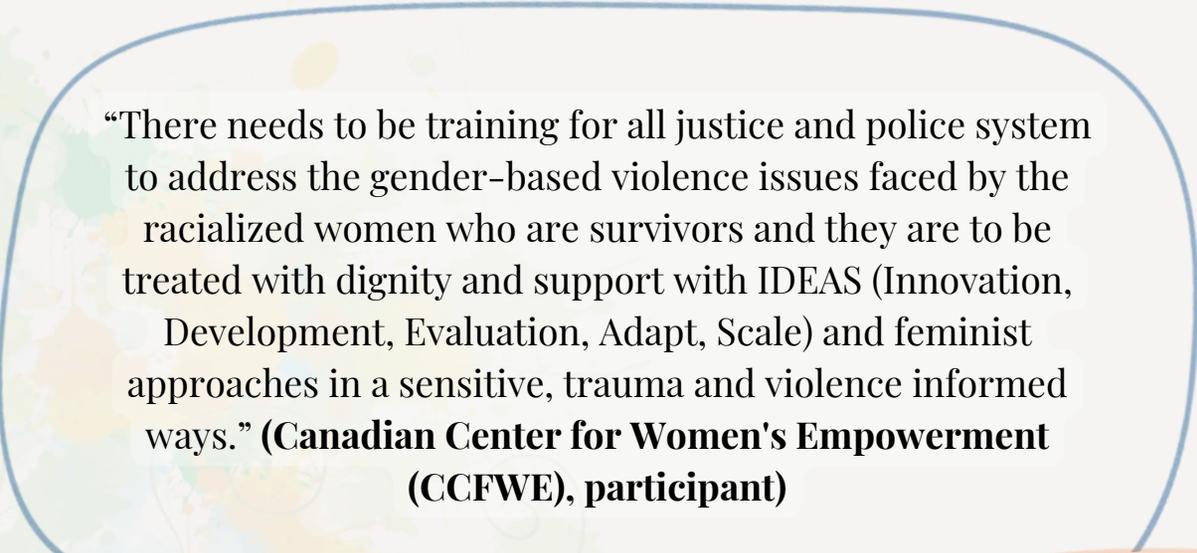
“Police frequently invalidate survivors' experiences and do not fully comprehend the dynamics of intimate partner violence, especially the non-physical aspects. Training and laws need to be inclusive of all types of abuse, including coercive control and psychological abuse. It was better to stay with the abuser than be abused by the system.” **(Kingston Anti-Violence Advisory Council | Victim Services of Kingston and Frontenac, participant)**

“It was suggested that education for cops, students, social workers may be one way of addressing these issues. This includes reframing the language used around perpetrators and abusers, particularly fathers and recognizing the importance of their identity and relationships as a parent.”  
**(Islamic Relief Canada, provider)**

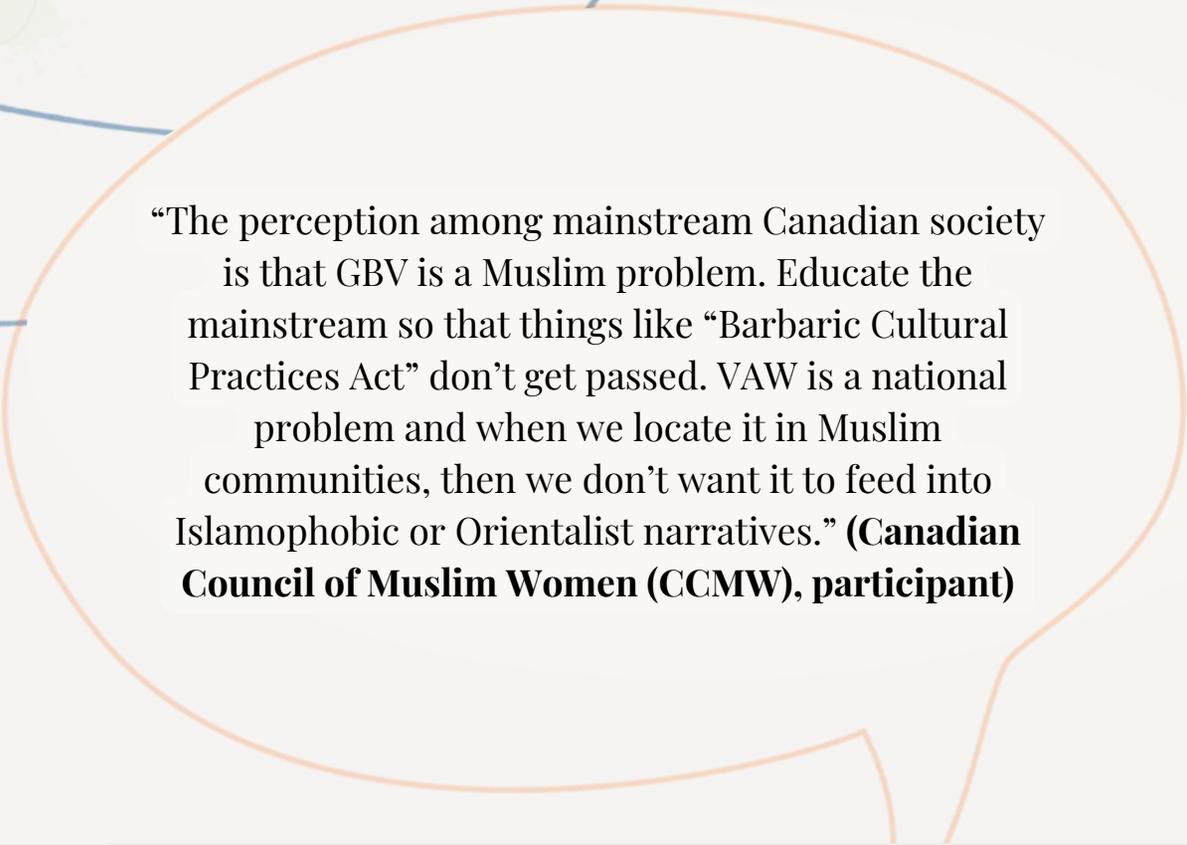
“If you are a sitting judge - every year you [should] need to do so many hours [of mandatory training]”  
**(London Abused Women’s Centre, provider)**

“Have police do no further harm.” **(BC Society of Transition Houses, participant)**

“The police when they do show up at the door, they come with tasers. It's not a calming time. Even when Children’s Aid showed up, they're not very well trained either...in the past, things have been very traumatizing. The way the system shows up with ex parte orders... I don't know how they're allowed to be legal.” **(Sistering, provider)**



“There needs to be training for all justice and police system to address the gender-based violence issues faced by the racialized women who are survivors and they are to be treated with dignity and support with IDEAS (Innovation, Development, Evaluation, Adapt, Scale) and feminist approaches in a sensitive, trauma and violence informed ways.” **(Canadian Center for Women's Empowerment (CCFWE), participant)**



“The perception among mainstream Canadian society is that GBV is a Muslim problem. Educate the mainstream so that things like “Barbaric Cultural Practices Act” don’t get passed. VAW is a national problem and when we locate it in Muslim communities, then we don’t want it to feed into Islamophobic or Orientalist narratives.” **(Canadian Council of Muslim Women (CCMW), participant)**

A watercolor illustration of a woman's profile, facing right. The drawing is composed of thin, dark green lines for the hair and facial features. The background is a light, pale green. Overlaid on the illustration are various splatters and washes of color in shades of green, yellow, and orange, creating a textured, artistic effect.

**Recommendation:** Enact  
Fundamental Changes to the Ways  
Our Punitive and Carceral Systems  
Operate and Make More Supports  
Available to Remedy the Harms  
They are Causing

“Colonial and patriarchal systems such as the courts and policing must be overhauled, reformed, and modernized to reflect a values system where victims are heard and believed”. **(Cowichan Women Against Violence Society, participant)**

“Anti-trafficking measures are violent and “raids often end in deportation with the border security”. **(Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI), participant, Ontario and Quebec Community organizer)**

“An overhaul of Victim Services and Child Protection and increased/mandatory training for all legal personnel is urgently needed.” **(YWCA Halifax, provider)**

“The system needs to be overhauled and given back to the people that it is meant to serve.” **(YWCA Cambridge, provider)**

“Provide status-on-arrival to allow people to leave abusive employer/relationship without risk of being deported.” **(Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI), participant, Ontario and Quebec Community organizer)**

“It’s like [the system] is stuck in the 1800s. It needs an overhaul.” **(Planned Parenthood Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Health Centre, participant)**

“Unfair to let the government off the hook or state bodies that commit violence either directly or indirectly against communities.” **(Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI), participant, Organizer, Migrant Sex-workers project)**

“Even if we provide individuals with housing and mental health help, systemic issues still exist.” **(Sakeenah Homes, provider)**

“The system, as it stands now, does not work. We need to look at a completely new model that must include a restorative justice system.” **(YWCA Cambridge, provider)**

“Stop talking about what to do and move to action, there have been numerous consultations and studies, we know what to do.” **(Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services, participant)**



**Recommendation:** Believe Survivors. Reform Laws and Repeal Policies to Ensure Survivors are Not Criminalized, Retraumatized, or Subject to Violence When Interacting with the Justice and Legal Systems

“Feels as though there’s a responsibility to prove rather than believe when survivors share. How difficult this is for survivors when relaying their experience, especially when they’ve repeated their story many times before. How is a person to be believed when they have had multiple offenses [against them]? We know how challenging it is to report and then there are all those barriers given existing paradigms.” **(Ending Violence Association of BC, participant)**

“Black women express that they will not call the police when their partner assaults them because of the risks to Black men when police are called. Though they may want their partner out of their home, they do not want them dead, and they want their children to continue to have relationship with their father.” **(Islamic Relief Canada, provider)**

“I see when Indigenous women try to get help due to violence and are living with HIV, social services swoops in and takes their children.” **(HIV Legal Network, participant, Indigenous Elder and advocate)**

“I know of one instance where a girl did tell the police what was happening, and she was pretty thorough in her description of these people who were trying to harm her, and the police officer said, ‘well, if you feel unsafe let us know.’ She just did. So, yeah, they need to be taken seriously, they need to be offered protection right away, and...there should be an investigation and they should not be worried that they're going to get in trouble for destruction of property or for being stoned or anything that could have been involved in that situation.” **(Sistering, participant)**

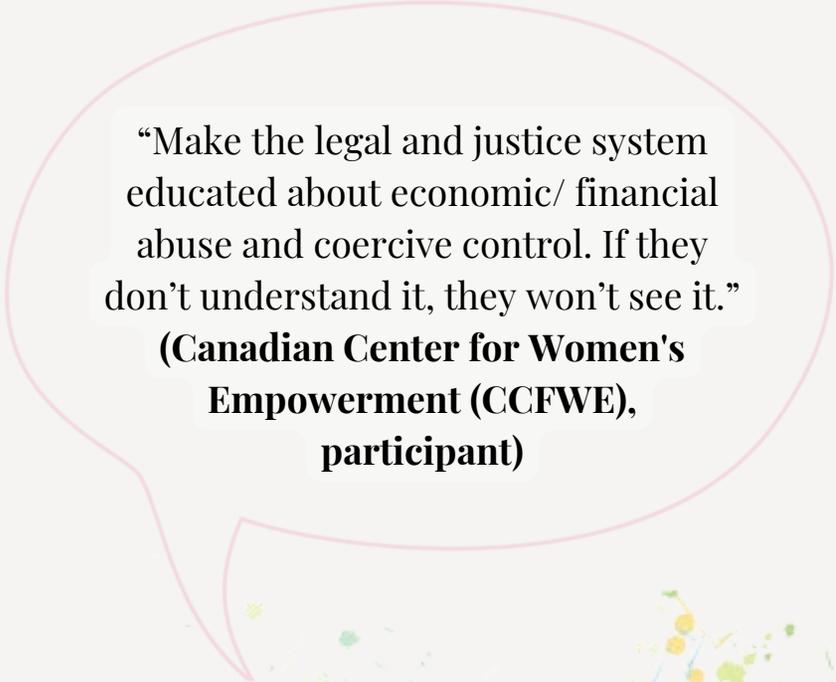
“Establish a civilian oversight body for police investigations of sexual assault cases. The oversight mechanism should include front line feminist advocates, who will conduct a transparent and on-going review to ensure police carry out thorough investigations that result in appropriate charges.” **(Vancouver Rape Relief and Women’s Shelter, participant)**

“[S]ex work is criminalized and massage parlours are facing the repressive bylaw and policies and they are the major reason that they fear of the law enforcement...workers report that they are being racial profiled, surveillance, charged arrested, detained and deportation is the violence against them.” **(Butterfly – Asian and Migrant Sex Worker Support Network, provider)**

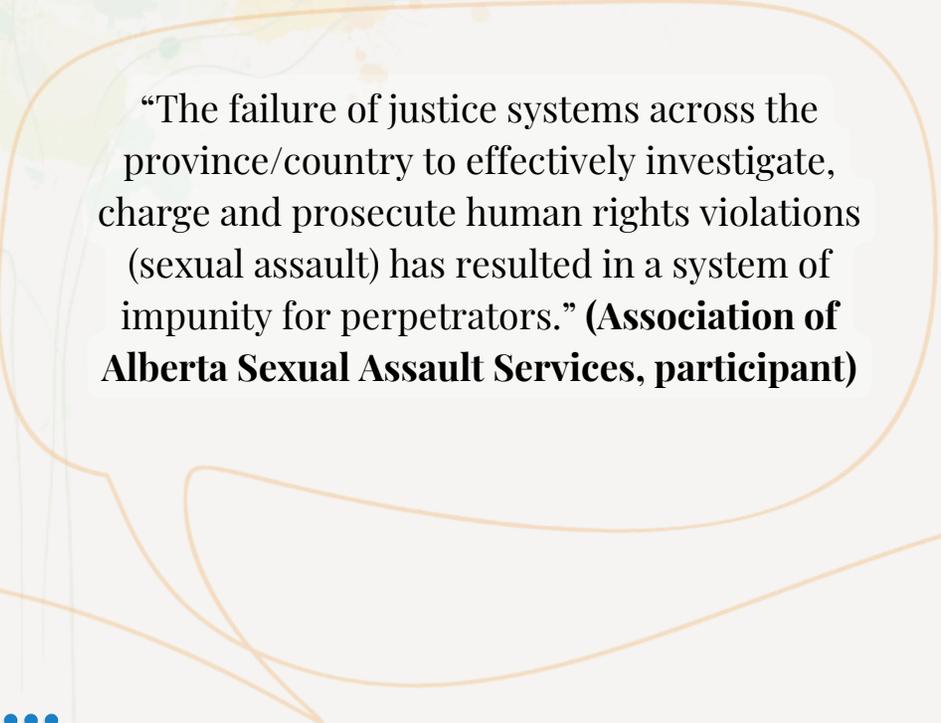
“When violence happens, the burden is placed on the victim to leave the home and find new housing, to keep themselves and their children safe, and to reestablish themselves, sometimes finding new jobs after relocating or when employment was disrupted due to violence. Placing responsibility on the victim to prove they are at risk, before their abuser must forfeit his right to continue contact with her, is unjust and unreasonable.” **(Provincial Association of Transition Houses and Services of Saskatchewan (PATHS), provider)**



