



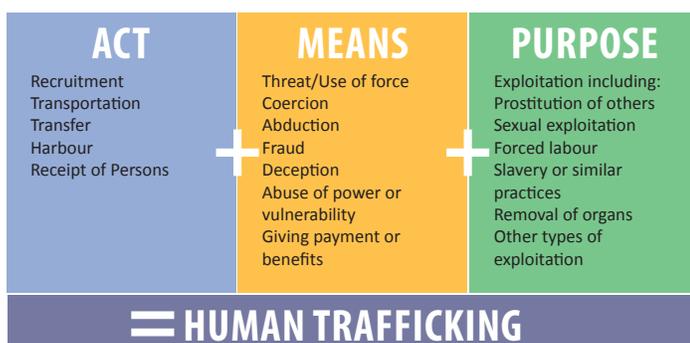
FACT SHEET

HUMAN TRAFFICKING OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN & GIRLS

The human trafficking of Indigenous women and girls is an issue that is little understood within Canada. While human trafficking is understood to occur when people are moved across international borders into Canada for the purposes of exploitation, it is less commonly known that Indigenous women and girls are trafficked inside Canada.

What is Human Trafficking?

- The United Nations' *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children*, defines human trafficking as: the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation (UN, 2000).
- Human trafficking includes Indigenous women or girls who have been forced or coerced into working in the sex trade due to an abuse of power, control and/or vulnerability



There is a Lack of Data on Indigenous Human Trafficking Survivors:

- The domestic human trafficking of Indigenous people is not well understood so it is often not identified by police officers, healthcare workers, social workers and other frontline workers who come into contact with trafficking survivors
- It is possible that there is a connection between missing and murdered Indigenous women and human trafficking of Indigenous people in Canada

Indigenous Women and Girls who are Survivors of Human Trafficking:

- Research has found that the average age that Indigenous girls are forced into the sex trade is 11 or 12 (Sethi, 2007)
- Indigenous women and girls are recruited by traffickers through various methods including schools, bars, 'boyfriends' and the Internet
- Girls are sometimes made to work as recruiters by their traffickers, recruiting other victims
- Women and girls who hitchhike or who are recruited as dancers often lose contact with their families and communities, making them vulnerable to human trafficking

The Root Causes of the Human Trafficking of Indigenous Peoples:

- Colonization and colonial policies that dispossessed Indigenous women and children of Indigenous cultures, communities and lands

- Residential school, the 60s scoop and the high numbers of Indigenous children in care
- Indigenous women and girls experience intersecting discrimination on the basis of both gender and ethnicity
- The ongoing effects of colonization and intergenerational trauma mean that Indigenous women and girls experience higher rates of poverty and homelessness than non-Indigenous women and girls
- One report on trafficking and Indigenous women in the sex trade found that 98% were currently or previously homeless (Farley et al., 2011)

Recommendations:

- Indigenous women must be reinstated at the centre of our families and communities; their roles and knowledge must be honoured and respected
- Indigenous women and girls require culture-based, wholistic wrap around services; the needs of women working in the sex trade must be taken into account
- Indigenous women and girls involved in the sex-trade must receive increased advocacy and support, especially in the area of child welfare
- Culture-based and wholistic addictions treatment must be made available
- A public awareness campaign must educate Indigenous communities and the general public about the extent of human trafficking of Indigenous people in Canada
- Existing policies must be re-evaluated to determine where Indigenous women and girls are disproportionately experiencing barriers in support and/or services

What is the Ontario Native Women's Association doing to address Human Trafficking:

- In 2017, ONWA began delivering the Indigenous Anti-Human Trafficking Liaisons Project under Ontario's Strategy to End Human Trafficking. The Liaison project is intended to support Indigenous communities in providing survivor focused and localized responses to human trafficking
- ONWA has developed an Anti-Human Trafficking culture-based trauma informed training module. This training provides participants with a critical analysis of the underlying issues that perpetuate trafficking and exploitation while also strengthening culture-based practices for incorporating a trauma-informed approach to service provision
- ONWA Co-Chairs the Provincial Committee on Human Trafficking with the Ministry of Community and Social Services
- ONWA released a paper in 2016 on the Sex Trafficking of Indigenous Women in Ontario <http://www.onwa.ca/upload/documents/report-sex-trafficking-of-indigenous-wom.pdf>

References:

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- United Nations. (2000). *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime*.

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Head Office: 150 City Road · P.O. Box15-684 City Road · Fort William First Nation, ON P7J1J7 · Toll Free: 1-800-667-0816 · Phone: (807) 577-1492 · Fax: (807) 623-1104 · **E-mail:** onwa@onwa.ca