



Centre to End All  
Sexual Exploitation

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## **Standing Committee on the Status of Women (FEWO)**

### **Study on Resource Development and Violence Against Indigenous Women and Girls**

CEASE: Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation for 25 years is a community-based organization responding to commercial sexual exploitation, sex trafficking and violence against girls and women, many of whom are Indigenous.

Edmonton is known as a gateway to the North and the North is known for resource extraction industries including oil, gas and coal. There is also significant logging industry activity, often adjacent to resource extraction industries. All of these industries impact every aspect of life of First Nations and Metis communities. While these communities strive to create positive socio-economic outcomes by engaging with the resource development companies, there are negative impacts. I will focus my comments on migration from communities near resource development industries and the violence Indigenous women and girls face when they leave for towns and cities.

A key vulnerability factor is transportation. There are many communities where there is no, or very limited, access to buses. Hitching a ride puts youth and women at risk of male drivers who may demand sexual services in exchange. When they are dropped off in a nearby town or city, they encounter more risks.

Over 70% of Edmonton's Indigenous population originate from other communities<sup>1</sup>. The 2016 Census identifies that Indigenous people comprise 5.5% of the population in the City. The Indigenous population of central Edmonton neighbourhoods, where I live, range from 10% – 17.5%. These neighbourhoods are often where Indigenous youth and adults migrate first and where they are preyed upon by sex trade exploiters, traffickers, gangs and drug trade profiteers.

While Industry work camps are able to establish codes of conduct for workers and contractors on site, there is little control when they leave the camps and travel to near-by towns and cities. This demand by males for access to female bodies fuels the sex trade, especially when women have few economic options. Where there is a demand, there are also those who see a business opportunity to traffic in human beings.

At least 44 sexually exploited women, including transgender and two spirit persons, were murdered in the Edmonton area in the past 39 years. Many were last seen in these central communities. Then their bodies were found in fields outside the city. Over 52% were identified as Indigenous, which shows the over-representation of Indigenous girls and women exploited through the sex trade. Only 11 of these murders have been solved.

For those who survive, they endure the harsh reality of the long-term physical and mental health impact of sexual violence. When compounded with poverty, precarious housing, racism and intergenerational

trauma, many Indigenous girls and women live the majority of their lives in these conditions of vulnerability. This needs to change.

In conclusion, Resource Industries must continue to work with Indigenous and Metis communities on community plans to decrease violence and sexual exploitation and increase safety and well-being for Indigenous girls and women.

They can expand their codes of conduct for workers and contractors to include training on sexual violence, commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking, such as Enbridge has done.

They can fund community safety initiatives, employment training, bursaries and financial literacy programs, both on Nations and Metis Communities and in towns and cities.

They can develop wellness programs for the male workforce and focus on positive masculinity, healthy relationships and healthy coping strategies to deal with the unusual workplace stressors required in the Resource Industry.

Example: Enbridge's statement on human trafficking. On May 4, 2022, Enbridge staff throughout North America received training from an Indigenous woman from Alberta.

“Enbridge has zero tolerance for all illegal and exploitive behavior. We can confirm that two individuals who formerly worked for our contractor were arrested and charged in a human trafficking sting in Itasca County, MN. Such behaviors from anyone associated with this project will not be tolerated and are immediate grounds for dismissal. Both individuals were immediately terminated upon learning of their arrests.

Pursuant to the project’s route permit, Enbridge developed and implemented a Human Trafficking Prevention Plan in cooperation with several Tribal and state entities. In addition to requiring that all workers receive training prior to beginning work on the project, the plan also included development of an awareness campaign called Your Call Minnesota ([yourcallmn.org](http://yourcallmn.org)). We have been working together with contractors and our construction teams to make certain our standards and expectations are clear. Workers are required to act consistently with our policies and the law. Enbridge will continue to work with the state, Tribes and our contractors on actions to combat trafficking in our society. We support all efforts by law enforcement to arrest perpetrators as well as the prosecution of anyone participating in trafficking to the maximum extent of the law.”  
Feb. 23, 2021

<http://www.enbridgeus.com/projects-and-infrastructure/public-awareness/line-3-newsroom/enbridge-statement-on-human-trafficking>

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<sup>i</sup> <https://bentarrow.ca/newintown/>

## Helpful Resources

1. Indigenous Communities and Industrial Camps: Promoting Healthy Communities in Settings of Industrial Change

[https://firelight.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Firelight-work-camps-Feb-8-2017\\_FINAL.pdf](https://firelight.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Firelight-work-camps-Feb-8-2017_FINAL.pdf)

2. A Literature Synthesis Report on the Impacts of Resource Extraction for Indigenous Women

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<https://www.criaw-icref.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Impacts-of-Resource-Extraction-for-Indigenous-Women.pdf>

3. *What Was Shared*: Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Initiative: Final Report

<https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/310f9d6f-d76d-4866-9fb7-7e9096cc000e/resource/3d939ef0-62bb-4491-8afe-b82a3c603f3c/download/jsg-mmiw-final-report-what-was-shared.pdf>

4. Moose Hide Campaign

<https://moosehidecampaign.ca/get-involved/moose-hide-campaign-day/event-2022>

These are a few Edmonton examples that offer Indigenous women a chance to heal and create improved futures for themselves and their families:

#### **Community Initiatives:**

- 1) Investing in education: CEASE Bursaries<sup>i</sup>  
AWINITA Bursary: CEASE supports Indigenous women pursuing education through an endowment created by an author who was troubled by “the inequality that Indigenous women face, and the impact of the oil sands on their traditional territories.

<https://www.ecfoundation.org/blog/awinita-fund/>

Rachel’s HOPE Bursary at NorQuest College, named for a 19 year old woman murdered in 2004.

- 2) EMPOWER U: Financial Literacy and Matched Savings Program. CEASE and <https://www.myunitedway.ca/empoweru/>
- 3) Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society: “New in Town” support; Community Outreach Transit Team; and employment and family support programs. <https://bentarrow.ca/>
- 4) Women Building Futures: Training programs for women to work in the trades and resource industries. <https://womenbuildingfutures.ca/>

#### **Government Initiatives:**

**City of Edmonton** On April 6, 2022, City Council approved an implementation plan to improve safety and well-being for Indigenous people, based upon the MMIWG Report.<sup>i</sup>

<https://www.albertanativenews.com/edmonton-city-council-hears-mmiw-call-to-action/>

<https://edmontonjournal.com/news/local-news/edmonton-indigenous-ombudsperson-office-mmiwg-action-plan>

**Province of Alberta:** Family Information Liaison Unit to support families of Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls. <sup>i</sup>