



Mino'Ayaawag Ikwewag
All Women Doing Well

Acknowledgements

The Government of Manitoba extends its deepest gratitude to the Matriarch Circle, families and friends of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, 2Spirit, and gender-diverse relatives, advocates, helpers, healers, and leaders who contributed in part to the development of this strategic framework.

Your insights, dedication, and unwavering support to end violence have been instrumental in shaping Manitoba's approach, now and for years to come.

We would like to extend a kichi-miigwech to respected Anishinaabe Elder and Language Keeper, Katie Whitford from Sandy Bay Ojibway First Nation for gifting us with the name Mino'Ayaawag Ikwewag meaning "All women doing well" in Anishinaabemowin. Mino'Ayaawag encompasses the spirit and intent of this important work.





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Message from

The Honourable Nahanni Fontaine, Minister of Families, Minister responsible for Accessibility, Minister responsible for Women and Gender Equity

Sagkeeng Anishinabe First Nation

Over the past thirty years, Manitoba has borne some of the highest rates of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, 2Spirit and gender diverse relatives (MMIWG2S+) across Canada. My own community, Sagkeeng Anishinabe First Nation, carries the heavy burden of having the highest number of MMIWG2S+ cases among First Nations in Canada.

In recent years, the city of Winnipeg has tragically witnessed the emergence of two serial killers targeting Indigenous women. Beyond these known perpetrators, there remain countless unsolved cases, suggesting the unsettling possibility there may be more, or

that others who have committed these heinous acts continue to walk freely among us, posing an ongoing threat to the safety of Indigenous women, girls, 2Spirit, and gender-diverse relatives.

We have seen Indigenous women, girls, 2Spirit and gender-diverse relatives repeatedly dehumanized, blamed for the violence of the people who target them, and deliberately ignored by people in power. But Manitobans have rejected politics of hate and division, ushering in a new era of governance.

The historic election of Premier Wab Kinew, the first First Nations Premier of Manitoba and the



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appointment of Minister Bernadette Smith and I as the first First Nations women to serve in Manitoba's Cabinet, marked the dawn of this new era.

Twenty-nine years ago, I made a sacred commitment to dedicate my life to the protection of Indigenous women, girls, 2Spirit, and gender-diverse relatives. Today, Mino'Ayaawag Ikwewag stands as the culmination of that lifelong journey, shaped by the resilience of Matriarchs and the ongoing struggle for our collective reconciliation.

Mino'Ayaawag Ikwewag is more than just a strategy; it is the embodiment of our government's commitment

to prioritize the safety, protection, and empowerment of Indigenous women, girls, 2Spirit and gender-diverse relatives. It represents years of collective struggle toward our liberation and is our government's response to the ongoing need for justice, safety, and dignity for our Peoples and for *all Manitobans*.

Miigwech,

Honourable Nahanni Fontaine

Minister of Families

Minister responsible for Accessibility

Minister responsible for Women and Gender Equity

Sagkeeng Anishinabe First Nation



Message from

Cora Morgan, Special Advisor on Indigenous Women's Issues and Secretary to the MMIWG2S+ and Gender-Based Violence Committee of Cabinet Sagkeeng Anishinabe First Nation

I have spent my entire career working for Indigenous communities and have witnessed so much dispossession, hardship, hopelessness, trauma and tragedy, while always maintaining hope for relief and a good life. The time for change is now.

This founding document outlining our Province's Mino'Ayaawag Ikwewag "All Women Doing Well" Provincial Strategy is that change.

I continue to witness stories of resilience, acts of kindness, extraordinary gifts and talents, generosity beyond measure, and so much unconditional love among our Indigenous Nations, communities and families.

This beauty from our own Peoples gives us the strength to do the heavy lifting needed for change, actioning aspirations and motivating systemic change with the ultimate goal of creating a better life for First Nations, Métis and Inuit women, girls, 2Spirit and gender-diverse relatives.

It's an honour and inspiration to work for a government committed to prioritizing the empowerment and protection of Indigenous women, girls, 2Spirit and gender-diverse relatives.

I am grateful to receive direction from the multi-talented women and 2Spirit people who make up the

Matriarch Circle as they continue to provide guidance for the work we are undertaking together.

There is momentum building across Manitoba. The work of Mino'Ayaawag Ikwewag is setting the path to a brighter future for Indigenous women, girls, 2Spirit Peoples and gender-diverse relatives in our province.