"Reform criminal law to remove burden of proof from women reporting GBV." (**BC Society of Transition Houses, participant**)



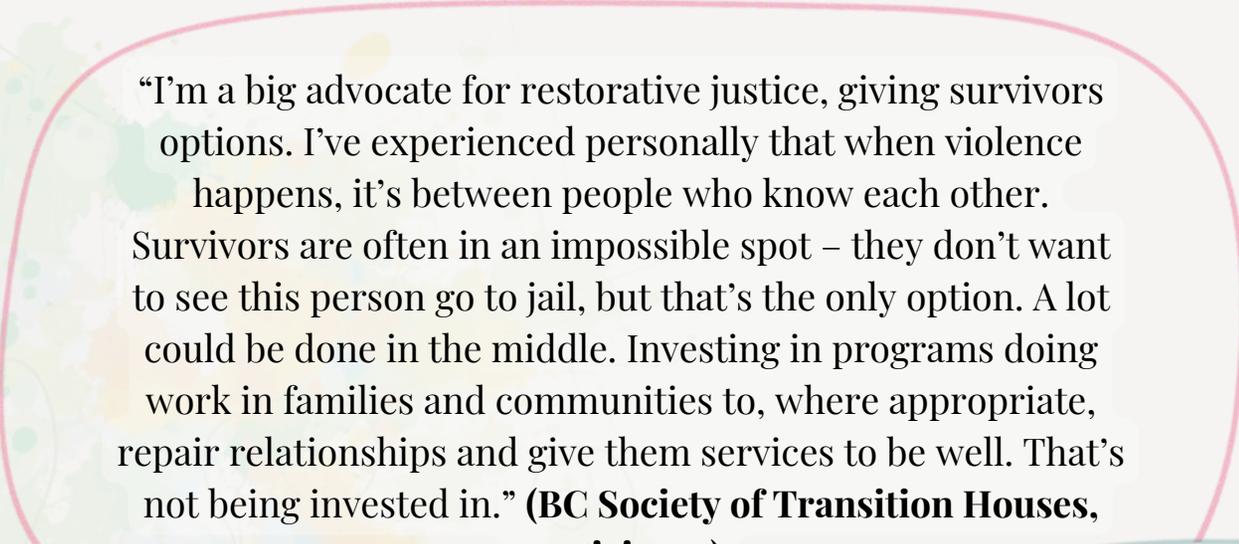
"Make the legal and justice system educated about economic/ financial abuse and coercive control. If they don't understand it, they won't see it." (**Canadian Center for Women's Empowerment (CCFWE), participant**)



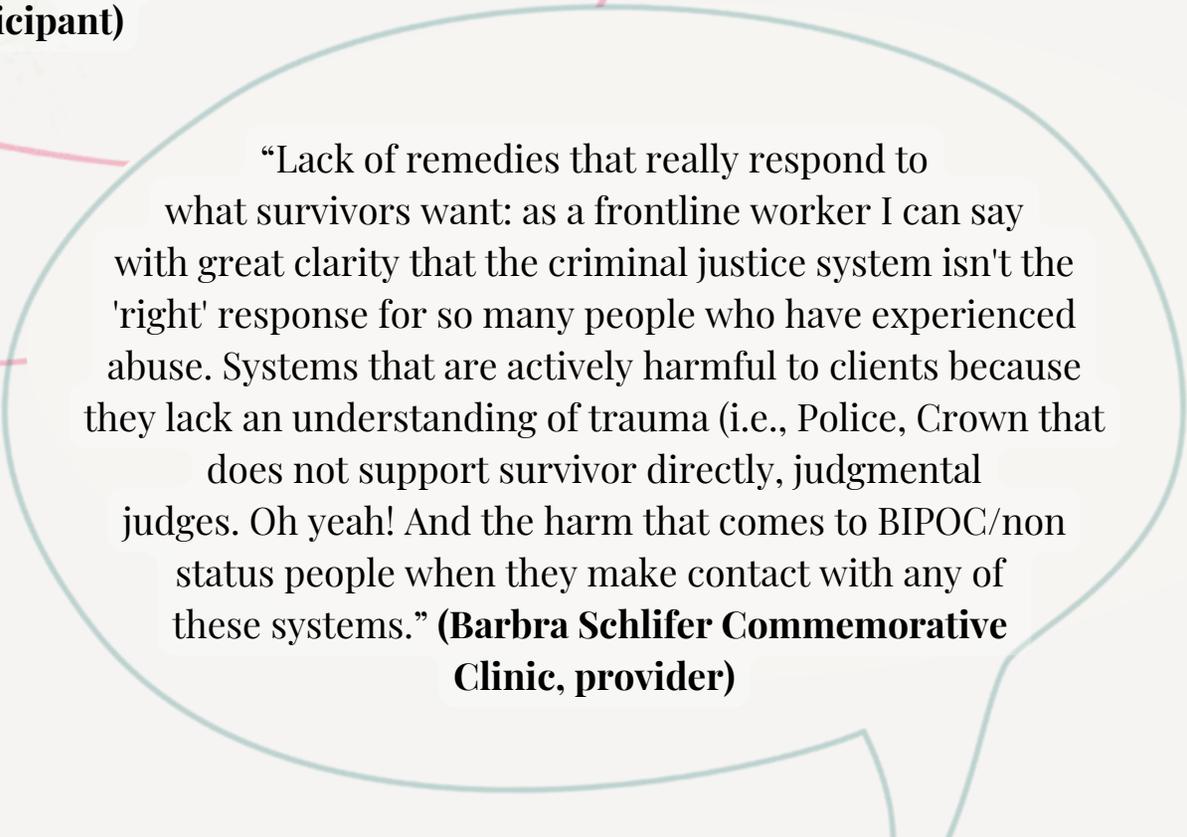
"The failure of justice systems across the province/country to effectively investigate, charge and prosecute human rights violations (sexual assault) has resulted in a system of impunity for perpetrators." (**Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services, participant**)

A watercolor illustration of a woman's profile, facing right. The drawing is composed of thin, dark green lines for the hair and facial features. The background is filled with various shades of green and yellow watercolor splatters and washes, creating a textured, artistic effect. The overall style is soft and expressive.

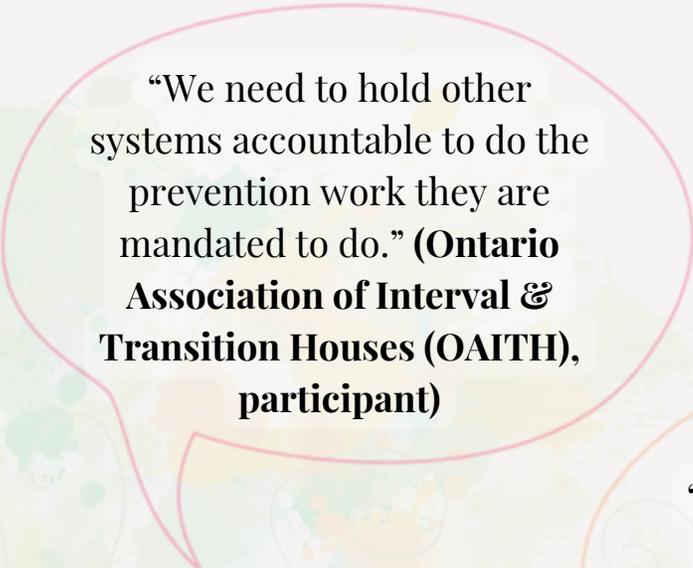
**Recommendation:** Offer Choice to Survivors and Explore and Establish Alternative Models of GBV Response Grounded in Transformative or Restorative Justice [[xv](#)]



“I’m a big advocate for restorative justice, giving survivors options. I’ve experienced personally that when violence happens, it’s between people who know each other. Survivors are often in an impossible spot – they don’t want to see this person go to jail, but that’s the only option. A lot could be done in the middle. Investing in programs doing work in families and communities to, where appropriate, repair relationships and give them services to be well. That’s not being invested in.” **(BC Society of Transition Houses, participant)**



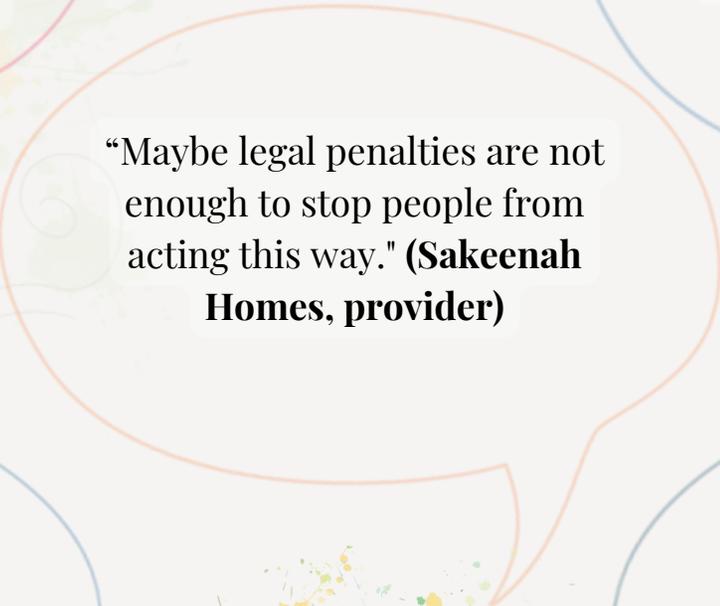
“Lack of remedies that really respond to what survivors want: as a frontline worker I can say with great clarity that the criminal justice system isn't the 'right' response for so many people who have experienced abuse. Systems that are actively harmful to clients because they lack an understanding of trauma (i.e., Police, Crown that does not support survivor directly, judgmental judges. Oh yeah! And the harm that comes to BIPOC/non status people when they make contact with any of these systems.” **(Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic, provider)**



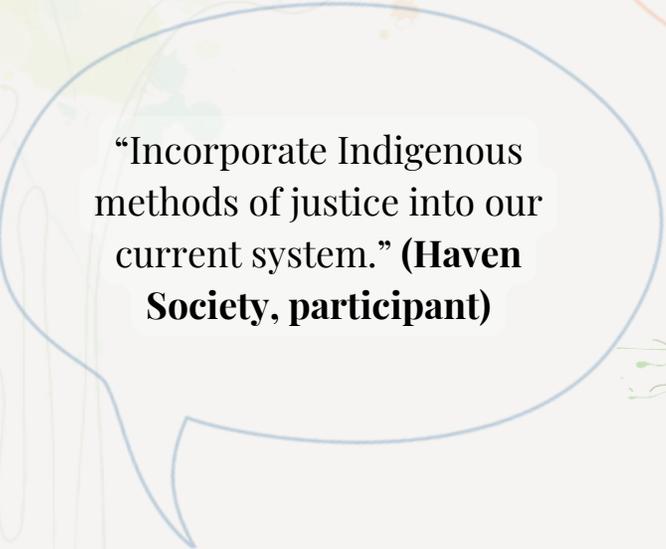
“We need to hold other systems accountable to do the prevention work they are mandated to do.” (**Ontario Association of Interval & Transition Houses (OAITH), participant**)



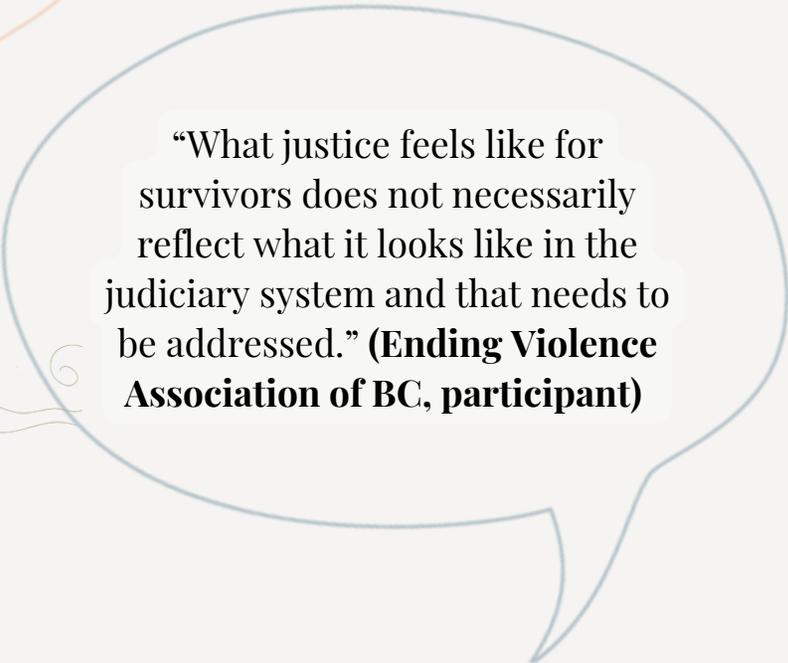
“Look at moving funding away from justice & legal systems and to those community groups that are already doing this work.” (**YWCA Cambridge, provider**)



“Maybe legal penalties are not enough to stop people from acting this way.” (**Sakeenah Homes, provider**)



“Incorporate Indigenous methods of justice into our current system.” (**Haven Society, participant**)



“What justice feels like for survivors does not necessarily reflect what it looks like in the judiciary system and that needs to be addressed.” (**Ending Violence Association of BC, participant**)

“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.” **(Ending Violence Association of Canada, provider)**

“The anti-trafficking raid is harming the workers. The “white women” organizations should not take away our job by shutting down our businesses.” **(Butterfly – Asian and Migrant Sex Worker Support Network, participant)**

“Talk about abolishing police and prisons and understanding the discussion on who is perpetuating harm and how, as well as who is accessing services to reduce harm.” **(The Enchanté Network, participant)**

“Can the legal system be responsive and inclusive?...considering its historical foundations, pervasive anti-Indigenous and anti-Black racism in the system, and how few survivors actually report or trust the system to provide justice... “the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house”. **(Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic, participant)**



“There is a need for divestment [from] oppressive systems and an investment into community based and non-carceral alternatives for survivors of gender-based violence...An expansion in non-carceral and non-systemic alternatives for survivors will provide support to survivors who would not have otherwise accessed services.” **(Ontario Association of Interval & Transition Houses (OAITH), provider)**



