

SEXUAL ABUSE and TRAFFICKING OF ABORIGINAL CHILDREN

Child Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse in Aboriginal communities has its roots mostly in historical trauma suffered by many individuals during the residential school system program. Presently, the rate of child sexual abuse amongst Aboriginal children is comparable to the rates for non-Aboriginal children in Canada. A 2009 literature review on statistical data for child sexual abuse in Aboriginal communities places the rate at 25-50%. Girls experience sexual abuse more often than males, with national studies revealing that 75% of Aboriginal girls under the age of 18 have experienced sexual abuse, half of which are under 14 and nearly 25% are under 7 years old. Research is limited in the area of child sexual abuse in Aboriginal communities and small sample sizes often lead to inflated, high prevalence rates that are not necessarily representative of the overall population.

Trafficking of Aboriginal Children

While Aboriginal women and children have been identified as a particularly vulnerable group, presently there is no national data that tracks participation of Canadian Aboriginal populations in trafficking and the sex trade. First Nation girls are overrepresented in the sex trade with 14% to 60% of youth engaging in prostitution in various regions of Canada. Domestic trafficking takes several forms including introduction into the sex trade by family members, gang-related activities and escort services. As noted in a 2007 case study, often girls are moved in a triangular fashion between large cities, for example from Saskatoon to Edmonton to Calgary, which has been associated with increased travel of men from city centers to work on oil rigs and in mining.

Action

As part of the National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking launched in 2012, action has been taken to protect vulnerable Aboriginal women and children through:

- Collaboration of Status of Women Canada and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to provide training on human trafficking to officials in law enforcement, the justice system, and border and immigration services, to protect Aboriginal and immigrant women.
- Providing funding to the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs to raise awareness and develop recommendations on the issue of human trafficking and sexual exploitation among First Nations communities.
- Facilitating support programs targeting vulnerable children and families through the Public Health Agency (in particular, the Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities).

- Mass distribution of the “I’m Not for Sale” human trafficking awareness toolkits to Aboriginal communities (as of 2013, nearly 2,000 toolkits were distributed).
- Partnership of Aboriginal Affairs, Northern Development Canada and Public Safety Canada with the National Association of Friendship Centres to develop a national awareness campaign on the domestic sex trafficking of Aboriginal peoples living on and off reserve and in rural, urban and northern communities, with aim to prevent victimization.

Sources

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