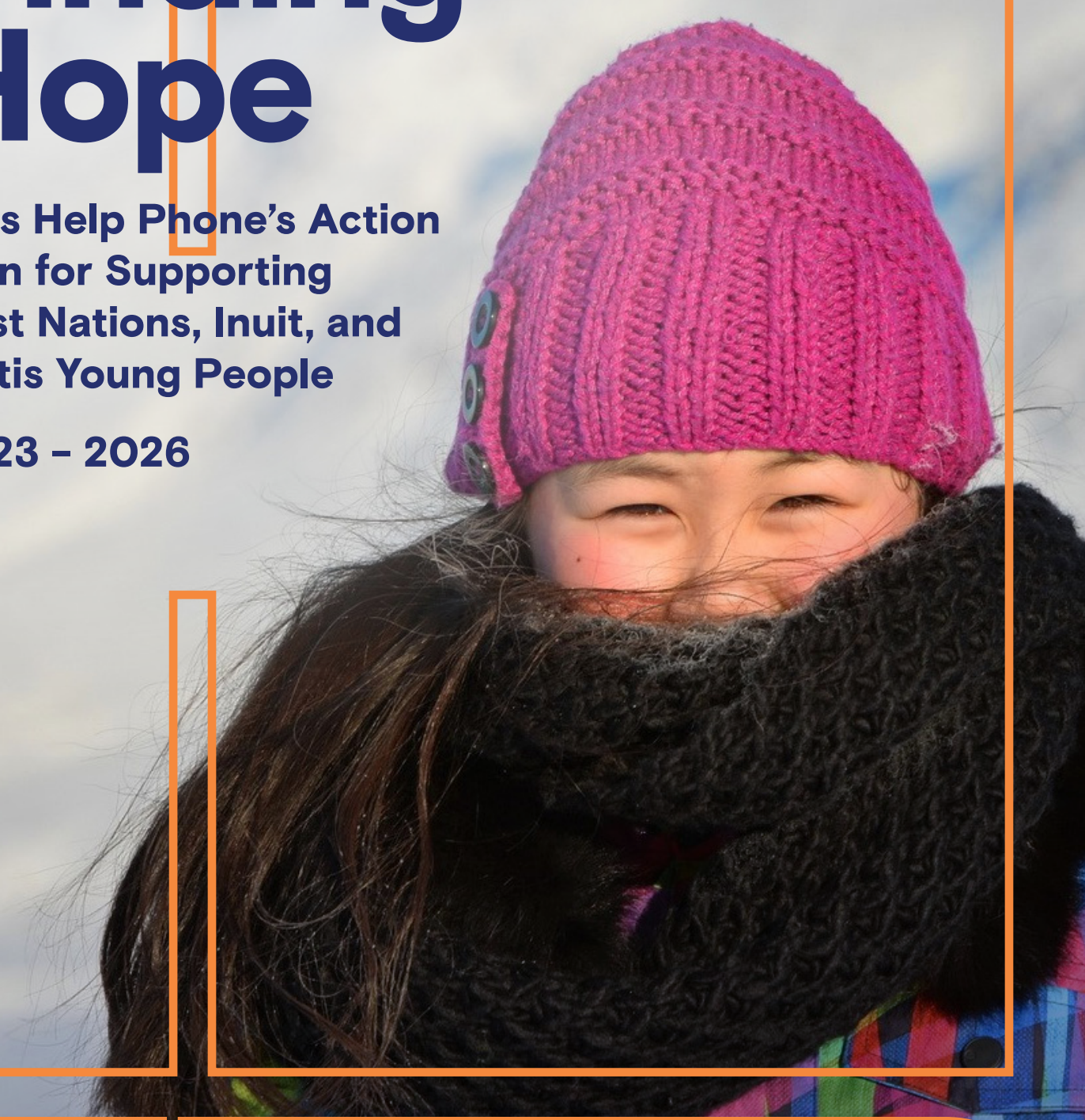


Finding Hope

Kids Help Phone's Action Plan for Supporting First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Young People

2023 - 2026



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Introduction

The impacts of colonization on First Nations, Inuit and Métis young people are ongoing, intergenerational and outmatched only by the resilience of Indigenous people.