Miigwech,

**Cora Morgan
Special Advisor on Indigenous
Women's Issues and Secretary to
the MMIWG2S+ and Gender-Based
Violence Committee of Cabinet.
Sagkeeng Anishinabe First Nation**

The Dream and Guiding Principles

Mino'Ayaawag Ikwewag is centred on a dream.

A dream where ALL women, girls, 2Spirit and gender-diverse relatives in Manitoba are empowered to live their lives authentically and fully; with opportunities for themselves and their families and, ultimately, to be free from violence.

This inaugural strategy commits to making this dream a reality. It is the culmination of tireless efforts from Indigenous Matriarchs, leaders, communities, allies and family members affected by the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, 2Spirit, and gender-diverse relatives.

It represents a sacred commitment to Indigenous women, girls, 2Spirit

and gender-diverse relatives decades in the making: built from countless rallies, vigils, memorials, and the mobilization of Matriarchs alongside the National Inquiry into MMIWG and the Final Report's 231 Calls for Justice.

Mino'Ayaawag Ikwewag is guided by the principle and inherent knowledge Indigenous women, girls, 2Spirit and gender-diverse relatives are more than just victims or survivors. They are powerful, resilient and sacred. Mino'Ayaawag Ikwewag directs all actions to address this crisis be based on the understanding and commitment that the safety and empowerment of Indigenous women, girls, 2Spirit

and gender-diverse relatives must be prioritized for all programs, initiatives, policies and legislation.

Most importantly, *Mino'Ayaawag Ikwewag* honours those lost too soon; the lives of Indigenous women, girls, 2Spirit and gender-diverse relatives that were stolen and murdered.

Mino'Ayaawag Ikwewag is also in honour of the families and survivors of MMIWG2S+ and their tireless pursuit of justice and recognition of their loved one(s).



Mino'Ayaawag Ikwewag All Women Doing Well

The Strategy Identifier was created to be in the shape of a butterfly, while incorporating Indigenous symbolism throughout the design. In Indigenous cultures, butterflies represent transformation, metamorphosis, beauty, balance, and grace.

In the wings, sage, cedar, crocus, seeds, vines, flowers, heart berry, and blueberries are shown, which hold great cultural significance. Sage and cedar are sacred medicines, the crocus that survives the harsh winters signals brighter days are ahead, blueberries signify well-being, and seeds, vines, flowers, and heart berry represents life cycles, reconciliation, and maintaining heartfelt relationships with family and community.

Also shown on the bottom of the wings is hair that turns into flowing water. Hair signifies cultural identity

and a sense of belonging while flowing water is considered sacred and vital to Indigenous livelihoods, spiritual practices, and traditional ways of living.

The center that holds the wings together, is a wild rose, dress with jingle cones, and ribbon skirt – representing survival, vitality, and healing, with the different bells of the jingle cone symbolizing 2Spirit and gender diverse relatives.

This Strategy Identifier is meant to pull strength and unity from our Indigenous roots and symbolizing the importance of coming together to create change for Indigenous women, 2Spirit and gender diverse relatives to provide safety and healing while dismantling fear and violence.



Butterflies:
Transformation,
metamorphosis,
beauty,
and grace.



**Seeds, Vines, Flowers,
Heart Berry:**
Representing life cycle
and generations. The
heart berry teaches
forgiveness and peace
also reminds us of
reconciliation and how
to maintain heartfelt
relationships in our
families and communities.



Blueberries:
Recognized for their
spiritual symbolism
and cultural
importance, often
associated with
wellbeing.



Sage:
One of the four
sacred medicines.
Releases with
troubles the mind
and removes
negative energy.



Cedar:
One of the four
sacred medicines.
The tree of life.



Crocus:
One of the first
plants to emerge,
after surviving the
harshest winter
conditions. A sign
of hope for warmer,
brighter days
ahead.



Long Hair:
Represents a strong
cultural identity.
Promotes self-
esteem, self-
respect, and a good
sense of belonging.



Water:
A sacred resource
to communities.
Indigenous
people have relied
on water for their
livelihood, spiritual
practices, and
traditional knowledge
for generations.



Wild Rose:
A symbol of life,
that represents
survival and
vitality, often
valued for its
healing properties
as traditional
medicine.



Jingle Cones:
The Jingle Dress
Dance was first
considered a
healing dance. The
different coloured
cones symbolize
2SLGBTQIA+ people.



Who?

