

Summary Report: Resource for Indigenous Survivors of Human Trafficking

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Prepared for – METRAC: Action on Violence

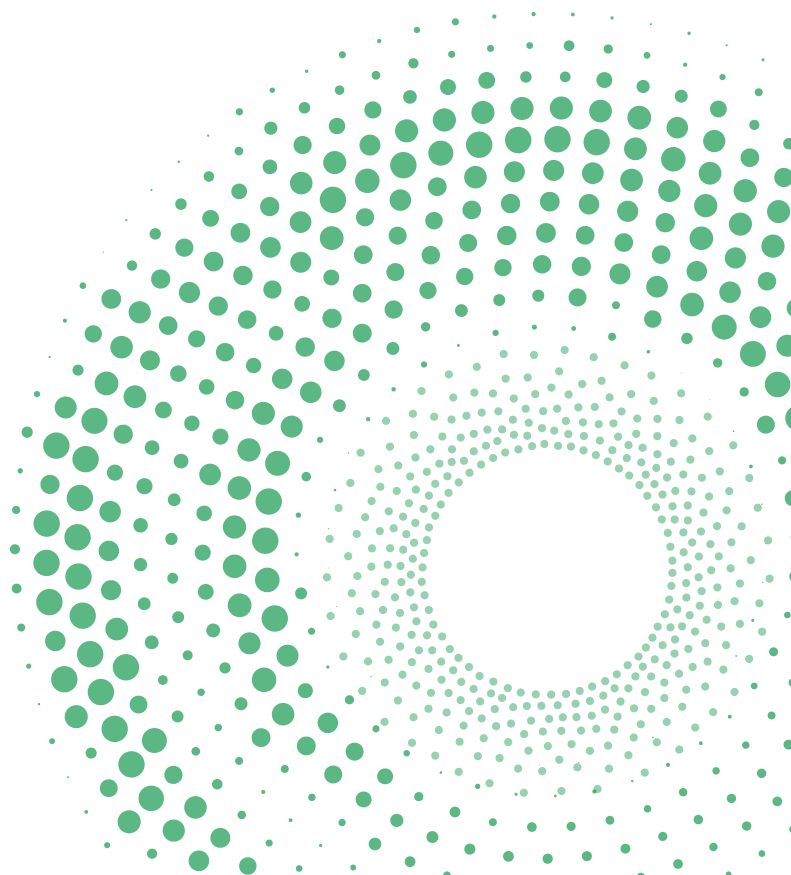
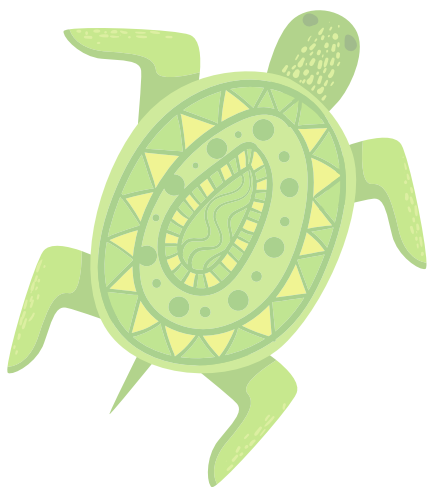


I. Summary of Project

Beddome and Longclaws Law Corporation (BLLC) is a law firm located at the Swan Lake First Nation in Headingley, Manitoba. The firm's primary focus is serving Indigenous Governments, tribal organizations, businesses, and Indigenous families and people with their legal needs. Three of our four team members are Indigenous.

METRAC is a non-profit organization located in Toronto and their goal is to end violence against women and youth. Part of the organization's work is to produce and provide free legal information for vulnerable members of the community.

BLLC and METRAC in partnership, are working on a project to produce a legal resource booklet with information specific for Indigenous women or people who identify as and who are victims/survivors of trafficking. The purpose of the resource is to provide information that is beneficial to the community, such as what trafficking is and what can someone do if they are being trafficked, as well as highlight supports and services victims/survivors can access to help them. The resource will be available in Ontario and Manitoba.



II. Work to Date

A. Research

The firm undertook significant research on the topic of human trafficking with respect to the trafficking of Indigenous women and girls. This research included looking into the section of the criminal code which deals with human trafficking and reviewing case-law on how those matters played out at a trial. There were a number of reports which were also reviewed which pertained largely to the statistics and prevention measures undertaken in Manitoba and Ontario. These two provinces have developed some programs and initiatives to fight human trafficking. These two provinces are also the targets of the information in this brochure.

