Expanded Trauma-Informed Health and Cultural Supports

Background

In August 2021, the Government of Canada announced additional funding to improve access to mental wellness and cultural supports for those impacted by the ongoing investigations and confirmations of unmarked burials at the sites of former Indian Residential Schools.

Funding is being provided for one year in order to meet immediate mental health and wellness needs related to the investigations and confirmations of unmarked burials associated with Indian Residential Schools.

This funding is provided through Indigenous Services Canada's Mental Wellness Program and should be integrated with other community-based mental health and wellness activities, where applicable. Funding is eligible to be carried over to subsequent fiscal years where allowed by an existing Contribution Agreement.

Even though only one year of funding was provided initially, it is well recognized that the impacts of investigations and confirmations of unmarked burials will continue, and that Survivors, family members, and community members will need to have continued access to compassionate, trauma-informed, and culturally-relevant supports. Indigenous Services Canada is continuing to work to ensure that appropriate supports remain available to those who need them, even beyond this initial year of funding.

Purpose of funding

The primary purpose of this funding is to increase the number of community-based, Indigenous health and cultural support providers (i.e., salary and related costs for workers to provide emotional support and cultural support).

Funding can also be used to enhance emotional and cultural supports through complementary culturally-relevant and safe approaches to mental wellness including:

- On-the-land activities and ceremonies;
- Workshops (grief and loss, traditional parenting, intergenerational trauma, etc.);
- Cultural activities (medicine walks, drum-making, sewing circles, language revitalization);
- Delivering workshops, activities, or supports in settings including educational settings (i.e. K-12 schools), federal institutions such as prisons, child welfare settings (i.e. group homes, foster homes).

Other activities related to health and cultural support could include:

- Providing training, capacity building, and development opportunities for health and cultural support workers;
- Providing ongoing support for health and cultural support workers to ensure they are able to continue to work in safe ways (i.e.- opportunities to discuss casework and other issues in a structured way, such as through formal debriefing or clinical supervision);

- Paying for travel and related costs for health and cultural support workers to attend training or development opportunities, including training on how to provide better support to underserved communities such as children and youth or 2SLGBTQQIA;
- Paying for travel and related costs for health and cultural support workers to provide services at events (community gatherings, commemoration events, events related to the identification of unmarked burials);
- Paying for resources that are necessary to provide services (cell phone or laptop to provide virtual services, traditional medicines, supplies for cultural activities, food for traditional feasts, etc.)
- Doing outreach activities to develop linkages with the child-welfare system, the justice system, the education system, the health system etc.
- Hiring helpers for cultural support providers (including hiring people with technological expertise to support access to virtual cultural/ Elder supports when deemed appropriate)

Funding can be used to improve access to mental health supports such as by hiring a regulated mental health professional (social worker, psychologist) to provide mental health supports to individuals, families, or groups, or to provide supports to health and cultural support workers and other front line staff.

COVID-19

In many cases, COVID-19 restrictions may force communities and organizations to change the way that they have always delivered services. Health and cultural support workers may be travelling less, seeing clients virtually rather than in person, or not holding group events.

Some examples of ways organizations are adapting services to make sure clients are still able to access services are listed under eligible activities and include:

- Ensuring that health and cultural support workers have the resources that they need to deliver support services virtually (i.e., purchasing cell phones, tablets, or laptops);
- Hosting cultural activities virtually, and sending resource materials (like supplies for drum making or beading) to clients ahead of time;
- Providing one-to-one supports in ways that feel safe to all involved, including going out for walks;
- Supporting land-based activities;
- Engaging younger people to support Elders or cultural support providers to work in new virtual ways, if that is acceptable to them;
- Hosting multiple smaller group activities rather than one large group activity.

Annex A

Existing Indian Residential School, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and Indian Day School, Trauma-Informed Support Program in Ontario

Indigenous Services Canada funds 9 Indigenous Organizations (see next page) across Ontario to deliver Trauma-Informed Support Services through the Indian Residential Schools (IRS) Resolution Health Support Program, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) and the Indian Day School (IDS) Trauma-Informed Support Programs to provide mental health, emotional and cultural support services to former IRS and IDS Survivors, their families and those affected by MMIWG. **We encourage communities to connect and collaborate with organizations who deliver existing IRS, IDS and MMIWG services.**

Trauma-Informed Support Services are safe, confidential, respectful and non-judgmental.

Services available

Cultural support

Cultural supports are provided by local Indigenous organizations who coordinate the services of Elders or traditional healers. Cultural supports seek to assist former students and their families to safely address issues related to IRS, MMIWG and IDS as well as the disclosure of abuse. Specific services are chosen by the former student or family member and can include traditional healing, ceremonies, teachings and dialogue.

Emotional support

Services are provided by local Indigenous organizations and are designed to help former students and their families safely address issues related to the negative impacts of IRS, MMIWG and IDS as well as the disclosure of abuse. A Resolution Health Support worker will listen, talk and provide support to former students and their family members through all phases of the process.

Professional counselling

Professional counsellors are psychologists and social workers that are registered with Indigenous Services Canada, for individual or family counselling. A professional counsellor will listen, talk and assist individuals to find ways of healing from IRS, MMIWG and IDS experiences.

Indigenous Services Canada's Non Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) and Indian Residential Schools Resolution Health Support Program developed a joint Guide to Mental Health Counselling Services which outlines the criteria, guidelines and policies under which the NIHB program's Mental Health Counselling benefit and the Individual and Family Counselling component of the Indian Residential Schools Resolution Health Support Program operate.

Transportation

Assistance with transportation may be offered when professional counselling and cultural support services are not locally available.

Accessing health support

Please contact the Ontario IRS/MMIWG/IDS client information for Professional Counselling line at: 1-888-301-6426 or one of the following Indigenous Organizations to access Cultural and/or Emotional support.

Organization	Phone
Grand Council Treaty #3 P.O. Box 1720, KENORA, ON P9N 3X7	1-800-665-3384
Keewaytinook Okimakanak, Northern Chiefs Council 8 Eric Radford Way, PO Box 340 BALMERTOWN, ON P0V 1C0	1-807-387-3740
Maamwesying (North Shore Tribal Council) 473-B Hwy 17, West CUTLER, ON P0P 1B0	1-807-844-2021
Mushkegowuk Tribal Council PO Box 370 MOOSE FACTORY, ON P0L 1W0	1-705-658-4222
Nishnabe Aski Nation 100 Back Street, Unit 200 THUNDER BAY, ON P7J 1L2	1-807-623-8228
Noojmowin Teg Health Centre Postal Bag 2002, Hwy 540, 48 Hillside Rd, Aundeck Omni Kaning, LITTLE CURRENT, ON P0P1K0	1-705-368-2182
Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority PO Box 1300, 6 Queen Street, SIOUX LOOKOUT, ON P8T 1B8	1-807-737-1802
Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre 439 Dundas Street, East, TORONTO, ON M5A 2B1	1-416-360-4350
WEECHEETOWIN 450 Frontenac Street, Unit 2, BATCHEWANA, ON P6A 5K9	1-705-942-9422