Governments
 - Manitoba
 - Canada
 City Councils
 Municipalities
 First Nations
 Rightsholders
 Indigenous
 Regional
 Organizations
 Indigenous
 Non-Profit
 Organizations
 Elders &
 Knowledge
 Keepers
 Citizens
 Educators
 Parents
 Grandparents
 Siblings
 Relatives
 Friends

Short-term

Capacity Building for
 organizations
 Bring sectors together
 Safe transportation
 Improve access to culture,
 ceremonies and traditional
 healing opportunities
 Re-integration mentorship
 for youth exiting incarceration
 Create alternatives to
 Wellness checks
 Improving access and cultural
 safety at hospitals, nursing
 stations, and healthcare
 centres
 Mentorship resources and
 education to encourage
 more Indigenous youth and
 adults into leadership positions
 Curriculum development
 on self-esteem, mental health,
 safety and identity
 Increased public education
 to improve Indigenous and
 newcomer relations

Long-term

Safety for children
 & youth in care
*physical, mental, emotional
 & spiritual*
 Physical spaces for
 support, healing, and
 urgent safety right when
 it's needed
 More language at an
 earlier age
revitalization & preservation
 Increase volume and quality
 of supports for youth and
 adults in crisis beyond police
 Supports for leaving
 relationships safely
legal, housing, emotional support, etc.
 Shelters just for women and
 gender diverse people
 Improved access to land-
 based learning & care
*taking care of what takes care
 of us*

Indicators

More Indigenous women
 girls & 2Spirited as
LEADERS & MENTORS
 Safe neighbourhoods where
 families are **THRIVING**
 Safety to live authentically
self & community acceptance
 Men & boys empowered as **allies
 & protectors**
 No shame in asking for help
 knowing it will be there
 Culture, language and identity
 becoming part of every day
 Sectors working together
 on prevention with community
 Report knowledge gathered
 from organization used to continue
 working upstream
 Growing opportunities for educational
 and economic growth and development
 Always feeling **SEEN, HEARD,
 LOVED and RESPECTED.**





Artwork by Jennifer Chartrand, Special Assistant to Minister Fontaine, Member of Sandy Bay Ojibway First Nation

Critical Background in Manitoba

Manitoba is often referred to as “ground zero” for MMIWG2S+. The legacy and systemic and structural violence embedded by colonialism and patriarchal practices continues to be experienced and felt deeply by communities across Manitoba. These inherently violent systems and structures directly impact the safety and well-being of Indigenous women, girls, 2Spirit and gender-diverse relatives resulting in numerous harmful and negative outcomes. It is important to note that these negative outcomes are in no way a reflection of Indigenous women, girls, 2Spirit and gender-diverse relatives’ individual and communal strength, courage, tenacity, accomplishments and successes.

Data from Statistics Canada indicates that Indigenous women, girls, 2Spirit and gender-diverse relatives experience disproportionately higher rates of violence in all categories including self-reported sexual assault, intimate partner violence (IPV), and domestic homicide. In addition, research from the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth indicates exposure of children to IPV is associated with increased mental health issues, less time spent at school, decreased rates of graduation and increased conflict with the law.

In Manitoba, 81 per cent of children exposed to IPV are Indigenous.

There is also a correlation between poverty and violence. The 2021 Census indicates individuals living in low-income households are more likely to experience various forms of violence and conflict with the law as a result of multiple socio-economic factors (e.g. stress, limited access to supports, etc.).

The 2021 “State of Homelessness in Canada” report by the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, indicated that approximately 45 per cent of unsheltered citizens in Manitoba are Indigenous, with a significant portion of the group identifying as women. Further, a 2022 report from the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth noted Indigenous youth exiting the child



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welfare system (of which they make up over 90 per cent) often face higher rates of homelessness and housing instability. The trend is attributed to systemic issues including a lack of supportive transition services and insufficient resources, alongside the historical and ongoing impacts of colonialism.

Indigenous women, girls, 2Spirit and gender-diverse relatives remain overrepresented within the criminal justice system as a result of housing insecurity, homelessness, and poverty. The 2020 "State of Women's Housing Need and Homelessness in Canada" literature review noted socioeconomic factors such as poverty, homelessness, addictions and mental health

challenges impacting Indigenous women, girls, 2Spirit and gender-diverse relatives are deeply rooted in intergenerational trauma.

Using an intersectional lens, it's clear intersecting identifies further exacerbate these issues, all of which contribute to a higher risk of experiencing violence. As a result, 2Spirit and gender diverse relatives living in rural and remote settings, and persons with disabilities experience IPV, homelessness, and poverty at exponentially higher rates.