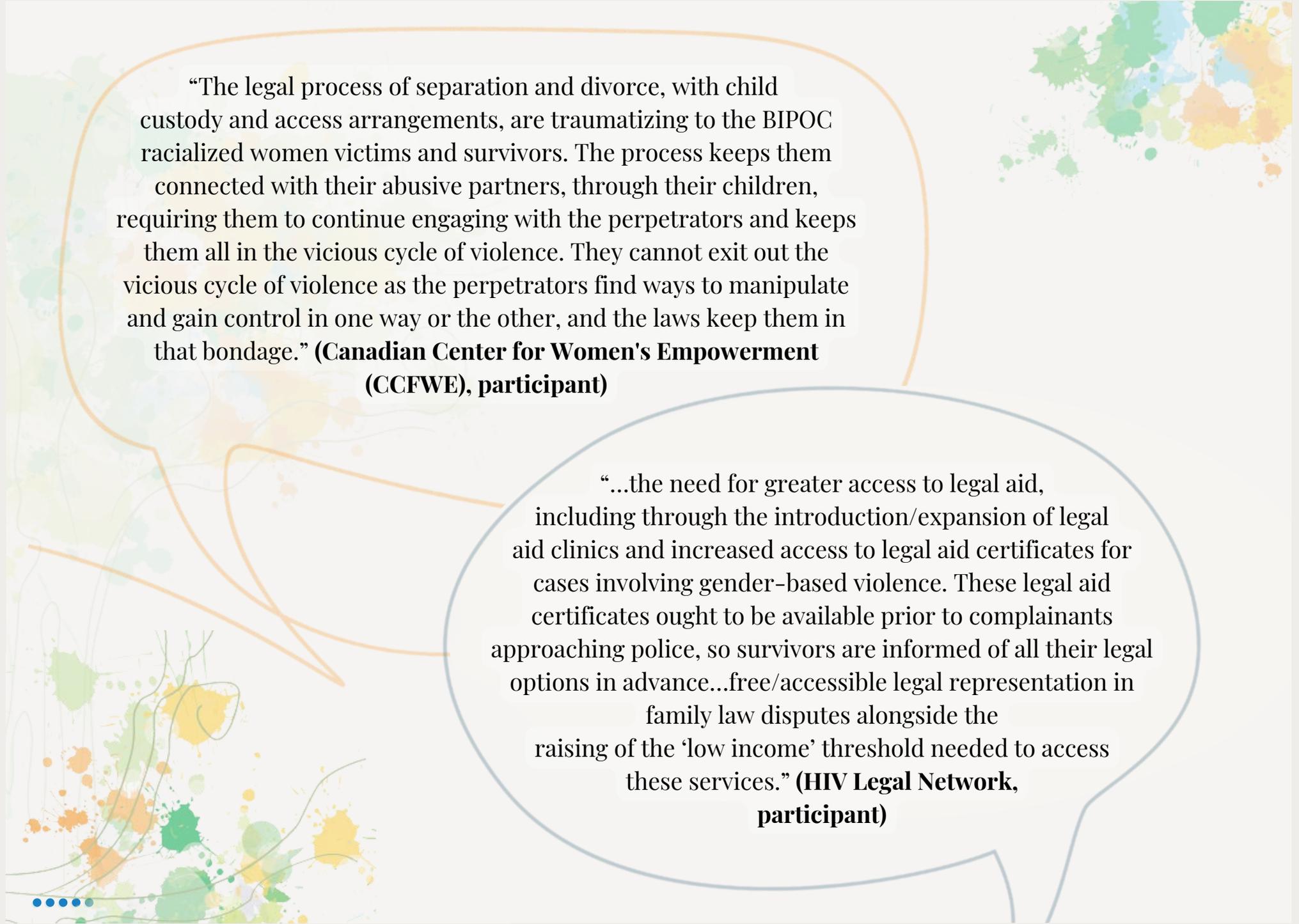
**Recommendation:** Bolster Legal Aid Services, Reduce Barriers and Income Thresholds to Receiving Free/Low-Cost and Equitably Accessible Legal Resources and Representation at All Stages of Legal Processes

“Challenges for mothers to get legal aid when the father is in fact getting legal aid and perpetuating the abuse through legal proceedings with no consequences.”  
**(Woman Abuse Council of Toronto (WomanACT), participant)**

“Introduce automatic supports within the system so that people don’t have to advocate for themselves or others to get the support they need. If you don’t know how to navigate the system and advocate for yourself, you don’t get them.” **(YWCA Cambridge, provider)**

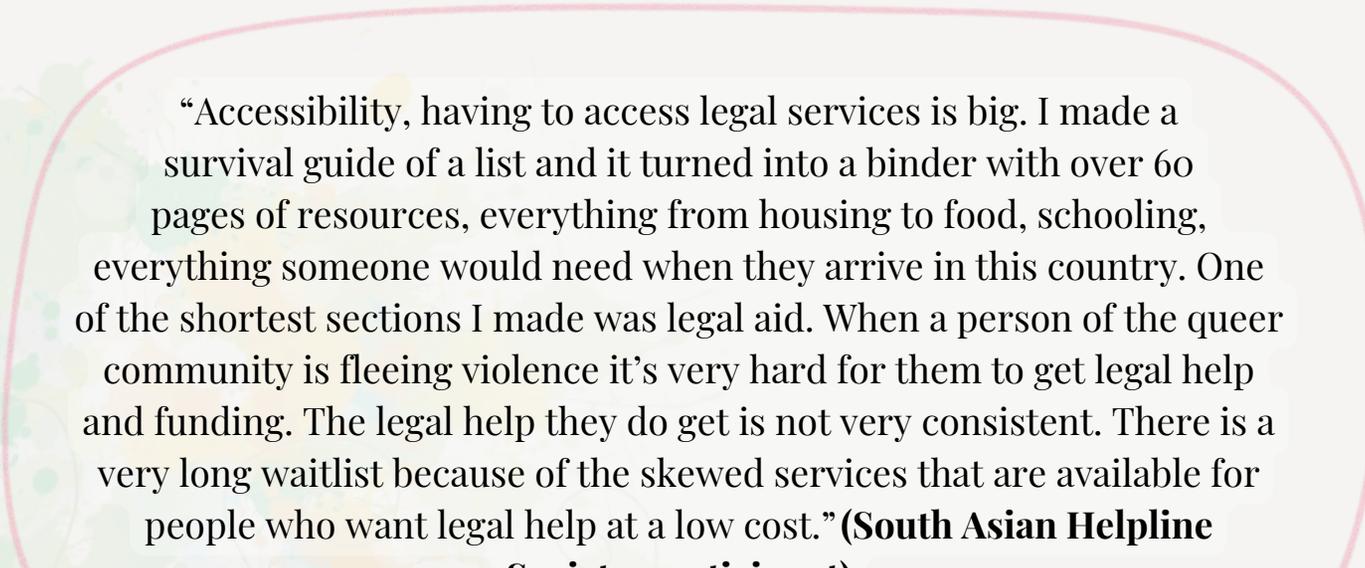
“Having more dedicated funding for legal support readily available on campus would be useful.” **(Possibility Seeds (Courage to Act), Canadian Federation of Students and the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, participant)**

“There is limited professional help in urban Friendship Centers, where Indigenous people go for support. They need capacity to hire psychiatrists and there is a stigma at urban friendship centers about receiving services. People go there to seek legal help, but there aren’t lawyers there who can help. Bolstering the professional help at friendship centers and costs can hugely benefit the Indigenous communities.” **(Canadian Center for Women’s Empowerment (CCFWE), provider)**

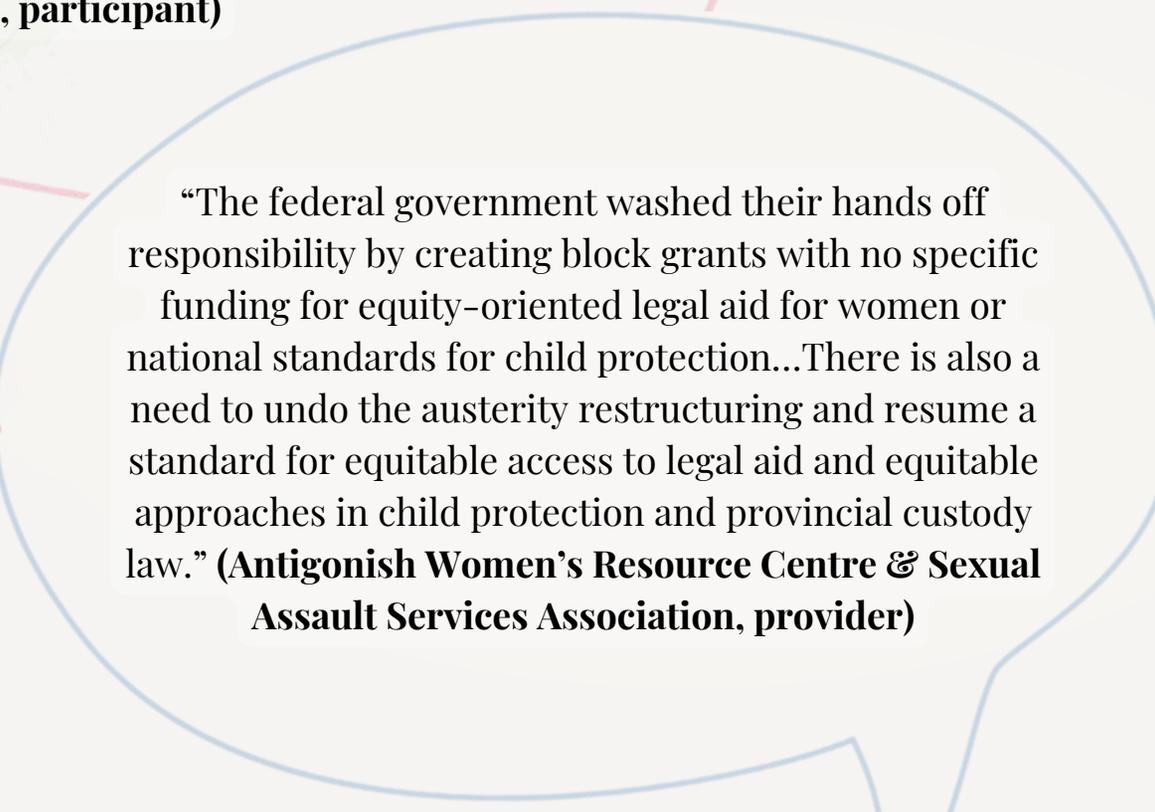


“The legal process of separation and divorce, with child custody and access arrangements, are traumatizing to the BIPOC racialized women victims and survivors. The process keeps them connected with their abusive partners, through their children, requiring them to continue engaging with the perpetrators and keeps them all in the vicious cycle of violence. They cannot exit out the vicious cycle of violence as the perpetrators find ways to manipulate and gain control in one way or the other, and the laws keep them in that bondage.” **(Canadian Center for Women's Empowerment (CCFWE), participant)**

“...the need for greater access to legal aid, including through the introduction/expansion of legal aid clinics and increased access to legal aid certificates for cases involving gender-based violence. These legal aid certificates ought to be available prior to complainants approaching police, so survivors are informed of all their legal options in advance...free/accessible legal representation in family law disputes alongside the raising of the ‘low income’ threshold needed to access these services.” **(HIV Legal Network, participant)**



“Accessibility, having to access legal services is big. I made a survival guide of a list and it turned into a binder with over 60 pages of resources, everything from housing to food, schooling, everything someone would need when they arrive in this country. One of the shortest sections I made was legal aid. When a person of the queer community is fleeing violence it’s very hard for them to get legal help and funding. The legal help they do get is not very consistent. There is a very long waitlist because of the skewed services that are available for people who want legal help at a low cost.” **(South Asian Helpline Society, participant)**



“The federal government washed their hands off responsibility by creating block grants with no specific funding for equity-oriented legal aid for women or national standards for child protection...There is also a need to undo the austerity restructuring and resume a standard for equitable access to legal aid and equitable approaches in child protection and provincial custody law.” **(Antigonish Women’s Resource Centre & Sexual Assault Services Association, provider)**

“Introduce automatic supports within the system so that people don’t have to advocate for themselves or others to get the support they need. If you don’t know how to navigate the system and advocate for yourself, you don’t get them.” **(YWCA Cambridge, provider)**

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## Pillar IV

# Implementing Indigenous-Led Approaches & Informed Responses

As a colonial import, gender-based violence has wreaked havoc on Indigenous traditional ways of living, knowing, and being. **GBV in Indigenous communities is a symptom of the erosion of cultural structures such as women's leadership role, food sovereignty, community-based education systems, traditional languages, technology, and healthcare systems.** While GBV in Canada continues to be a persistent and ongoing problem, the risk and extent of GBV are significantly higher for Indigenous women and girls, gender diverse, and Two-Spirit peoples.[\[xvi\]](#) This is true across different communities (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit...) and constituencies (status, non-status, rural, urban, reserve).[\[xvii\]](#) **Indigenous women and girls are at least 3 times more likely to experience violence, and at least 6 times more likely to be murdered than any other woman or girl in Canada.** Further, well over 60 percent of Indigenous women have experienced sexual violence.[\[xviii\]](#) Police-reported violent crime against young women and girls (aged 24 and under) in the North is nearly four times higher than for Canadians overall.[\[xix\]](#) Despite the prevalence of gender-based bias and brutality against Indigenous Peoples, there is discernible apathy, indifference, and prejudice in government and law enforcement responses to missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

## Pillar IV

# Implementing Indigenous-Led Approaches & Informed Responses

Indigenous communities in Canada have long histories and methods of transforming GBV that are not meaningfully integrated in current response and recovery models. **Indigenous communities and organizations need to lead the development of action plans and strategies for their communities.** Through partnerships with Indigenous-led organizations (The Native Women's Association, Indigenous Friends Association, Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, and Native Women's Resource Centre of Toronto (NWRCT)), Knowledge Keepers, as well as other national and local organizations serving Indigenous communities, YWCA Canada affirms the strategies and needs expressed by Indigenous survivors and service providers.

## What Remains to be Done

**GBV responses across sectors must be informed by and grounded in Indigenous leadership and learnings and center decolonizing practices.** This includes addressing the impacts of colonial violence and systemic racism, affirming the self-determination of Indigenous communities by implementing the MMIWG National Inquiry's Calls for Justice and TRC calls to Action, and ensuring funding and resources are provided to Indigenous and Two-Spirit led organizations to meaningfully contribute and participate in the National Action Plan implementation.

This calls for adopting Indigenous epistemologies and ethical frameworks including Indigenous storytelling and re-storying, OCAP principles of ownership, control, access, and possession as well as Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) in all research, evaluation and monitoring efforts, and consulting and compensating Elders, Healers, and Traditional Knowledge Keepers at every stage.