B. Drafting

After the research was conducted, an initial draft of a resource was created in document and powerpoint formats. Following one consultation, changes were made to the document format of the resource and this draft was circulated for feedback and review from service providers and survivors/victims whom we were able to speak with.



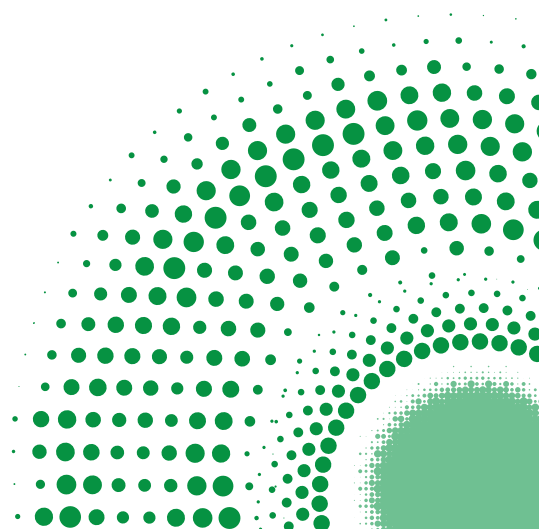


C. Interviewing

BLLC reached out to several organizations that work with Indigenous victims/survivors of trafficking. Many organizations did not reply or indicated they were busy at this time and could not participate in the project. Further, service providers indicated victims/survivors have difficulties coming forward and talking about being trafficked or surviving trafficking due to being scared, having been traumatized, still requiring further healing and not even realizing they are being trafficked. Some organizations indicated they may be able to provide feedback at a later date.

The winter holiday season provided a challenge to the facilitation of these interviews as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Following the holidays, the rapid rise in Covid cases meant many organizations shut down and were working virtually, making it extremely difficult to connect with service providers and victims/survivors.

The interviews that were carried out included 1 service provider, 1 service provider who is a survivor/victim, 1 victim/survivor, 1 Elder/grandmother and 1 researcher. The questions were prepared and provided with the draft resource via email and the consultations held over the phone. Due to Covid, having in-person consultations was not the best approach as all people involved in the project wanted to keep safe during the pandemic. While participants did not answer all the questions, many of them spoke about their personal experiences. Victims and survivors shared how they became trafficked and survived. Service providers talked about why and how people get trafficked and what can be done to help.



III. Perspectives from Consultations

Outcome 1:

The resource is meant to be simple and easy to read so that information is disseminated to people in a manner they can understand.

Question asked: (1)

Is the resource simple and easy to read?

Findings:

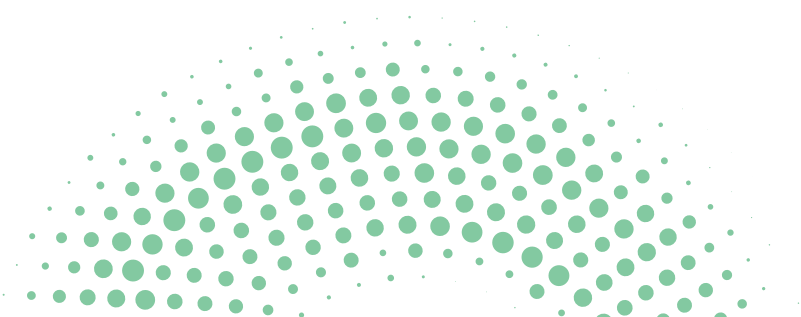
Most of the participants indicated the resource was simple and easy to read and understand.

They stated the content was not complicated and easy to follow and the information flows well. One participant shared they have ADHD and dyslexia and a lot of available material does not hold their attention. The resource is not repetitive or boring.

There was one comment that the level of language used for the resource was quite high and that the use of street language and slang could be integrated. It was noted that since, many minors are being exploited, the resource may reach more youth if language that is targeted to that demographic and their characteristics is included

Outcome 2:

The resource is meant to help those individuals that are victims or survivors of trafficking. Service providers and victims/survivors are the best people to provide feedback as they will be using the resource and therefore can tell us what they like and don't like about the resource. Changes can be made based on that feedback and in turn create a resource that is informed by the people who will use it.



Questions asked:

(2) What do you like and/or don't like about the resource? (3) Is the information we have included helpful?