The Path: Mino'Ayaawag Ikwewag

Mino'Ayaawag Ikwewag was developed with Manitoba women of all gender identities, ethnicities, and backgrounds in mind. It recognizes healing, empowerment and safety are not just a need for Indigenous women, 2Spirit and gender-diverse relatives, but, rather, for all women, girls and gender-diverse citizens. All Manitoba women, girls, 2Spirit are deserving of well-being and safety.

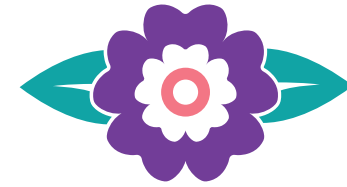
In March 2024, Minister Fontaine announced the creation of Manitoba's first Matriarch Circle to help guide the sacred work of protecting and empowering Indigenous women, girls, 2Spirit and gender-diverse relatives. The Matriarch Circle is comprised of a diverse group of accomplished Afro-Indigenous, Anishinaabe, Anishinew, Cree, Dakota, Dene, Inuit and Métis women, youth and gender-diverse relatives. They are knowledge keepers, authors, artists, actors, athletes and storytellers with experience in justice, health and social services. These Matriarchs bring lifetimes of expertise gained through years of practice and advocacy.

The Matriarch Circle was integral to the development of Mino'Ayaawag Ikwewag. Their vision for safety

and well-being is grounded in traditional teachings, factoring in four key areas of life: physical (body), mental (mind), emotional (heart), and spiritual (spirit). Mino'Ayaawag Ikwewag's ten Pillars were developed based on this vision and these teachings. Mino'Ayaawag Ikwewag's Pillars centre access to culture, economic development, education, food security, health services, healthy communities, housing, justice and safety, transportation and matriarchal leadership.

Together, these pillars form the basis of Manitoba's strategy for addressing the national crisis of MMIWG2S+. Addressing these critical issues is also foundational to achieving the dream of Mino'Ayaawag Ikwewag.

The specific mechanisms and processes required in this work can only be accomplished with continued conversation and collaboration. The Manitoba government is committed to this process and invites all allies, partners and citizens to feel empowered to support Indigenous women, girls, 2Spirit and gender-diverse relatives in reaching their dreams through this strategy.



Pillars on The Path

The pillars outlined in this strategy have long been identified by advocates, family members, and survivors of violence in various discussions, engagements, and forums as critical areas needing urgent attention to uplift and protect Indigenous women, girls, 2Spirit, and gender-diverse relatives.

Mino'Ayaawag Ikwewag calls for immediate action, recognizing creating lasting change requires consistent efforts, adequate resources, and established political will.

This strategy covers the period from 2024 to 2028, focusing on short-term actions that will lead to long-term solutions.



PILLAR 1:
Access to Culture

For Indigenous women, girls, 2Spirit, and gender-diverse relatives to thrive, meaningful access to culture is crucial in building resilience, health, wellness, and empowerment. Culture is central to achieving their dreams and goals.

Whether living in urban, rural, or Northern communities, Indigenous women, girls, 2Spirit, and gender-diverse relatives deserve to have meaningful access to cultural teachings and activities, which are vital for healing and affirming their identities as strong, resilient, and powerful individuals. The Manitoba government will prioritize enhancing access to land-based learning opportunities, ceremonies, Knowledge Keepers, and Elders. These programs, initiatives, and policies are designed to prevent the erosion of Indigenous cultural identity, language, and knowledge systems.

PILLAR 2:
Economic Development

When Indigenous Peoples are supported both culturally and safely in their workplaces—whether in small business, trades, academia, healthcare, essential services, entrepreneurship, or public/private senior leadership positions — they thrive and make significant contributions to these sectors.

The Manitoba government is committed to increasing opportunities for economic freedom for Indigenous women, girls, 2Spirit, and gender-diverse relatives through tailored programs and policies.

Financial freedom goes beyond earning a paycheck; it's about having control over one's life and future. The liberation and empowerment of Indigenous women are inextricably linked to their participation in economic development and the achievement of financial independence.

PILLAR 3: Education

Indigenous women, girls, 2Spirit, and gender-diverse relatives have the right to access quality education, regardless of where they live in Manitoba. Indigenous Peoples are breaking barriers in the education system, becoming doctors, nurses, teachers, engineers, lawyers, authors, and more, paving the way for future generations.

Cultural safety and connection to traditional languages, customs, and knowledge systems are essential to their success in learning environments. The Manitoba government will increase educational opportunities to ensure Indigenous women, girls, 2Spirit, and gender-diverse relatives thrive on their educational journeys.

PILLAR 4: Food Security

Food security is vital to the well-being of Indigenous women, girls, 2Spirit, and gender-diverse relatives. Access to cultural medicines, traditional foods, Indigenous harvesting and hunting practices, and agricultural participation must be protected and promoted to ensure their healthy development.