**Recommendation:** Meaningfully Engage, Fund, Build Relationships with and Take Direction from Diverse Indigenous-Led Organizations and Community Members

“Engage Elders and Knowledge Keepers and implement their work in concrete ways. Too often, they are included to say an opening prayer and a few words, bless food, and close. This is not true engagement and is actually tokenism and wasting a valuable disappearing resource.” **(Provincial Association of Transition Houses and Services of Saskatchewan (PATHS), provider)**

“There is an over representation of western values and beliefs in the lives of Indigenous Peoples...Decisions on what should be funded needs to be made with Indigenous People at the table and part of the bigger conversation, not as a side note. The Government knows what they need to do, and they to stop consulting and start taking action.” **(Sageese Domestic Violence Prevention Society, provider)**

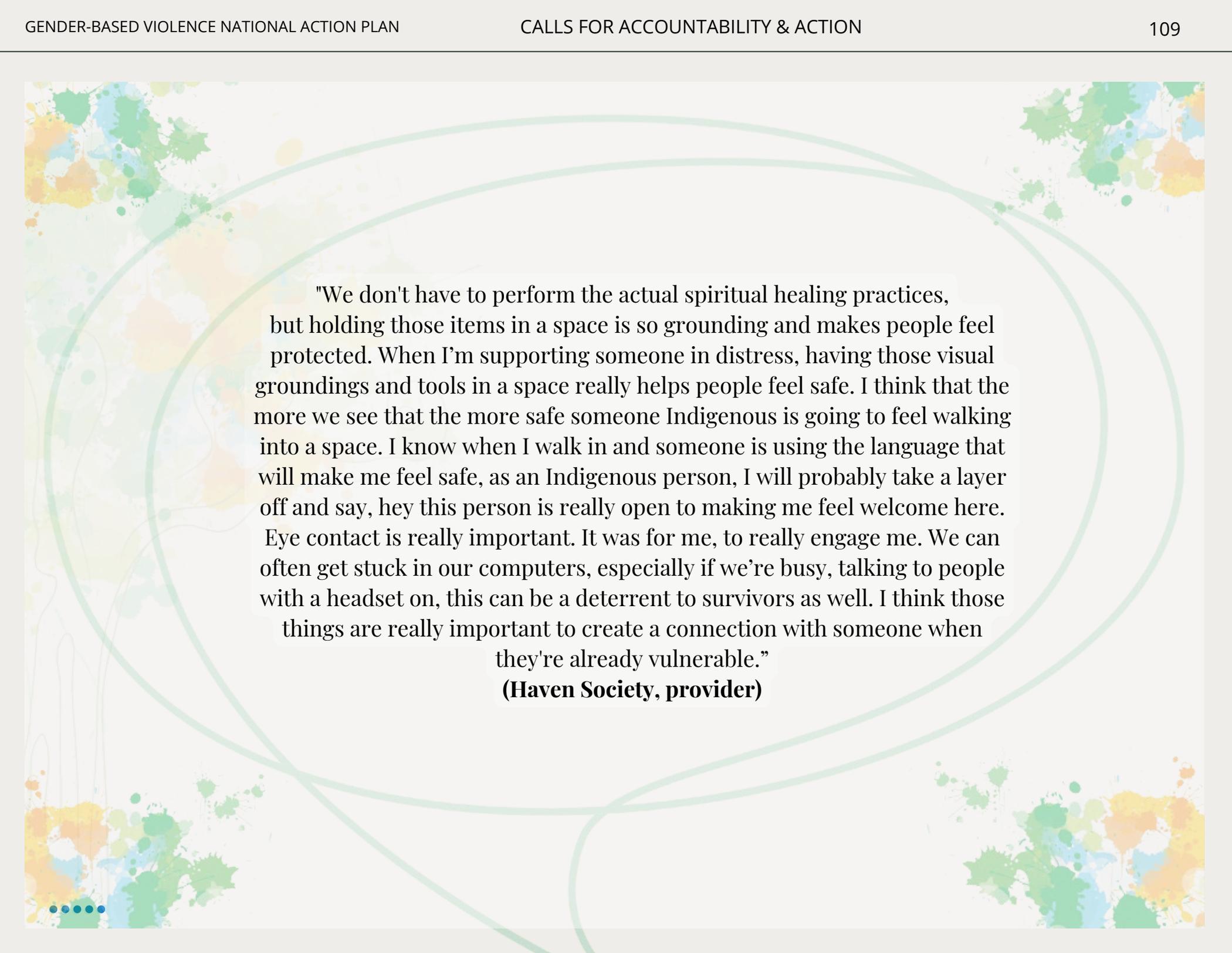
“It is time to restore control and resources to Inuit to address violence in communities. What is needed are measures that immediately protect Inuit women suffering from violence and their children; Inuit-specific services that respect Inuit culture, languages, and healing practices; and ongoing public awareness campaigns and training that reach every Inuk. Immediate safety measures include affordable housing, shelters or safe houses in every community, and these courses of action cannot wait...” **(Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2016, p. 2[xx])**

“It was also noted that it is important to understand the holistic viewpoint of family in Indigenous communities as community is also family. Support for Indigenous organizations to develop prevention strategies for their communities has to be embedded in any action plan.” **(Yellow Brick House, Provider)**

“A lack of racialized, and specifically Indigenous voices in the GBV sphere contributes to the perpetuation of racist, colonialist and ableist views on gender, sex, consent, rape culture...” **(Possibility Seeds (Courage to Act), Canadian Federation of Students (CFS), and Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA, participant – Black and Racialized Students Consultation)**

“Let the Indigenous community lead their healing and futures. Give the communities the resources and space and self-efficacy to do so.” **(Native Women’s Resource Centre of Toronto (NWRCT), provider)**

“Indigenous approaches need to be included at all levels of intervention from reporting to treatment to (when applicable) conviction.” **(Haven Society, participant)**



"We don't have to perform the actual spiritual healing practices, but holding those items in a space is so grounding and makes people feel protected. When I'm supporting someone in distress, having those visual groundings and tools in a space really helps people feel safe. I think that the more we see that the more safe someone Indigenous is going to feel walking into a space. I know when I walk in and someone is using the language that will make me feel safe, as an Indigenous person, I will probably take a layer off and say, hey this person is really open to making me feel welcome here. Eye contact is really important. It was for me, to really engage me. We can often get stuck in our computers, especially if we're busy, talking to people with a headset on, this can be a deterrent to survivors as well. I think those things are really important to create a connection with someone when they're already vulnerable."

**(Haven Society, provider)**



**Recommendation:** Implement the 94 Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action and the 230+ Calls to Justice in the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls into Policy, Programs and Legislation

“...the following recommendations have been repeated in everything from community calls to action, to the MMIWG2S inquiry. The subsequent frustrations that have been shared with us are a consequence of continued inaction, disrespect, indifference, and colonialism.” **(Aura Freedom, provider)**

“Government talk[s] a big game and then they don't follow through, right. So, what is the point of the [MMIWG] inquiry if the inquiry is like here are our recommendations and the government's like, \*whistling\* like, what did we waste everybody's time for then? You know, I think they know what needs to be done and fail to do it.” **(Sistering, participant)**

“We must take the information from the Truth and Reconciliation Committee and immediately enact the recommendations from these reports.” **(Aura Freedom, participant)**

“The final report of MMIWG – they summed it up nicely. It flows into all women. As long as violence against women is seen as a gap that needs to be filled, as opposed to a right that needs to be upheld, then things won't change. It's not a service gap. Intervention of the day. Now we'll all become trauma-informed. Now we'll all do this. It doesn't get us anywhere.” **(BC Society of Transition Houses, participant)**



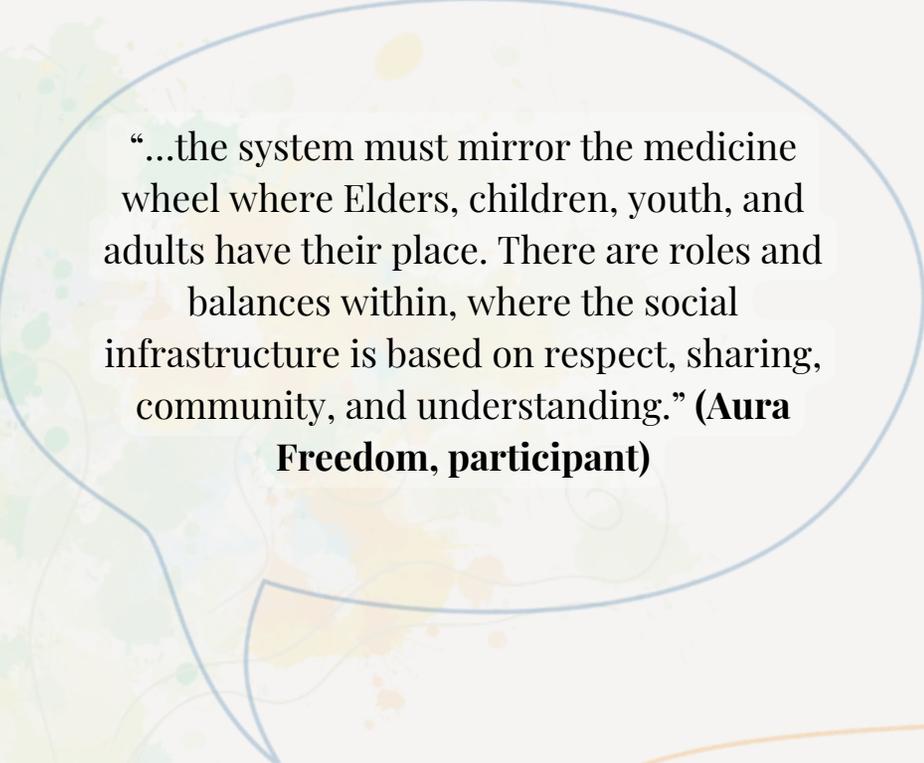
**Recommendation:** Direct Funding to Indigenous-Led Initiatives and Incentivize Hiring Indigenous Community Members in Positions of Leadership

“[W]e must create and maintain pathways for communities of different worldviews and perceptions, especially that of different Indigenous Communities on Turtle Island. These worldviews should be the basis for actions that will result in lasting change for all. These worldviews are the basis for not only solidarity, but for societal change.”  
**(Aura Freedom, participant)**

“...funding for programs, services and shelters was an issue pre-COVID that has persisted throughout the pandemic with shelters for Indigenous women being confronted with a lack of or not enough funding to adequately provide programs and services.” **(Native Women’s Association of Canada (NWAC), participants)**

“Cultural support and spaces for Indigenous women to heal. A large part of healing is feeling connected – Indigenous women’s support groups are very important.”  
**(Battered Women’s Support Services, participant)**

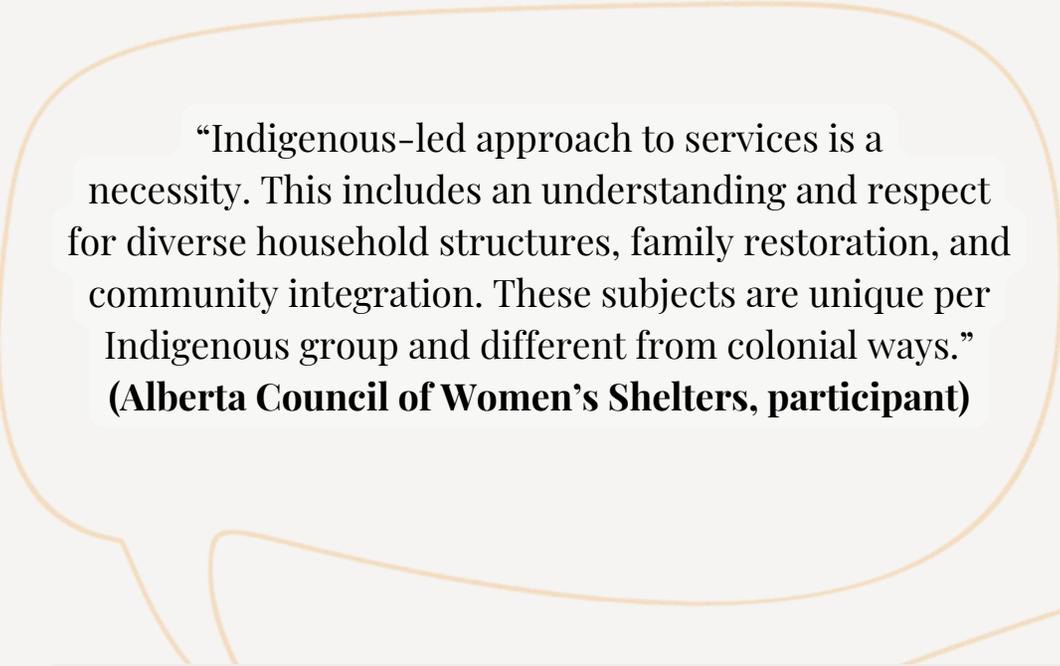
“Funding for independent of the state and band, grassroots Indigenous women’s initiatives to organize and challenge misogyny and men who commit violence against women in their communities.”  
**(Vancouver Rape Relief and Women’s Shelter with Aboriginal Women’s Action Network and Strength In SiSterhood, participant)**



“...the system must mirror the medicine wheel where Elders, children, youth, and adults have their place. There are roles and balances within, where the social infrastructure is based on respect, sharing, community, and understanding.” **(Aura Freedom, participant)**



“Groups run by Indigenous women for their communities have experience running activities that have had tangible positive outcomes for not only women survivors of GBV, but for men and whole families.” **(The Canadian Women’s Foundation, provider)**



“Indigenous-led approach to services is a necessity. This includes an understanding and respect for diverse household structures, family restoration, and community integration. These subjects are unique per Indigenous group and different from colonial ways.” **(Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters, participant)**

## Pillar V

# Social Infrastructure & Enabling Environment

**GBV is socially informed and enabled. It is therefore essential to challenge the social norms and inequities that underpin the risks and impacts of GBV.** The COVID-19 pandemic intensified existing social disparities and systemic inequities making it even more imperative to address these issues.[\[xxi\]](#) Indigenous, Black, and racialized women and gender diverse people experienced heightened economic insecurity, greater caregiving responsibilities, disproportionate employment and (im)migration precarity, and elevated risk of COVID-19 exposure due to their overrepresentation in frontline jobs. This substantive area focuses on the range of social policy responses required to eliminate systemic barriers to gender equality.

A salient recommendation emerging from consultations was the need to build the full complement of multi-sectoral support and undertake a transformative social change agenda to ensure competent, compassionate multi-sectoral services to survivors and create an environment in which survivors feel seen, safe, and empowered to approach service providers for help.