Findings:

Overall, participants stated they would not change any of the current information in the resource. The feedback received was that the resource was very helpful; it is relevant and a good tool for someone in this position. The resource is an additional support that comes from the legal perspective. Victims and survivors need expertise and knowledge in different fields that cannot always be provided to them by service providers. The resource offers everyone more options, and by including legal information on their rights it allows everyone to learn from each other. As an example, the resource would teach new service providers about this issue.

It was reported that any information that can be provided to victims and survivors and service providers is beneficial. Written resources are great. Often, the population has suffered trauma at a young age and therefore have difficulty navigating documents. Disseminating this information into posters can be helpful.

Many victims do not feel comfortable approaching the police for help or seeking legal help, as they sometimes lack trust in the justice system. A further finding was that some victims noted that they were abused or intimidated by the police with threats of being arrested if they didn't perform sexual favours for the police. For a victim, they struggle with who to trust, where they can break free, who can keep them protected and where they can be legally supported. A resource such as this provides information that can help victims, survivors and service providers offer help in another format that still upholds their legal rights.



One participant commented the resource appears to assume a victim who is seeking services is aware they are being exploited or trafficked. However, they indicated having survivors review the resource and provide feedback can help victims identify they are in this situation. Victims and survivors are the experts and they have seen this from every angle. Survivors can provide an opinion on how to do this without triggering a victim.

The draft title for the resource is a mouthful and since we are trying to appeal to a target audience we should revise the title. Using slang or street language in the title may engage the target audience better.

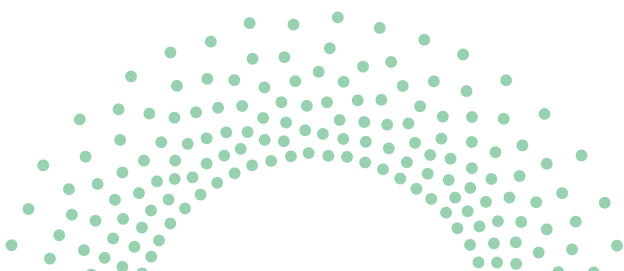
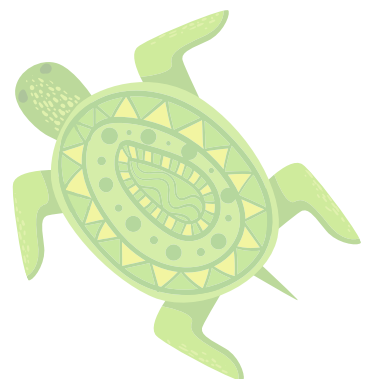
There are organizations working in this field where victims and survivors can connect with service providers and learn some of this information. One participant stated however they have never seen a resource like this in Manitoba before.

Outcome 3:

The resource aims to provide information to help victims and survivors understand what can lead someone to being trafficked. With a better understanding and awareness of this issue the resource can provide information to help people who are at risk of being trafficked and are being trafficked in an attempt to give them insights that can help them not get trafficked or get out of trafficking.

Questions asked:

(4) What led you to being trafficked? (5) Have you ever had any contact with the child and family services (CFS) system prior to being trafficked? (6) Any suggestions as to how another individual in similar circumstances can avoid that outcome?

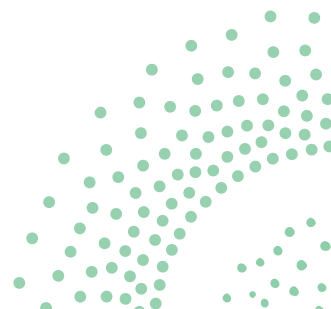


Findings:

Victims and survivors are vulnerable to becoming trafficked due to different life circumstances and personal traits, including being raised by parents and or family members who were not equipped to care for them due to colonization, residential schools, 60's scoop, intergenerational trauma, domestic violence, drug and alcohol issues, abuse, poverty, and lack of opportunities. Then the victims and survivors suffer from the same things their parents and families did. In addition many victims and survivors were placed in the CFS system where they were treated poorly, not protected and sexually and physically abused.

Victims and survivors spoke to getting involved in sexual exploitation and human trafficking at young ages. They experienced this for many years, finally being able to leave later in their adult life. One participant shared that from age 11, they were a runaway, traveling across Canada from Vancouver to Toronto and in between.