The Manitoba government will work collaboratively with all partners to empower Indigenous women, girls, 2Spirit, and gender-diverse relatives in food security initiatives supporting themselves and their communities.

PILLAR 5: Health Services

Mino'Ayaawag Ikwewag commits to enhancing the accessibility, responsiveness, and cultural relevance of health services for Indigenous women, girls, 2Spirit, and gender-diverse relatives across Manitoba. To improve health outcomes, healthcare services must prioritize safety and cultural competence, whether addressing routine health needs or life's unexpected challenges.

PILLAR 7: Housing

Indigenous women, girls, 2Spirit, and gender-diverse relatives deserve stable, safe, and accessible housing across Manitoba. This includes homeownership, affordable rentals, family-sized homes, safe shelters, and transitional housing. Economic independence is a crucial protective factor that promotes wellness and future prosperity.

The Manitoba government will collaborate with partners to ensure housing initiatives meet the needs of Indigenous women, girls, 2Spirit, and gender-diverse relatives.

PILLAR 6: Healthy Communities

Indigenous women, girls, 2Spirit, and gender-diverse relatives deserve safe and healthy communities. Cultural teachings, family reunification, youth access to sports, capacity-building for Indigenous non-profits, and ensuring safety for those in abusive relationships all contribute to fostering healthy communities. This includes a systemic shift within Child and Family Services recognizing the strength of Indigenous women, girls, 2Spirit, and gender-diverse relatives.

Moreover, healthy communities empower men and boys to engage in ending violence against these groups and promote positive role models.

PILLAR 8: Justice and Safety

Indigenous women, girls, 2Spirit, and gender-diverse relatives are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system. This strategy supports justice reform by increasing support for victims, improving access to policies and programs, and enhancing training on the impacts of residential schools, misogyny, racism, and patriarchal systems.

Culturally responsive supports must be available throughout the justice process, including during the reintegration and exiting of systems. The protection and empowerment of Indigenous women, girls, 2Spirit, and gender-diverse relatives must be central in every aspect of justice reform.

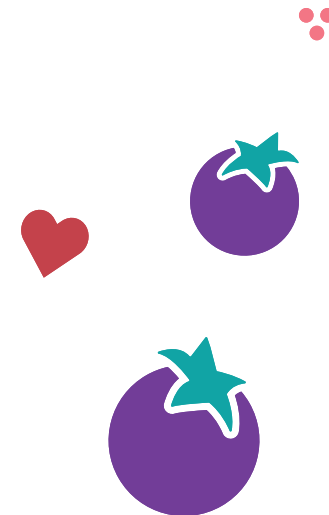
PILLAR 9: Transportation

Indigenous women, girls, 2Spirit, and gender-diverse relatives rely on public and private transportation for their daily needs. Manitoba's transportation systems must be safe and accessible, including bus shelters, ride-shares, and taxis. Rural, northern, and remote transportation options require special attention to ensure the safety and protection of Indigenous women, girls, 2Spirit, and gender-diverse relatives.

PILLAR 10: Matriarchal Leadership

The leadership of Indigenous Matriarchs has always been essential to the health and well-being of Indigenous families and communities. This strategy emphasizes the need to empower and restore the role of Matriarchs, enhancing opportunities for visibility and recognition of their contributions.

Indigenous women, girls, 2Spirit, and gender-diverse relatives deserve access to Matriarchal guidance, ensuring positive role models and shared stories. Matriarchs play a key role in preserving and celebrating cultural traditions and addressing lateral violence that undermines these achievements.





Conclusion

Mino'Ayaawag Ikwewag, envisions a future where Indigenous women, girls, 2Spirit, and gender-diverse relatives in Manitoba are safe, empowered, and able to live fulfilled lives, rich with opportunities for themselves and their families.

Mino'Ayaawag Ikwewag is distinct from past strategies, embracing Indigenous ways of being, knowing, and learning. It takes a holistic approach to the experiences, strengths, teachings, cultures, and traditions of Indigenous women, girls, 2Spirit, and gender-diverse relatives.

It recognizes the years of hard and heart-felt work by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Manitobans to drive awareness and transformational change.

Mino'Ayaawag Ikwewag ensures community voices are heard and centered within government policy, with actions evolving to respond to community needs and priorities.

Mino'Ayaawag Ikwewag embodies the belief that when Indigenous women, girls, 2Spirit, and gender-diverse relatives thrive, all Manitobans benefit.