## Pillar V

# Social Infrastructure & Enabling Environment

**When we strengthen the capacity of institutions to provide care for survivors and synchronize social infrastructure (such as education, healthcare, housing, childcare, long term care, anti-GBV services) we can create environments free of violence.** This involves improving policy, infrastructure, and services as well as ensuring communication and referral pathways between sectors and service providers across jurisdictions. Strengthening investments and supports for national and local stakeholders can institutionalize attention to GBV across key sectors and facilitate coalitional interventions that are effective, coordinated, and sustainable.

## What Remains to be Done

**To address the root causes of GBV, we must identify the social determinants of health and community safety and invest in social programs, services and supports, including childcare, long-term care and GBV survivor services.** Advancing economic independence and addressing economic insecurity through access to meaningful work, public services and social protections is key to ending and preventing GBV. Key to this is access to decent work, addressing the housing crisis through accessible and affordable housing, guaranteed universal basic income and income support, access to affordable and culturally relevant childcare, quality public services and infrastructure like transportation, technology, high-speed internet, and healthcare, including mental health supports, sexual and

reproductive health, and reproductive and abortion services. Increased public allocations towards social infrastructure is key to improving supports outside of the gender binary, labour rights and workplace protections, housing, universal childcare, access to technology and internet services, accessible education, status for all, anti-GBV curriculum at all levels, and representation at all levels and geographies including rural, remote, and northern communities.

**This work cannot be carried out to its fullest extent without leveraging and advancing a robust research agenda integrated with ongoing data collection and extensive knowledge mobilization of research findings, unlearning, learning, frontline expertise, policy recommendations and**

## What Remains to be Done

**promising practices.** Developing the evidence base and evaluating the impact of existing and emerging interventions offered by service providers and grassroots community organizations can strengthen multi-sectoral responses to and prevention of GBV. Ongoing knowledge exchange and evaluation can help with the identification, adaptation, and/or development of models that both represent and reinforce promising practices in survivor support and GBV service delivery.



**Recommendation:** Provide Core, Sustainable, and Flexible Funding to Strengthen Community-Based Care and Support for GBV Survivors

“Current funding is project-based and is not sustainable for grassroots organizations.”  
**(Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI), provider)**

“In rural communities there is little anonymity leading to greater difficulty in reaching out to support.”  
**(Kingston Anti-Violence Advisory Council | Victim Services of Kingston and Frontenac, participant)**

“Sustained and increased funding for matrix of GBV services.” **(Battered Women’s Support Services, provider)**

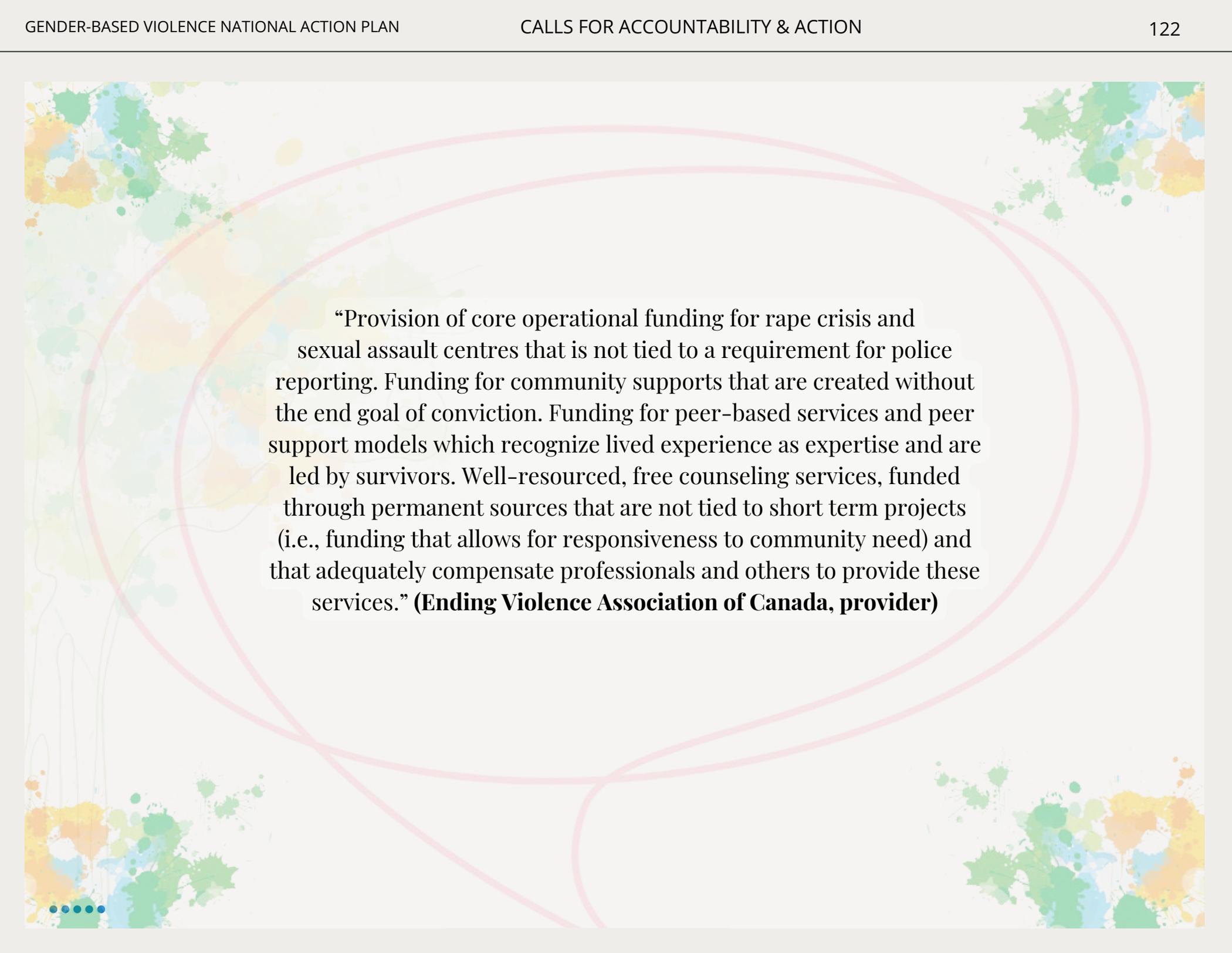
“Gov[ernment] must provide funding for social service agencies that understand the needs of their community.”  
**(YWCA Cambridge, provider)**

“Huge funding for human trafficking goes to organizations that are openly anti-sex worker and anti-migrant.” **(Organizer, Sisters of St. Joseph’s) (Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI), participant)**

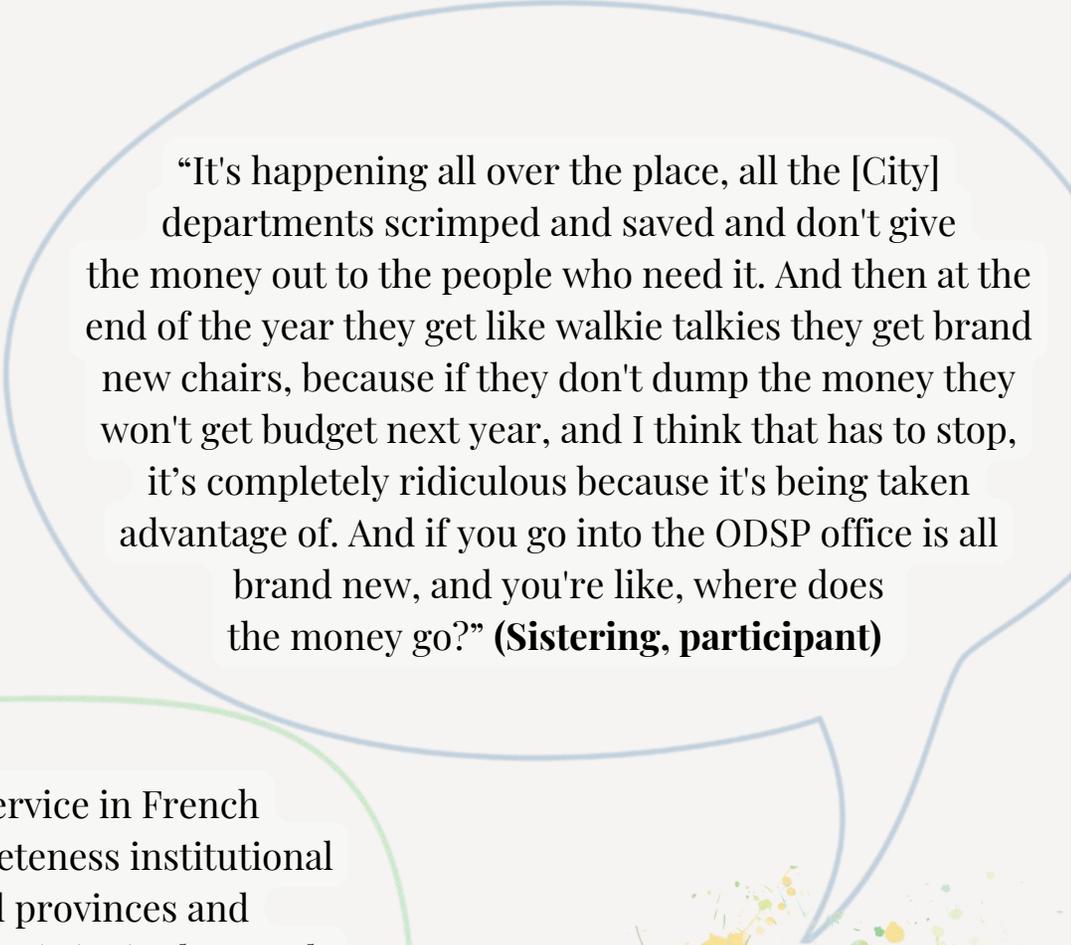
“Gaps to providing prevention work always starts with funding, it’s hard to get funding for prevention work, we are a backwards society where crisis work is more valued and funded then prevention work, not seen as important to have as part of education system.” **(Howe Sound Women’s Centre Society, provider)**

“The funding that is available is not sustainable, protected core funding for sexual assault services. Federal funding is often project based, which is a barrier to maintaining access to sexual assault services for survivors. Delays and uncertainty in funding are causing operation challenges and limited critical services.” **(Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services, provider)**

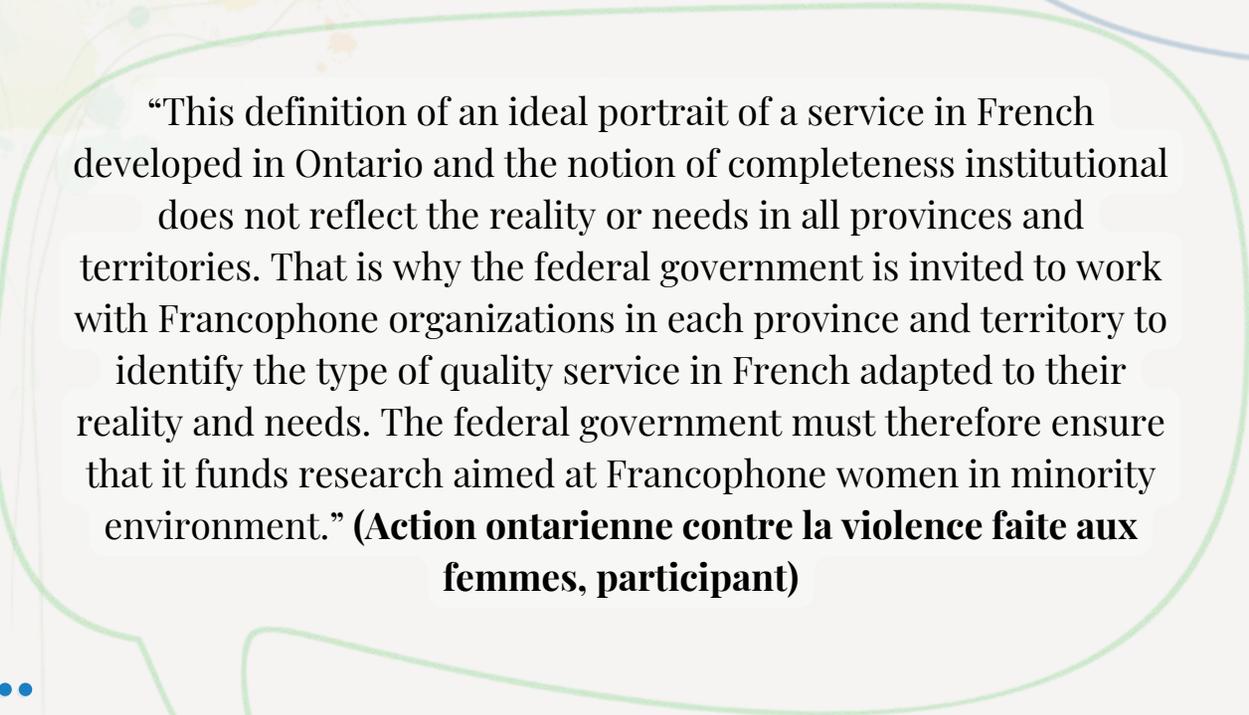
“A more systemic issue that was indicated was the unfair distribution of resources. Many individuals indicated how difficult it is for many agencies to secure funding to run these programs, especially smaller organizations that help a specific population. Bigger institutions may withhold from smaller non-profits or not include them in the work they are doing.” **(Laadliyan, Celebrating & Empowering Daughters, provider)**



“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 counseling services, funded through permanent sources that are not tied to short term projects (i.e., funding that allows for responsiveness to community need) and that adequately compensate professionals and others to provide these services.” **(Ending Violence Association of Canada, provider)**