It was reported women and young girls do not know what is happening to them. Even if they do know what is happening they do not use the word trafficking. Young girls think the person exploiting and trafficking them is their boyfriend. In some cases, this is how they survive. They do not necessarily understand that they are being exploited for the trafficker's benefit. They feel they are being taken care of, have a place to go at the end of the day and they are provided the things they need to survive. Addictions also play a role, as many traffickers or exploiters continue to supply the addictive substances and if they don't, a victim will go elsewhere for it.



Some victims are dependent on the exploiters and traffickers, who may have "rescued" them from foster homes or home environments where they were being sexually abused. This left them in a vulnerable place to be empowered through being exploited. They believe they are making their own decisions but they are actually losing their power. They get caught up in being dependent on people exploiting them for everyday survival.

The CFS system is a close follow up to the residential schools system. Indigenous families were dismantled and the children raised in environments where their parents or families didn't know how to parent them. The parents and families did not have the tools to provide nurturing homes and develop loving relationships. The youth wanted to feel accepted and that they belonged. A lot of time they will receive a feeling of worth from people on the streets. In the sex trade they are told they are beautiful and pretty by different men, even if they did not feel that way. Some participants said it made the sex trade glamorous and exciting, provided a sense of belonging and love and replaced the relationship they lost with their families.

When youth in the CFS system turn the age of 18 they are forced out the door of their foster homes and group homes. The governments do not provide financial assistance for 18 year olds in CFS and this is why this happens so often. The number of people that still feel a part of their foster families is very low. A lot of those people raised in CFS have no opportunities or the right skills to succeed in society. This is why we have so many Indigenous people raised in CFS systems who as adults are homeless, suffer addictions, are sexually exploited and trafficked, live in institutions and are sentenced to correctional facilities. Then those who have children are not equipped to care for their children for all these reasons discussed. Their children are then taken from their families and raised in CFS creating a cycle that continues.



One participant spoke to struggling with identity issues, in particular being a two spirited and transgendered person. It was hard for them to feel accepted and that they belonged. They met sex trade workers who made them feel like family and that they were accepted and belonged. In turn this helped the person to "feel (their) identity." They indicated LGBTQIA2S+ youth are at high risk for sexual exploitation and human trafficking for many reasons, including there is a queer subculture that normalizes recreational sex. This subculture is endangering the youth and putting them at risk.

Some ways how people can try to avoid this outcome was discussed. Taking programming to realize their self worth has been shown to really help.

Many people who become sexually exploited suffer from low self esteem and believe they are nothing more than a drug addict and sex trade worker. Youth need to practice self love and nurture. This is something they do not see in their family home and they can resort to unhealthy relationships and look up to negative role models. They need to hear the message that these influences will not provide them with validation and acceptance and let them know they are special and important. Victims and survivors need to work on getting rid of the shame, guilt and humiliation that comes with being in the sex trade.

Developing relationships with service providers in the community who people can trust and confide in can help them realize they are at risk and/or are being exploited and trafficked. It only takes one time for someone to come to the realization they are in this situation to seek and get help. It is important for service providers to understand they need to build this rapport with victims and survivors in order to try and reach them.



A lot of participants thought at least $\frac{3}{4}$ of victims and survivors are Indigenous. Service providers need to be educated on and understand the special circumstances that lead Indigenous people to be exploited and trafficked. Service providers are being trained on colonization, residential schools, 60's scoop, intergenerational trauma, domestic violence, drug and alcohol issues, poverty, and lack of opportunities.

Engaging in the Indigenous culture has been very successful at helping people avoid being exploited or trafficked and as a means to get out and heal. Participating in traditions and learning the sacred teachings provides a connection with their culture and helps them to gain a sense of identity. Embracing rituals and ceremonies such as smudging, full moon ceremony, sweat lodges, feasts, powwows, sundance etc. has shown to have tremendous positive impacts. Victims, survivors and service providers stated this goes a long way to overcoming trauma and allowing the healing to begin.

More education and awareness in schools and society needs to happen. This could create an educational shift in society where people begin to understand the "real" CFS system. Where they hear how often the foster home placements break down and how this impacts the Indigenous people being raised in this system. A yearly report should be prepared on how many children are sexually violated in the CFS system and by police then look at how many of those children/youth/adults end up on the streets. There is a correlation between it all that needs to be taught.

Education for Indigenous male youth on their traditional roles and responsibilities should be taught in schools. Traditionally, the men had the responsibility to protect, honour and value the women. Men should not just be educated on this when they are arrested, they should be taught these teachings as youth.