The statistics are shocking. In Canada, Indigenous youth account for 41% of homeless youth¹, 50% of trafficking victims², and 54% of youth in care³ and suicide rates are among the highest in the world⁴. The need for equitable and accessible services is critical.

Since 1989, Kids Help Phone (KHP) has had a growing role in supporting the mental health of Inuit, Métis and First Nations youth. Since releasing Finding Hope 2019–2022, we've experienced a steady increase in the number of Indigenous young people reaching out to Kids Help Phone for mental health support. In texting alone, conversations have nearly tripled and now account for close to ten percent of conversations.

Through Finding Hope we introduced two programs designed and delivered by Indigenous people for Indigenous people. Brighter Days: An Indigenous Wellness Program Supported by Sun Life and Weaving Threads: An Indigenous Engagement Program have increased access and awareness of services and contributed to skills development without requiring youth and volunteers to leave their communities.

Young people can now speak with a professional counsellor by phone in Plains Cree or Ojibwe through an interpreter and request to text with First Nations, Inuit or Métis crisis responders. Services such as Resources Around Me have been enhanced to follow a distinctions-based approach. This approach is carried through our website, where we've contributed to the revitalization of Indigenous languages by producing content in five Indigenous languages.

1 Leach, A. (2010, November). The Roots of Aboriginal Homelessness in Canada. Parity, 23(9), 12-13. https://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/Parity_Vol23-09.pdf

2 Roudometkina, A., & Wakeford, K. (2018). Trafficking of Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada [Review of Trafficking of Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada]. In House of Commons (p. 3). Native Women's Association of Canada. <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/421/JUST/Brief/BR10002955/br-external/NativeWomensAssociationOfCanada-e.pdf>

3 Government of Canada; Indigenous Services Canada. (2016). Reducing the number of Indigenous children in care. Sac-lsc.gc.ca; Government of Canada. <https://www.sac-lsc.gc.ca/eng/1541187352297/1541187392851>

4 Canada, G. of C. I. S. (2019, December 11). National Aboriginal Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy (NAYSPS) Program Framework. Www.sac-lsc.gc.ca. <https://www.sac-lsc.gc.ca/eng/1576092066815/1576092115467>



As we look to the future, partnership with Indigenous youth and communities continues to be at the heart of Finding Hope. Developed under the leadership of the KHP Indigenous Advisory Council, Finding Hope outlines 32 specific actions that will enable us to achieve six ambitious goals.

These goals are bold and achievable with the support of partners and generous donors. Please join us as we scale and enhance our programs and services — developing new and innovative approaches that will help unlock the hope Inuit, Métis and First Nations youth need to thrive in their world.

In good spirit,

Deanna Dunham

Director, Indigenous Initiatives and Equity Programs



Why Focus on Indigenous Children and Youth?



Indigenous peoples continue to experience intergenerational trauma from the ongoing effects of colonization. As a Canada-wide charity, KHP knows that more can and should be done to support Indigenous young people. We believe that our services can bridge the gap for many Indigenous young people in need of mental, emotional, physical and spiritual well-being support, particularly when other services are not available.

The effects of colonization are well-documented. The overrepresentation of Indigenous children and youth in government care has been called a “humanitarian crisis” by the Government of Canada⁵. High rates of incarceration, suicide, substance use and physical and sexual abuse are just some of the indicators that emphasize the need for greater supports for Métis, Inuit, and First Nations young people. Many Indigenous people, particularly in the north, live in isolation and experience high rates of poverty, which creates additional barriers to accessing health services, nutritious food and safe housing.

5 Edwards, K. (2018, January 16). “Terrible consequences:” Jane Philpott on Indigenous children in foster care. Macleans.ca. <https://macleans.ca/politics/terrible-consequences-jane-philpott-on-indigenous-children-in-foster-care/>



Mental health workers are intermittently available in many communities, with long waiting lists and limited resources. High staff turnover, fueled by vicarious trauma, occurs in health care and education — contributing to the instability that many Indigenous young people experience in their daily lives. Colonization has imposed beliefs that societies must be male-dominated and exclusively heterosexual, creating toxicity within Indigenous communities. This has also stigmatized the subject of mental health and increased violence and trauma in Indigenous communities while devaluing Indigenous teachings that historically supported healthy relationships and gender equality.