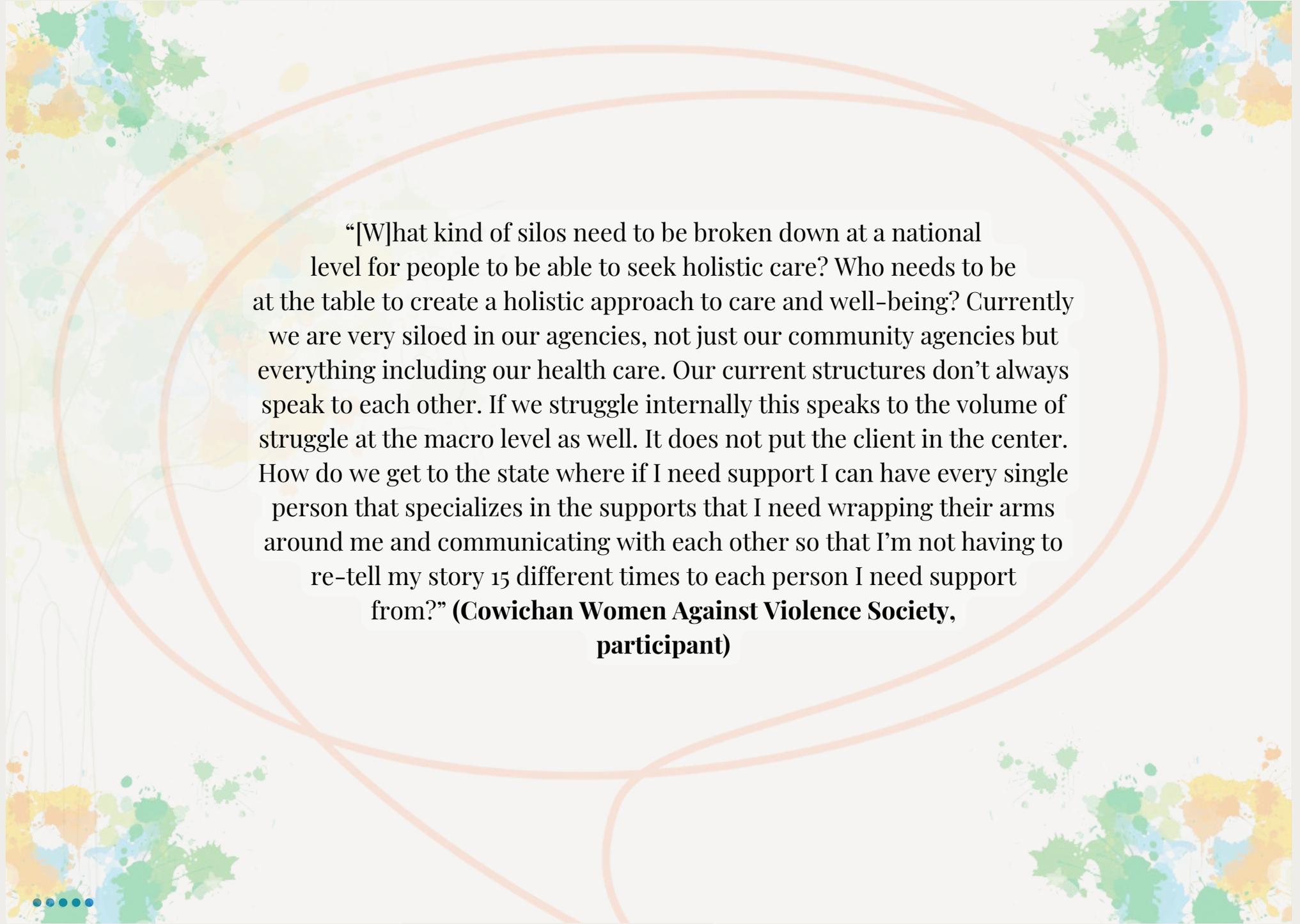
“It's happening all over the place, all the [City] departments scrimped and saved and don't give the money out to the people who need it. And then at the end of the year they get like walkie talkies they get brand new chairs, because if they don't dump the money they won't get budget next year, and I think that has to stop, it's completely ridiculous because it's being taken advantage of. And if you go into the ODSP office is all brand new, and you're like, where does the money go?” **(Sistering, participant)**



“This definition of an ideal portrait of a service in French developed in Ontario and the notion of completeness institutional does not reflect the reality or needs in all provinces and territories. That is why the federal government is invited to work with Francophone organizations in each province and territory to identify the type of quality service in French adapted to their reality and needs. The federal government must therefore ensure that it funds research aimed at Francophone women in minority environment.” **(Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes, participant)**



**Recommendation:** Develop Standard Operating Procedures to Guide How Multi-Sectoral Stakeholders and Levels of Government Coordinate and Work Together to Reduce Barriers and Redundancies in Survivor Support



“[W]hat kind of silos need to be broken down at a national level for people to be able to seek holistic care? Who needs to be at the table to create a holistic approach to care and well-being? Currently we are very siloed in our agencies, not just our community agencies but everything including our health care. Our current structures don’t always speak to each other. If we struggle internally this speaks to the volume of struggle at the macro level as well. It does not put the client in the center. How do we get to the state where if I need support I can have every single person that specializes in the supports that I need wrapping their arms around me and communicating with each other so that I’m not having to re-tell my story 15 different times to each person I need support from?” **(Cowichan Women Against Violence Society, participant)**

“Seamless communication, policies, regulations, and laws across Canada so when either a perpetrator or victim is moving province to province, they experience the same supports/laws and interactions with support services.” **(Provincial Association of Transition Houses and Services of Saskatchewan (PATHS), provider)**

“A plan to end gender-based violence needs to be integrated into the fabric of every policy, program, government [and] department. The plan needs to be implemented in such a way that it doesn't get cut at the whim of the Government of the day.” **(Archway Society for Domestic Peace, provider)**

“The fact that they (NAP) have pillars instead of circles is the most pressing issue. Because we're so siloed. All anti-violence services/responses are so siloed. Nobody ever talks to each other.” **(BC Society of Transition Houses, participant)**

“...a harm reduction approach that focused on systems synchronization. This would reduce the redundancies that force survivors and their families to replay traumatic experiences, as well as greater access for front line support workers to institutional services like healthcare, mental health and immigration to reduce wait times and provide system navigation support.” **(The Enchanté Network, participant)**

“A requirement to apply GBA+ principles and scope to all municipal decision making/policies/by-laws, the requirement of all municipal employees and school division employees to have ongoing professional development that includes GBV.” **(The Enchanté Network, participant)**

« Si on parle d'une stratégie nationale, il faut avoir des plans qui sont adaptés à chaque région. Les problèmes à Alberta ne sont pas les mêmes que celle au Québec. » “If we're going to talk about a national strategy, then it will have to be adapted for every region. The issues in Alberta aren't the same as the ones in Quebec.” **(Canadian Women's Foundation, participant)**

“...if Sistering went and had, you know, educational meetings with the police department, that would very much help. And if social workers were able to get together and exchange all their information, things would be a little bit more comprehensive... because it's an exponential [growth] of knowledge. Everyone has a little department, and they don't kind of connect and I wish that there could be more interconnection between the services from private to City, all those levels.” **(Sistering, participant)**



**Recommendation:** Gather Accurate, Reliable, and Disaggregated Data and Insights for Informed Advocacy and Decision Making

“The gap is having more statistics available for specific communities (people think Muslim community doesn’t face this issue but if we have statistics out there, people will know this is real and needs to be addressed).” (**Sakeenah Homes, provider**)

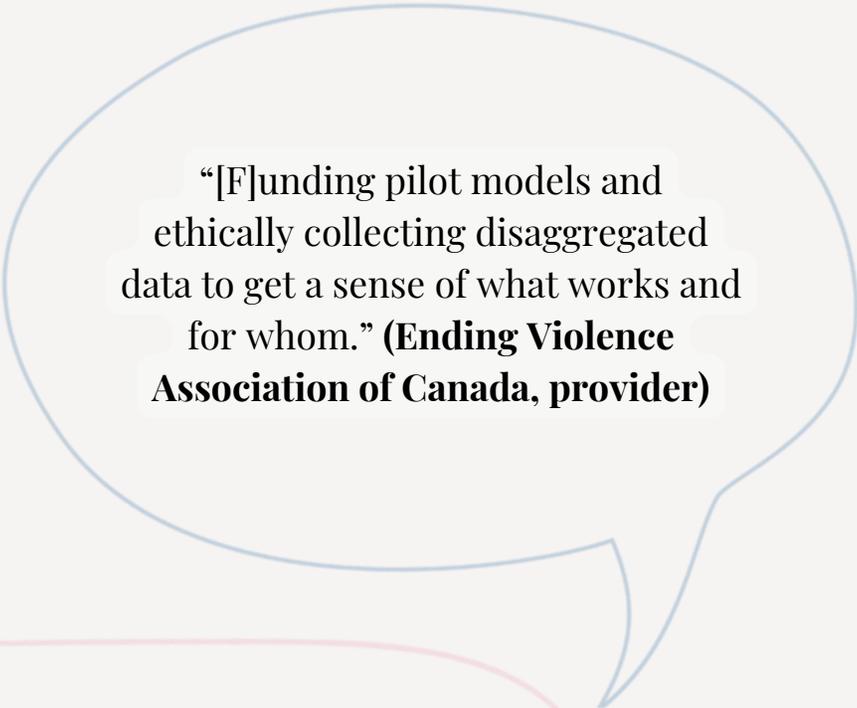
“Maintain/implement annual collection of data ensuring it is published publicly and easily accessible.” (**Vancouver Rape Relief and Aboriginal Women’s Action Network, participant**)

“Are the groups missing from the data opting out of participation because they don’t trust the process?” (**YWCA Cambridge, provider**)

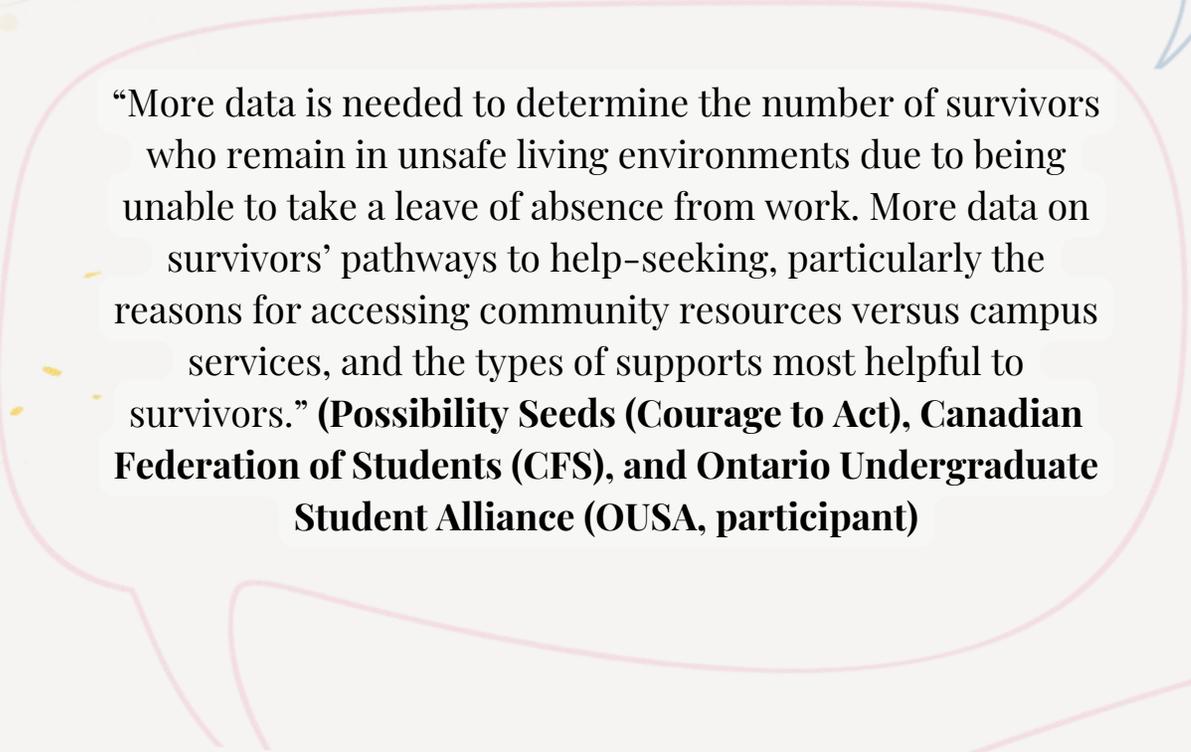
“Better data would help monitor systemic barriers and how policies are preventing or responding to financial abuse. Better data is also needed on the long-term economic consequences survivors face as a result of coerced debt and lost educational or employment opportunities.” (**Canadian Center for Women’s Empowerment (CCFWE), participant**)



“Maintain/implement annual collection of data ensuring it is published publicly and easily accessible.”  
**(Vancouver Rape Relief and Aboriginal Women’s Action Network, participant)**



“[F]unding pilot models and ethically collecting disaggregated data to get a sense of what works and for whom.” **(Ending Violence Association of Canada, provider)**

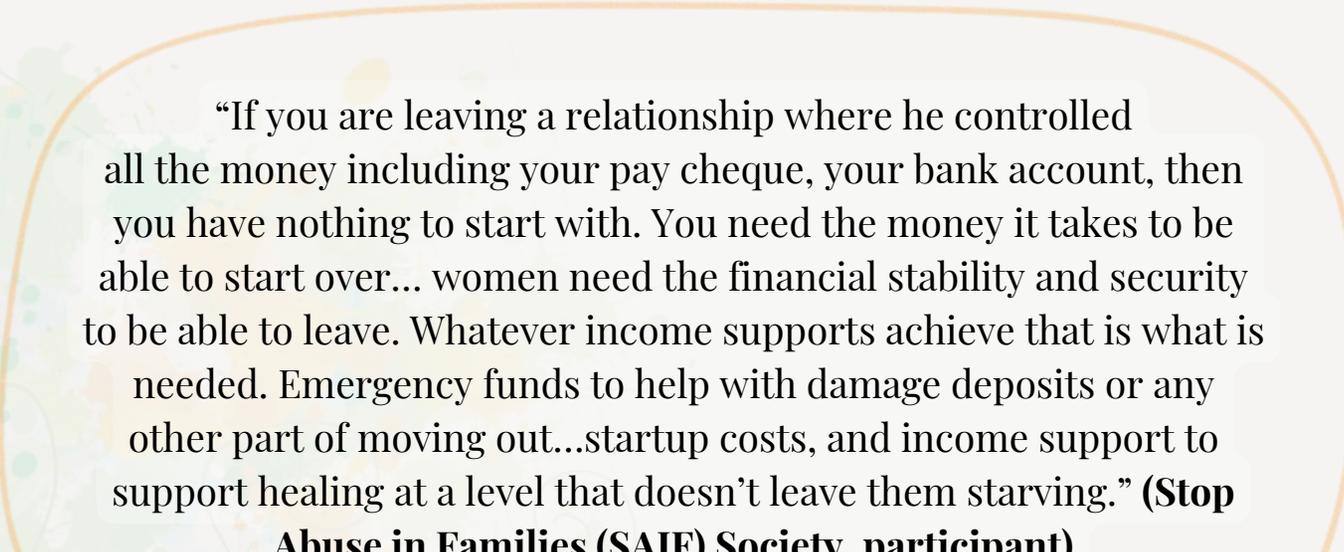


“More data is needed to determine the number of survivors who remain in unsafe living environments due to being unable to take a leave of absence from work. More data on survivors’ pathways to help-seeking, particularly the reasons for accessing community resources versus campus services, and the types of supports most helpful to survivors.” **(Possibility Seeds (Courage to Act), Canadian Federation of Students (CFS), and Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA, participant)**