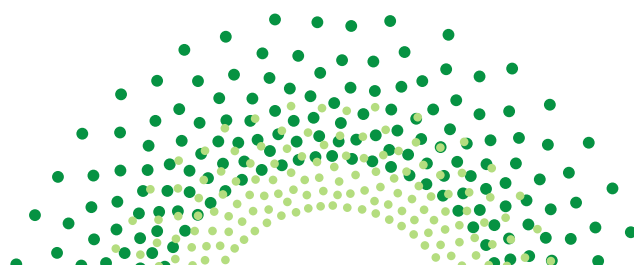
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More action in terms of prevention, intervention and enforcement in law and justice against the perpetrators. One way to look at how this should be done is by talking to the victims and survivors. Ask them what they want to see happen to the offenders. Should they be educated? Should they be sent to jail? How can the justice system support the victims coming forward?

Having more places victims and survivors can go to talk in groups, have discussions, feel safe sharing their stories and be able to relate to others in their shoes. Somewhere they know they are not at risk if they speak their truth and in turn be offered resources and things to help.

There were recommendations to include information specific to men and boys who become victims as they are a population often forgotten about. There are few resources for them and often they struggle more with shame and humiliation of being exploited and trafficked.

In general, the overall theme was that there are not enough services available for Indigenous people who are sexually exploited and trafficked. In Northwestern Ontario people are regularly sent to larger cities such as Toronto, Ottawa, and Sioux St. Marie for safe places and shelters to go to. Although victims need to be sent away somewhere safe to get away, they leave the home they know. Where their family and friends are, the place they have lived their whole life. In addition to research and resources on trafficking, there should be much wider availability of services for victims and survivors.



Outcome 4:

The resource is meant to help those individuals who are victims or survivors of trafficking. Service providers and victims/survivors are the best people to provide feedback as they will be using the resource and therefore can make suggestions for what else should be included in the resource. Changes can be made based on that feedback and in turn create a resource that is informed by the people who will use it.

Question asked:

(7) Do you have any suggestions for what we should include in the resource?

Findings:

It is quite common that service providers have to listen to victims describing their experience in order for both of them to know they are being trafficked. Victims do not understand they are being trafficked, do not use that language and/or do not believe they are. It was suggested it would be helpful to put in more information that can guide people to understand they are in this situation.

Again, the recommendation to use more slang and street language was suggested. An example of this language given was the term stable, which means the network of girls that a trafficker controls, it is very hierarchical. While using these terms though it is important to be respectful and maintain the dignity of victims and survivors.

One survivor suggested using various forms of media to get out the information within the resource to the intended audience. Creating images that convey the content and making video clips where the information is provided in visual and audio format. Having webinars where this information is taught and people can discuss it afterward. Allowing people to speak to their experiences in online discussions. Narrators that narrate the entire resource into an audio or video clip available on the internet.



Campaigns could be run to promote and advertise the resource online through YouTube, social media such as a pop up on Facebook or a TikTok video. The survivor shared that when they first got involved in the sex trade much was done on the streets and getting access to the internet was difficult. Once they got further in, a lot of the activities were done online. Therefore, using all these different forms of media could reach a lot of people more easily.

There should be more resources for LGBTQIA2S+ youth, not much of the available resources are able to help with sexual exploitation and human trafficking for them.

There were some general comments provided with respect to the differences in the Northwestern and Southern Ontario regions and Manitoba. The differences and characteristics of those regions is what impacts the regions. Specifics were not provided however, it was noted that overall there are more commonalities than not. Therefore, the resource is relevant in all the regions.

Outcome 5:

The resource should be something that a victim or survivor will want to pick up and read. It should be in a format and layout that is appealing and accessible in order for victims and survivors to actually utilize the resource.

Questions asked:

(8) What do you think the final resource should look like? For example, should it be a booklet or pamphlet? What images do you think should be in the resource?

Findings:

One participant commented that a pamphlet would be easier for distributing. However, a booklet would last longer, as pamphlets get folded up and thrown away.

Perhaps creating a pamphlet that is a shorter version of the resource and then a booklet that is more informative would work best.

If service providers are introducing this resource to young victims and survivors it should be in teen clinics, community agencies, and drop in centres. For youth that are not accessing service providers it would be good to have the resource in bus depots and public bathrooms at the malls as these are popular places for grooming youth.

