

March 17, 2022

Chair and Members, Standing Committee on the Status of Women,

[RESOLVE](#) is a tri-prairie, community-based research network that engages in research and education aimed at reducing the incidence and impact of family/gender-based violence. Our three centres are located at the Universities of Manitoba, Calgary, and Saskatchewan. RESOLVE is also a member of the [Alliance of Canadian Research Centres on Gender-based Violence](#), a consortium of five centres formed in 1992 by the federal government in direct response to the 1989 Montreal Massacre.

The prairie provinces experience the highest rates of intimate partner violence (IPV), including domestic homicide and violence perpetrated against Indigenous women. RESOLVE works closely with community organizations and policymakers across the prairies to identify gaps, barriers, and unique realities - ultimately leading to positive practice and policy outcomes. Over the last 25+ years, we have carried out more than 270 research projects. In this brief our Network highlights the gaps and unique realities of families and IPV survivors living in the prairie provinces that are important for your consideration (and should be addressed in any future response to IPV.)

1. Lack of Culturally Safe Services for Indigenous Survivors of IPV & the Mistrust of Colonial Systems

Indigenous women are over-represented as victims/survivors of IPV, especially those living in the prairie provinces. Working closely with our Indigenous community partners, we have identified numerous factors that contribute to their experiences of violence and make it almost impossible for Indigenous women to find permanent safety, including the lack of culturally appropriate and safe services/programs; lack of transportation and affordable/safe housing; extreme poverty and income insecurity; and mistrust of colonial systems, notably police, courts, and child protection systems¹.

2. Lack of Services and Supports in Rural, Remote, and Northern Regions

Women living in rural, remote, and northern (RRN) locations experience more instances of severe physical violence, higher rates of psychological abuse, and are at greater risk for domestic homicide than women in urban areas. Nearly ¼ of domestic homicides in Canada from 2010 to 2015 involved RRN populations, with both Saskatchewan and Manitoba having the highest rates. The unique dynamics and stressors of rural living put women at greater risk of IPV, such as increased access to firearms; gender inequalities; geographic and social isolation; the complexity of community and family dynamics; the unwillingness of communities to acknowledge IPV as a concern, limited cell phone service/access to the internet; and the lack of public transportation, affordable and safe housing, and critical IPV services and supports. These formidable barriers pose a greater challenge for those rural women who live with disabilities, Indigenous and other racialized women, and 2SLGBTQ+ persons.

3. Women's Economic Insecurity

Poverty and IPV are closely intertwined: economic vulnerability increases the risk of violence, heightens the

¹ Jaffe, P., Dawson, M., Crocker, D., Dubé, Fairbairn, J., Guruge, S., Hampton, M., Holtmann, C., Kaye, J., Letourneau, N., Moffitt, P., Nixon, K. (Co-Investigator), Ricardson/Kinewesquao, C., Rossiter, K., Scott, K., Ursel, J. *Canadian Domestic Homicide Prevention Initiative with Vulnerable Populations* (CDHPVP), [Canadian Domestic Homicide Prevention Initiative with Vulnerable Populations \(CDHPVP\)](#)

chances of being drawn into an abusive relationship, and limits exit and recovery capacity; financial abuse renders and keeps women dependent on their abusers; and survivors may

struggle to maintain employment and housing due to injuries, trauma, and mental health challenges. Current income assistance programs are grossly inadequate and often exacerbate conditions for vulnerable and marginalized women, and revictimize survivors. A Basic Income Guarantee (BI), which sets a livable income floor would reduce or eliminate these issues and provide economic security for IPV survivors – it may help women avoid high-risk relationships, reduce violence for those already in relationships, and help women exit abusive situations. This is especially relevant in the prairie provinces given their large Indigenous populations, which are overrepresented in both rates of IPV and poverty.

4. Inadequate Family and Criminal Court Responses in Cases of Intimate Partner Violence

Family and criminal court responses are often inadequate when IPV is identified. Our current research on Manitoba family/court systems² identifies numerous problems with court responses in cases involving IPV, including: a lack of coordination between the criminal and family court systems, limited practitioner knowledge related to IPV, challenges associated with the adversarial court model, and insufficient access to legal representation. Parental alienation was frequently referenced in the interviews, with non-offending parents noting that parental alienation claims were being raised during the family court process as a strategy of power and control. Parents also discussed how their disclosures of IPV in the family court process were not taken seriously and not considered in the court's decision-making process.

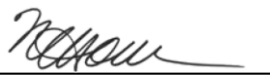
5. Lack of Training Capacity for Evidence-Based Programs and Services to Prevent/Address Negative Impacts of Violence and Adversity on Girls and Women

To improve Canada's [dismal UNICEF rankings](#) on the health of children, service providers and academic researchers require capacity to undertake needed collaborative work to ensure families and children (especially women and girls) at risk of/affected by violence and adversity receive improved, evidence-based programs and services. Training is required in developing, testing, and evaluation of programs/services to ensure services actually improve health. Currently, with more than 150 partners, RESOLVE is leading the Alliance against Violence and Adversity (AVA) Health Research Training Platform, focused on transforming the health and social services systems in Canada. AVA will build this missing capacity, to improve the health of girls and women in Canada who are affected by violence and adversity.

We thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback and hope it is useful to the committee. We wish you much success in your important endeavour.



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² Nixon, K. (Principal Investigator), Hoffart, R., Turnbull, L., & Ferguson, P. *Caught in the middle: Children's involvement in the court process as it relates to intimate partner violence*, 2019-2022.