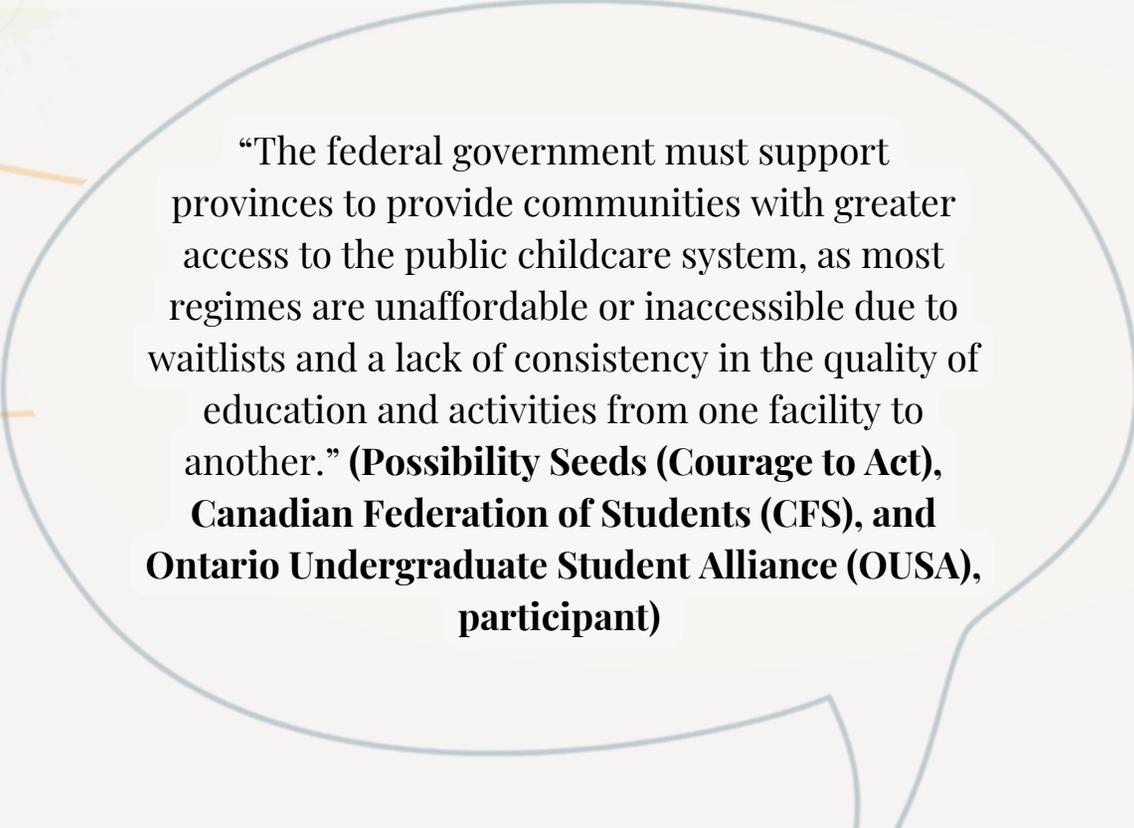
“Data needs to be disaggregated by race, Indigeneity, gender expression, ability, other socioeconomic measures. And in a way that the data is useful and can be found, retrieved, and utilized and correlated with other data sets for policy and funding decisions. Currently, the only data that captures DV stats locally, e.g., by county, region, is police-reported data which accounts for roughly a third of all DV situations. The accuracy depends on the coding of events by policing members, which is notoriously inconsistent, and then the information goes into the justice system data bank where it cannot be easily retrieved, analyzed, or correlated with any other data sets, if we even have any! The national general social survey is helpful, but not annual, not nuanced, correlated, or explained well.” **(YWCA Halifax, provider)**



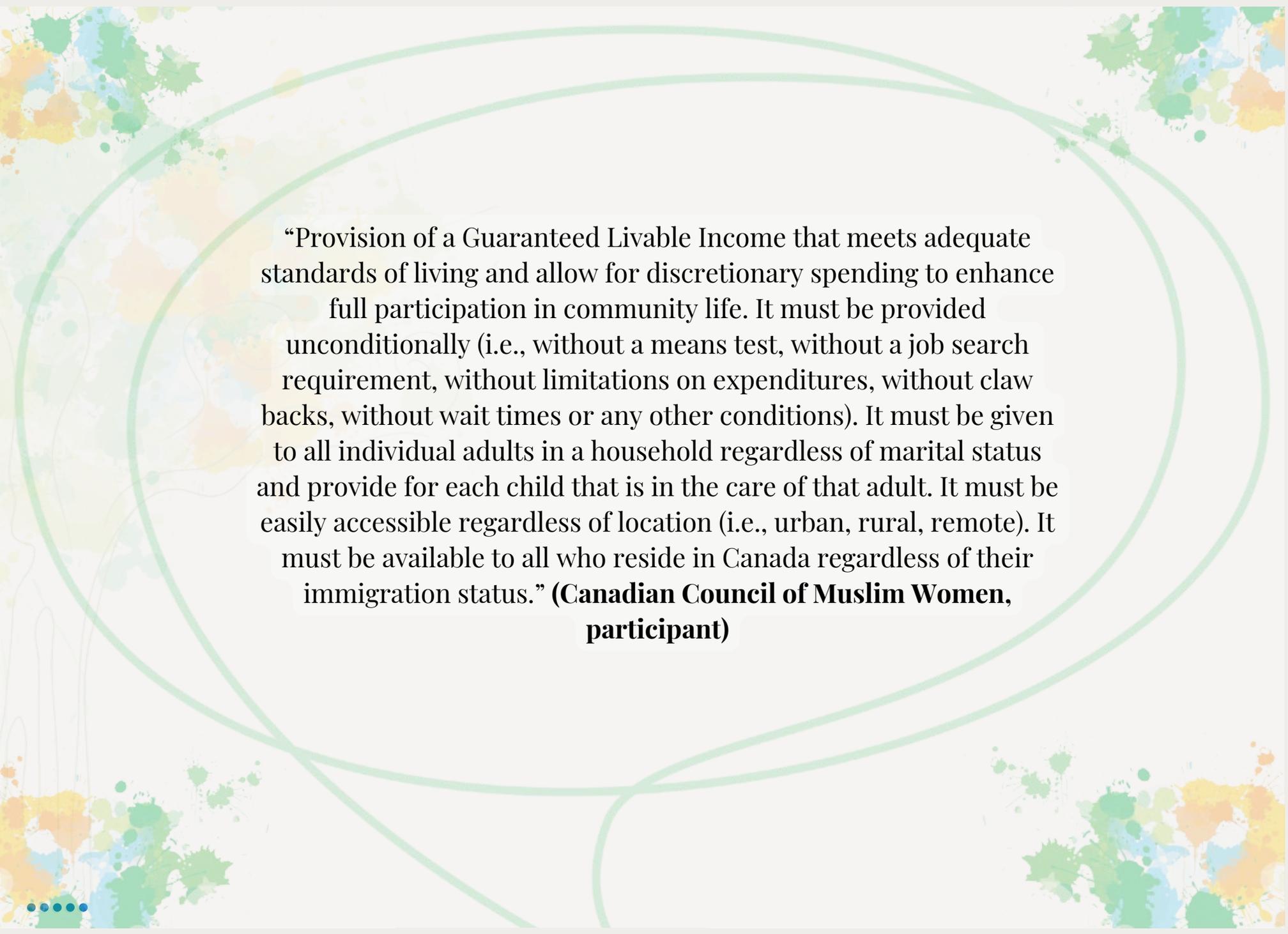
**Recommendation:** Make Bold Investments into Critical Social Infrastructure



“If you are leaving a relationship where he controlled all the money including your pay cheque, your bank account, then you have nothing to start with. You need the money it takes to be able to start over... women need the financial stability and security to be able to leave. Whatever income supports achieve that is what is needed. Emergency funds to help with damage deposits or any other part of moving out...startup costs, and income support to support healing at a level that doesn’t leave them starving.” **(Stop Abuse in Families (SAIF) Society, participant)**



“The federal government must support provinces to provide communities with greater access to the public childcare system, as most regimes are unaffordable or inaccessible due to waitlists and a lack of consistency in the quality of education and activities from one facility to another.” **(Possibility Seeds (Courage to Act), Canadian Federation of Students (CFS), and Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA), participant)**



“Provision of a Guaranteed Livable Income that meets adequate standards of living and allow for discretionary spending to enhance full participation in community life. It must be provided unconditionally (i.e., without a means test, without a job search requirement, without limitations on expenditures, without claw backs, without wait times or any other conditions). It must be given to all individual adults in a household regardless of marital status and provide for each child that is in the care of that adult. It must be easily accessible regardless of location (i.e., urban, rural, remote). It must be available to all who reside in Canada regardless of their immigration status.” **(Canadian Council of Muslim Women, participant)**

“We need things we don't often relate to GBV and trauma, including services like Universal Basic Income, families, abortion access, housing, good free transportation services and access to transit in more rural areas. These things aren't present now but since they aren't present, these things can force people to stay in unsafe situations.” **(The Enchanté Network, participant)**

“Workers who have experienced gender-based violence and harassment should be entitled to appropriate remedies. These remedies should be survivor-centered, which is to say that the affected worker should be the one to direct the type of remedies they are seeking.” **(Canadian Labour Congress(CLC), provider)**

“Now I have to choose between do I pay the bill or do I buy my daughter a pair of shoes? I couldn't go to work because I didn't have childcare and I couldn't pay for childcare because I didn't have work.” **(Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter, participant)**

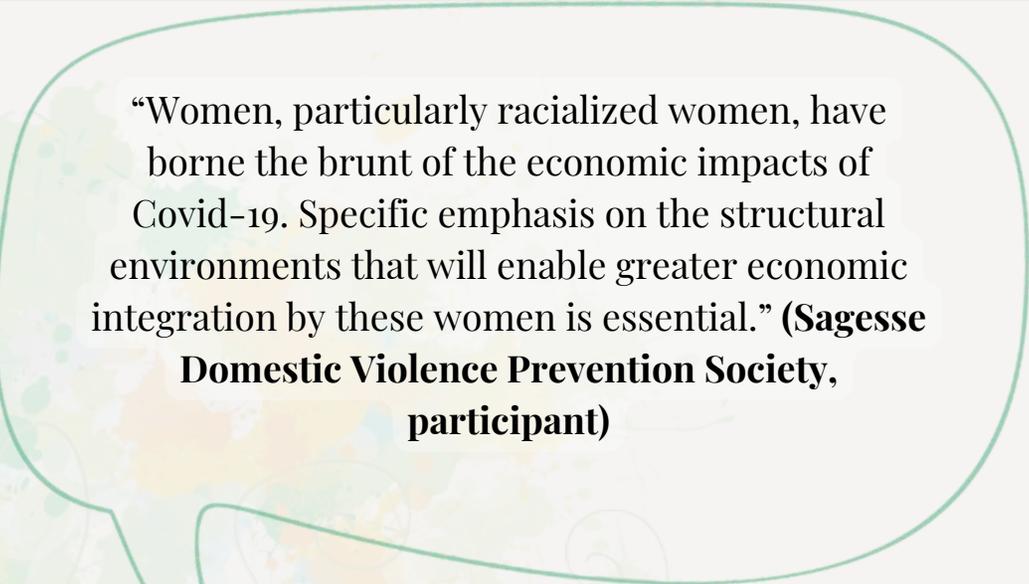
“Capacity to ensure that the “hierarchy of needs” are taken care of – survivors have housing, food, income, childcare and mental health & legal supports...A basic income program...Housing for all...Public transit for rural communities...Improved public transit for small municipalities...Universal childcare...shelters in rural areas” **(PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Centre, provider)**

“Industry should have a social safety plan when you come into a community. That should be automatically part of a workplan when they bid on any kind of job. Anywhere they have a significant impact on the community, that should be part of it. Just like reconciliation? Social safety!” **(BC Society of Transition Houses, participant)**

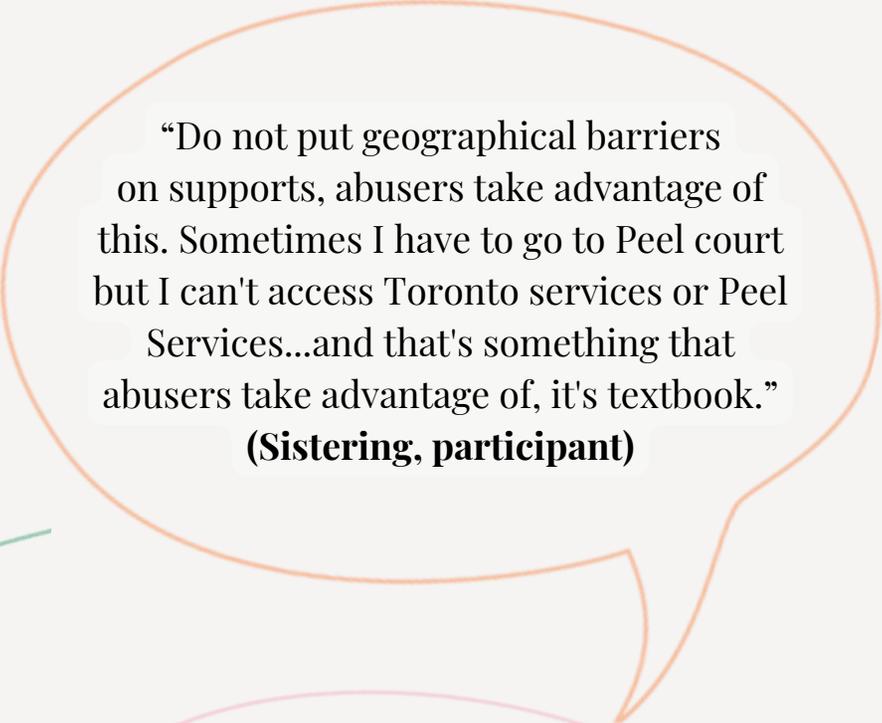
“Circles of Safety and/or support” is a promising practice that is used in a number of communities and sectors to support survivors when they leave abuse. An ability to expand this program and offer it more often and to more survivors.” **(PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Centre, provider)**

“Financial education and literacy for women whether they are immigrants or not. They don’t know how to pay bills and don’t know what to do if they leave an abusive home.” **(Sakeenah Homes, provider)**