Outcome 6:

The resource is intended to provide information on what someone can do if they are being trafficked, as well as highlight supports and services victims and survivors can access to help them. The resource will be available in Ontario and Manitoba and should include resources and support services from those provinces.

Question asked:

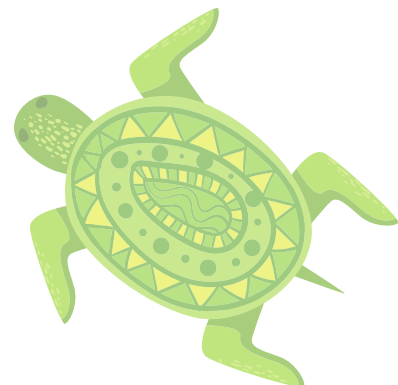
(9) Are there any other supports and resources you are aware of that we can include in the resources?

Findings:

We were provided with additional resources that are targeted specifically for dealing with sexual exploitation and human trafficking. We also were told about some that are not but do have contacts within those programs that have a passion for working in this area.

We were provided with the contact information for a mobile outreach program in Manitoba. During the consultation with the researcher in Ontario, this program was mentioned as being one of the best they were aware of in Canada.

Many organizations provided us with a list of all social services available at their organization or within their area, town, city, province and/or Canada. These lists had to be reviewed to determine if they were appropriate for the resource and if they still existed.



Some of the resources suggested are available through Facebook or online. We were required to find those resources and follow up with them on how someone could contact them.

We were educated on the international group of grandmothers called "Bringing Our Children Home." This group of grandmothers works together to bring exploited and trafficked children home at an international level. A lot of their work is through education and awareness. One way in which they fight the exploiters and traffickers is through finding the homes where they keep the victims and placing two signs next to each other in front of the home. One sign is black and the other is white, this indicates to the public this is a trafficking house. Unfortunately, many of these traffickers just move on to a different home.

IV. Recommendations

1. One participant stated that the level of language used for the resource was quite high and could be simplified.
2. Implementing street language and slang into the resource. Revising the title to use slang or street language may engage the target audience better.
3. Disseminating the information into posters.
4. One participant stated the resource appears to assume a victim seeking services is aware they are being exploited or trafficked. Having experienced survivors review the resource and provide feedback can help victims identify they are in this situation. Survivors can provide an opinion on how to do this without triggering a victim.



5. Targets of human trafficking and exploitation sections can be expanded to include:

a. Indigenous children being raised by parents and or family members that were not equipped to care for them due to colonization, residential schools, 60's scoop, intergenerational trauma, domestic violence, drug and alcohol issues, abuse, poverty, and lack of opportunities.

b. Victims and survivors that were placed in the CFS system were often treated poorly, not protected and sexually and physically abused.

c. Children raised in CFS are not equipped to care for their children and if they have their own children are apprehended from their families and raised in CFS creating a cycle that continues.

d. Victims and survivors were "rescued" by traffickers from foster homes or home environments where they were being sexually abused. This left them in a vulnerable place to be empowered through being exploited.

e. Young girls think the person exploiting and trafficking them is their boyfriend. In some cases, this is how they survive.

f. Youth want to feel accepted and that they belong. A lot of time they will receive a feeling of worth from people on the streets. It provide a sense of belonging and love and replaced the relationship they lost with their families.

g. LGBTQIA2S+ youth are at high risk for sexual exploitation and human trafficking for many reasons, including there is a queer subculture that normalizes recreational sex. This subculture is endangering the youth and putting them at risk.



6. What can you do if you are being trafficked or exploited section can be expanded to include:

- a. Taking programming to realize your self worth.
- b. Practicing self love and nurture.
- c. Working on getting rid of the shame, guilt and humiliation that comes with being in the sex trade.
- d. Developing relationships with service providers in the community who people can trust and confide in can help them realize they are at risk and/or are being exploited and trafficked.
- e. Engaging in the Indigenous culture to help people avoid being exploited or trafficked and as a means to get out and heal. Victims, survivors and service providers stated this goes a long way to overcoming trauma and allowing the healing to begin.

f. Finding places victims and survivors can go to talk in groups, have discussions, be able to relate to others and feel safe sharing their stories.

g. Education in schools for Indigenous male youth on their traditional roles and responsibilities.

V. Final Edits

After the consultations were undertaken and reviewed, quotes and a poem for the personal anecdotes section were chosen. Those participants were asked to revise the quote into their own words and give written permission for it to be used in the resource.

Funded by:

