



# *Indigenous Women's Healing Centre*

## Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the 2019 Budget

Submitted by:  
Annetta Armstrong  
Executive Director  
Indigenous Women's Healing Centre  
105 Aikins Street  
Winnipeg Manitoba, R2W 4E6  
[www.iwhc.ca](http://www.iwhc.ca)





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## **Recommendation 1:**

The Government of Canada should continue to support the MMIWG inquest.

## **Recommendation 2:**

As cited in The Calls to Action the Government of Canada should ensure adequate resources for Indigenous families; with special emphasis on working with the parents to keep children out of care; and if necessary ensure that indigenous children are placed in culturally appropriate environments.

## **Recommendation 3:**

Ensure that all Federal funding agreements to non-profit organizations, particularly ones working with women, pay no less than a living wage and consider providing competitive wages. This will promote staff stability and better programming.

## **Recommendation 4:**

As cited in the Calls to Action the Government of Canada should ensure that Indigenous Healing Centres be a priority in housing Indigenous offenders.

## **Recommendation 5:**

The Government of Canada should immediately expand resources to housing first models with priority given to meet the special needs of women who are homeless.

## **Recommendation 6:**

Ensure that the Government of Canada partners with 100 women centres across the country to establish social enterprises so that marginalized women can have access to employment and income.





# Indigenous Women's Healing Centre

## Introduction

When it comes to strengthening families the Indigenous Women's Healing Centre (formerly the Native Women's Transition Centre) has taken a leadership role. Since 1979, IWHC has worked to support and strengthen Indigenous women and mothers on their journey of healing and recovery from the impacts of colonialism, poverty, addictions, intergenerational trauma and institutionalization.

Since opening our doors we have offered a safe place to live for thousands of women and their children. All three sites encourage women to return to their cultural roots to meet life's challenges, build on personal gifts and strengths and undergo healing and transformation by learning together as women. Respecting Traditional ways of being and deepening personal identity will always be at the heart of the Centre's philosophy.

IWHC operates three (3) residential facilities for women, all with a different focus and support system. *North Star Lodge* is our long term transitional housing with a full schedule of in-house programs for all the residents. *Memengwaa Place* is a second stage apartment building for women who have had their children returned from the Child and Family System and who require additional supports before returning to the community. *Eagle Women's Lodge* is a home designed to house women who have been institutionalized through the justice and correctional systems.





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## **Context**

### **MMIWG**

In the 2014, Royal Canadian Mounted Police report titled “Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women: A National Operational Overview” it was reported that in Canada between 1980 and 2012, Indigenous women made up 4% of the population but 16% of all female murder victims. When a woman is a target for violence because of her gender or because of her Indigenous identity, her fundamental rights have been abused and violated. The social and economic marginalization of Indigenous women has resulted in a disproportionate number experiencing poverty, homelessness, victimization and in some cases criminalization.

### **Families**

Each child in care cost governments \$80,000 per year. Indigenous non-profits have successfully piloted family reunification programs that cost \$20,000 per child (one time)

### **Living Wages**

The living wage in Winnipeg in 2017 was \$14.54/ hour. This is the wage necessary for a worker to have a basic standard of living. Many in the non-profit sector work for low wages with little benefits and no pension. Adequate, decent wages should be built into funding agreements for those who work in the non-profit sector funded by the federal government. Multi-year agreements provide more certainty for non-profits to retain workers and reduce costly-turn over. Our workers really care about our participants. It takes a long time to build relationships and trust. If pay is not adequate then we can lose valuable members of our staff, which needlessly undermines program outcomes.

[http://www.livingwagecanada.ca/files/5915/0115/8552/CCPA-MB\\_Living\\_Wage\\_2017\\_final.pdf](http://www.livingwagecanada.ca/files/5915/0115/8552/CCPA-MB_Living_Wage_2017_final.pdf)





# Indigenous Women's Healing Centre

## Indigenous Women in Prison

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015) identified many 'calls to action' related to improving the delivery of services and supports to Indigenous offenders:

- We call upon the federal government to eliminate barriers to the creation of additional Aboriginal Healing Lodges within the federal correctional system.
- We call upon the provincial, federal and territorial governments to work with Aboriginal communities to provide culturally relevant services to inmates on issues such as substance abuse, family and domestic violence and overcoming the experience of being sexually abused.
- We call upon the federal government to provide more supports for Aboriginal programming in halfway houses and parole services.
- We call upon the provincial, federal and territorial governments to commit to eliminating the overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in custody over the next decade and to issue detailed annual reports that monitor and evaluate progress in doing so.
- We call upon the provincial, federal, territorial and Aboriginal governments to develop culturally appropriate parenting programs for Aboriginal families.

Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) research indicates that participation in culturally specific programs and interventions, preferably delivered by Indigenous people, is a major factor contributing to Indigenous offenders' success upon release. Indigenous offenders released from Healing Lodges were more likely to successfully complete their supervision (78 percent) than those released from other minimum-security institutions (63 percent). *The 2016 Fall Report from the Office of the Auditor General of Canada: "Preparing Indigenous Offenders for Release – Correctional Service of Canada"*

A "tough on crime" strategy does not make women safer. Lack of access to programs impacts recidivism and participant's abilities to meet parole.

<https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/commentary/fast-facts-tough-crime-strategy-has-not-made-our-communities-safer>

Research by University of Manitoba criminologist Elizabeth Comack finds that women are incarcerated due to traumas and programs must support women to deal with the root causes of trauma and pain <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/commentary/fast-facts-why-pain-women-manitoba-jails>





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## Women's homelessness

80% of homeless women in Winnipeg identify as Indigenous. (The Winnipeg Street Census 2015: Final Report. Winnipeg: Social Planning Council of Winnipeg.) The overrepresentation of Indigenous women living in poverty and homelessness is related to the lack of economic options, inter-generational trauma and the need for social supports. One of the main pathways into homelessness among women that emerged in the research is through gaps and barriers within or between systems that women are involved with, including Employment and Income Assistance, Child and Family Service and the Justice System. This vulnerability has left women in high risk and unsafe situations, subject to exploitation, child apprehension, substance abuse, in conflict with the law and also manifested in the prevalence of violence against Indigenous women and girls. *Finding Her Home – Gender Based Analysis of the Homelessness Crisis in Winnipeg - Jenna Drabbe and Sadie McInnes (March 2017)*

The new federal housing plan commits new money to create social and affordable housing. Supports are needed to be sure that this housing is built for those who need it most. Service providers are not experts in developing housing and expertise is needed to help plan, develop, build and finance needed, culturally-relevant housing for vulnerable women.

## Social Enterprise

Social enterprises fill an important gap in the economy for those struggling to enter the workforce. There is a larger role for the federal government here. In Manitoba, the housing department has seen the value of investing in social enterprises through funding training and procuring housing retrofit services. This in combination with financing from the Manitoba Hydro Pay As You Save (PAYS) program is producing great results. For instance, 194 people are employed in the six social enterprises involved in this study. More support and social procurement for social enterprise would help create decent jobs for those with barriers to employment.

<https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/creating-pride-through-decent-work>