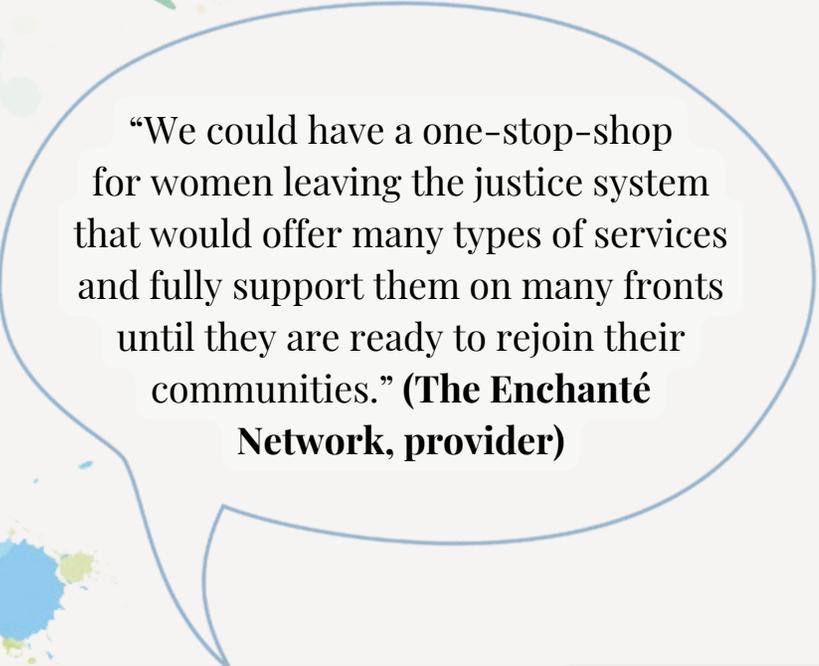
“Reverse the shelter system so that men who are behaving abusively in their homes are removed to receive counseling and support rather than uprooting the entire family.” **(YWCA Muskoka, participant)**



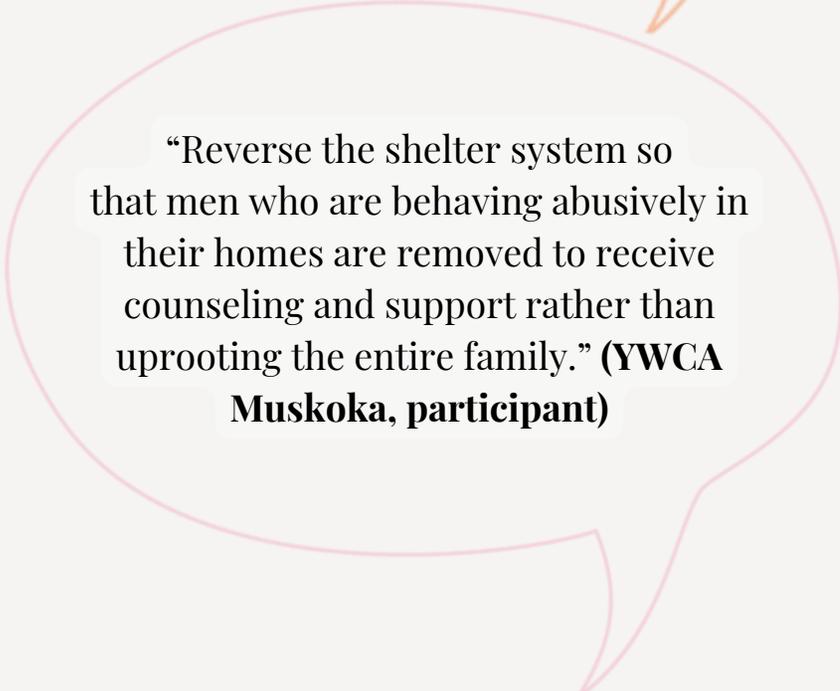
“Women, particularly racialized women, have borne the brunt of the economic impacts of Covid-19. Specific emphasis on the structural environments that will enable greater economic integration by these women is essential.” **(Sagesse Domestic Violence Prevention Society, participant)**



“Do not put geographical barriers on supports, abusers take advantage of this. Sometimes I have to go to Peel court but I can't access Toronto services or Peel Services...and that's something that abusers take advantage of, it's textbook.” **(Sistering, participant)**



“We could have a one-stop-shop for women leaving the justice system that would offer many types of services and fully support them on many fronts until they are ready to rejoin their communities.” **(The Enchanté Network, provider)**



“Reverse the shelter system so that men who are behaving abusively in their homes are removed to receive counseling and support rather than uprooting the entire family.” **(YWCA Muskoka, participant)**



“The wait lists for services are ridiculous. We need more services to cut down on the wait lists that can take up to a year or more. This would be so much more productive. For example, my son’s autism assessment took over one year to complete which has set my son back terribly. And now, rather than help me to care for him, I had to make one of the hardest decisions of my life. I had to place him with the Ministry so that he could get the care he needed. He is now being cared for in foster care. Why could they not pay me to care for my child. I feel that the system continues to push and test us to see where our breaking point is. ” **(Archway Society for Domestic Peace, participant)**

“A housing spectrum should include the following:  
affordable housing options lower than 80% average market rent  
unless it includes available and stackable benefits to offset the cost and  
policies that will adapt to changing family size; prioritization of safety for  
women and children fleeing violence within rent-geared-to-income programs;  
housing first programs that include housing finding services and intensive in-  
home and community supports as well as increased investments in municipal  
housing allowances and the Canadian-Ontario Housing Benefit...these housing  
options will also require a gender-based analysis of current  
legislative practices and policies that increase barriers such as family  
size, access to care, and neighborhoods of choice.” **(London Abused  
Women’s Shelter and London Housing Coalition Priority  
Working Group on Women’s Homelessness,  
participant)**



## Critical Reflections and Conclusion: Moving from Consultation to Meaningful Action

# Critical Reflections and Conclusion: Moving from Consultation to Meaningful Action

**Ending GBV is a large endeavor. It needs everyone working together: survivors, service providers, community grassroots organizations, social infrastructure agents, governments, and the broader public.** The community engagement sessions—coordinated over ten weeks amidst much pandemic-related uncertainty—that culminated in this report are proof that we can and do work together. Through this initiative, we are proud to provide insights that can provide guidance, inspire action and contribute to systemic change.

Our report highlighted the perspectives of survivors of gender-based violence and the civil society organizations that represent and support them.

While limited in scope and duration, the responses to the community engagement initiative summarized in this report provide a platform for action and a starting point for change. This work should be built on and engaged with at regular intervals to get as timely information as possible throughout the 10-year term of the National Action Plan. Furthermore, we must keep sight of the importance of coupling evidence-based data and policy with tangible action that is felt in and resonates with communities.

**Centering survivors means acknowledging the diverse and complex experiences and responses to GBV and the different needs and desires that emerge from it.**

# Critical Reflections and Conclusion: Moving from Consultation to Meaningful Action

**We especially need to center marginalized survivors—not exploiting their experiences by continuing to ask them to “prove” their stories but finding ways to allow them to meaningfully lead and engage their communities as they see fit and relevant for their healing.** While Black, Indigenous, racialized, 2SLGBTQQIA+ and other equity-deserving groups are statistically more vulnerable to GBV, they are also much less likely to report incidents due to systemic discriminations embedded in the justice system and service delivery. **What is meaningful for survivors of GBV will be directly relevant to preventing and responding to GBV in the lives of others.** A National Action Plan to end GBV requires having survivors at the table during its development, implementation, evaluation, and meaningfully engaged with every step of the way.

However, the weight of addressing and ending GBV cannot fall disproportionately on their shoulders. Survivors should see their feedback and contributions reflected in meaningful change and action undertaken by service providers, policy makers, governments, and the broader public.

Service Providers have long been engaged in conversation, advocacy, and action. Community efforts remain at the forefront, but our efforts alone are not sufficient to hold back the tidal wave of GBV as a systemic issue. Survivors and the sector that supports them deserve decisive action and support now. The healing, education, training, and advocacy of the anti-violence sector, community service providers, feminist movements and the women, girls, and gender diverse survivors we work with and for need sustained investment.

# Critical Reflections and Conclusion: Moving from Consultation to Meaningful Action

Through this dialogue, we hope to amplify and honour the recommendations of those closest to the issue of GBV and underscore what they have been saying for decades.

Some of the recommendations are simple: include us in all processes; let us heal our own communities in our own ways; utilize the information you have gathered from us instead of simply putting it on a shelf to collect dust; teach the history of Indigenous-settler relationships to foster understanding; involve us in the implementation and evaluation of anti-GBV efforts. Survivors need governments to build on the important work that has already been done to meaningfully move forward. **As a critical first step, governments at all levels must take action on the recommendations outlined in the National Inquiry Report on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and ratify international instruments that reflect global priorities.**

As we pursue post-pandemic response and recovery measures as well as think about what lessons we will take from this time, let one of the legacies be an unwavering commitment to a violence-free future. This commendable aspiration, grounded in our human rights obligations as a nation and to one another, must be shored up with concrete policies, measurable targets and adequate budgets.

To truly transform the cultures of violence we live in and the structures that enable constraints, we must break out of siloed ways of thinking and organizing against GBV and collectively devise and implement concrete strategies that are relevant across sectors, communities, and organizations. Ending gender-based violence must be everyone's concern in the immediate future and for generations to come. We look forward to continuing to work in solidarity to achieve this shared vision of a violence-free future for our collective safety and prosperity.



# Index

**[i]** Throughout this report and the broader anti-violence work of YWCA Canada, we conceive of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Violence against Women (VAW) as impacting all people, in particular cis women, trans women, and gender diverse people including Two-Spirit, trans, and non-binary people.

**[ii]** 2SLGBTQQIA+ is an acronym that stands for Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, and additional sexual orientations and gender identities. The use of the acronym is intended to affirm the many ways people choose to self-identity their gender identity and sexual orientation and an invitation to expansive understandings of sexuality, queerness, identity, rights, privilege, and colonialism.

**[iii]** Canadian Network of Women's Shelters and Transition Houses. (2013). The Case for a National Action Plan on Violence Against Women. Retrieved from: <https://endvaw.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/The-Case-for-a-National-Action-Plan-on-VAW.pdf>

**[iv]** Throughout this report and the broader anti-violence work of YWCA Canada, we recognize multiple and overlapping forms of GBV including, but not limited to, colonial violence, coercive control, systemic violence, economic violence and financial abuse, physical violence, psychological/emotional violence, technology-facilitated violence, intimate partner violence, familial violence, sexual violence, spiritual violence, workplace violence, transphobic and transmisogynistic violence, elder abuse, intergenerational violence, GBV against people with disabilities, GBV against sex workers and (im)migrants, human trafficking, femicide, and gendered violence outside of family, romantic or sexual relationships.

**[v]** Lateral violence, also known as horizontal violence, is violence that occurs or is perpetrated among or between members of historically and consistently oppressed or minoritized groups. This kind of violence is directed towards community members, peers, or individuals considered less powerful than themselves and stems from cultural oppression, colonialism and ongoing racism and discrimination.

- [vi]** Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). Retrieved from: <http://www.trc.ca/>
- [vii]** National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. (2019). Reclaiming Power and Place – Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Retrieved from: <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/>
- [viii]** Alimi, S., Abbas, J., & B. Hladik. (2020). The Impact of COVID-19 on Women living with Disabilities in Canada. DisAbled Women’s Network of Canada (DAWN).
- [ix]** UN Women. (2021) COVID-19 Priority Area: Gender-Based Violence. Retrieved from: [https://www.unwomen.org/en/hq-complex-page/covid-19-rebuilding-for-resilience/gender-based-violence?gclid=CjwKCAjwuqiiBhBtEiwATgvixD8idrKKJrZink1adDksdTheIRClraIIW6-B1ZYL6PSAjQki96GEaRoCqZMQAvD\\_BwE](https://www.unwomen.org/en/hq-complex-page/covid-19-rebuilding-for-resilience/gender-based-violence?gclid=CjwKCAjwuqiiBhBtEiwATgvixD8idrKKJrZink1adDksdTheIRClraIIW6-B1ZYL6PSAjQki96GEaRoCqZMQAvD_BwE)
- [x]** Trudell, A.L. & Whitmore, E. (2020). Pandemic meets Pandemic: Understanding the Impacts of COVID19 on Gender-Based Violence Services and Survivors in Canada. Ottawa & London, ON: Ending Violence Association of Canada & Anova.
- [xi]** Mass Casualty Commission. (2023). Turning The Tide Together. Final Report of the Mass Casualty Commission.
- [xii]** A public health approach to violence prevention aims to prevent or reduce a particular illness or social problem in a population by identifying causes, risk indicators and protective factors as well as testing interventions to prevent or reduce incidence and impact of the problem. This approach views GBV and the safety and wellbeing of populations as a broader public health issue and not only the purview of the criminal justice system.

**[xiii]** Clare’s Law, formally known as The Interpersonal Violence Disclosure Protocol Act or Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme, authorizes people to seek and police services to disclose certain risk-related information to a current or former intimate partner — or third party such as a parent — through a provincially-established process. This policy gives people the right to know if their current or ex-partner has any previous history of violence or abuse and enables Canadians to make informed decisions about their safety, and the safety of their intimate partner relationships.

**[xiv]** Keira’s Law or Bill C-233 is a 2023 federal and provincial legislation that signals a change in the way domestic violence will be treated by the family and criminal court system. It seeks to expand the training judges and justices of the peace receive on cases surrounding domestic violence, coercive control and the ability to consider risk factors when issuing decisions.

**[xv]** Restorative Justice refers to an approach to justice that sees crime as a violation of people and relationships, and therefore seeks to repair harm by providing an opportunity for those harmed and those who take responsibility for the harm to communicate about and address their needs after a crime has occurred. Restorative Justice practices encourage meaningful engagement and accountability, and provide opportunities for healing, reconciliation, and reintegration. A Transformative Justice response to violence, harm and abuse aims to transform the conditions that enabled the harm, at the same time as facilitating repair for the harm, by cultivating accountability, healing, resilience, and safety for all. Transformative Justice interventions seek to reduce harm and seldom rely on state institutions (e.g., police, prisons, foster care system).

**[xvi]** Brennan, S. (2011). *Violent Victimization of Aboriginal Women in the Canadian Provinces*, 2009. Ottawa, Statistics Canada.

**[xvii]** See Barker, J. (2008). Gender, sovereignty, rights: Native women's activism against social inequality and violence in Canada. *American Quarterly*, 60(2), 259-266 and Kuokkanen, R. (2008). Globalization as racialized, sexualized violence: The case of Indigenous women. *International feminist journal of politics*, 10(2), 216-233.

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**[xix]** Rotenberg. (2019). *Police-Reported Violent Crimes Against Young Women and Girls in Canada's Provincial North and Territories, 2017*. Statistics Canada.

**[xx]** Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada. (2016). *Strategic Plan for Inuit Violence Prevention and Healing*. Retrieved from: [https://www.pauktuutit.ca/wp-content/uploads/StrategicPlan\\_English.pdf](https://www.pauktuutit.ca/wp-content/uploads/StrategicPlan_English.pdf)

**[xxi]** Patel, R. (2020, April 20). Minister says COVID-19 is empowering domestic violence abusers as rates rise in parts of Canada. CBC News. Retrieved from: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/domestic-violence-rates-rising-due-to-covid19-1.55458513>