Supports to address these issues are particularly limited for male-identified Indigenous young people, 2SLGBTQ+ youth, and geographically displaced young people — including those who are away from

home due to evacuation, medical treatment, education, foster care, incarceration and human trafficking. Despite these extreme circumstances, Indigenous peoples continue to show amazing strength. As one of the fastest-growing populations in Canada, Indigenous peoples are contributing more and more to all aspects of local and national economies while sharing valuable knowledge in science, health, education, arts and more.

As partners in reconciliation, it is the responsibility of all people and organizations in Canada to work with Indigenous peoples toward a better future. All people across Canada benefit when Indigenous peoples have equal and equitable access to health care, economic development opportunities and education. KHP is committed to ensuring that every Indigenous young person across Canada has equitable access to our services, wherever and whenever they need us most.

Indigenous Leadership

KHP recognizes the importance of Indigenous leadership in all our work. Our Board of Directors requires mandatory Indigenous inclusion, and our Indigenous initiatives are led by the KHP Indigenous Advisory Council (IAC). The IAC is composed of Inuit, First Nations and Métis experts, half of whom are youth, who have demonstrated a strong commitment to the mental, emotional, physical and spiritual well-being of Indigenous young people.

The actions in Finding Hope were defined by the Indigenous Advisory Council and the IAC will continue to oversee the implementation of the action plan. Indigenous programming including Brighter Days: An Indigenous Wellness Program supported by Sun Life and Weaving Threads: An Indigenous Engagement Program is delivered by an all-Indigenous team of leaders, wellness specialists and engagement coordinators.



Finding Hope 2019–2022: The Beginning of Our Journey

The release of Finding Hope in 2019 was a defining moment for KHP. It was our first action plan dedicated to supporting youth from equity-deserving groups. The action plan illustrated the immeasurable impact that Indigenous leadership and specialized programming can have in maximizing access to services for all young people across Canada. This formed the foundation for RiseUp and New Journeys — our action plans for supporting Black and Newcomer youth, respectively.

The positive impact of Finding Hope is extensive and profound. All KHP employees now receive Indigenous cultural competency training as part of their onboarding, and focused, Indigenous learning opportunities are provided throughout the year in various forms. Indigenous Wellness Specialists work with our clinical team that ensures all frontline staff receive training attuned to the realities of Indigenous youth.





We've been honoured to contribute to the revitalization of Indigenous languages by developing both on- and offline mental health resources in five Indigenous languages. In addition to increasing access to mental health supports, resources such as our mindfulness body scan support reconciliation by demonstrating the distinctiveness of Indigenous people through language.

Young people can now speak with a professional counsellor by phone in Plains Cree or Ojibwe through an interpreter and request to text with First Nations, Inuit or Métis crisis responders. This service enhancement is one of many factors that have contributed to a steady and dramatic increase in service use since Finding Hope was introduced.

This increase is most evident in our texting service, where interactions with Indigenous

youth have grown from approximately 9000 interactions in 2019 to 25000 in 2022. Indigenous texters reflect positively on their experience texting with KHP, with 89% saying the conversation was helpful.

In early 2020 we engaged, in-person, with 180 Indigenous youth across Canada through sessions co-developed with their communities. Community engagement was strengthened in 2021 when we established Weaving Threads: An Indigenous Engagement Program. Weaving Threads Champions share feedback on KHP programs and services while connecting youth in their communities with mental health resources.

Brighter Days: An Indigenous Wellness Program supported by Sun Life launched in 2021 and is now available across Canada. Brighter Days features Indigenous influencers



and gently introduces Indigenous youth (6-29) to KHP services. The program provides youth with an opportunity to engage virtually with a KHP Indigenous Wellness Specialist in a culturally safe and fun conversation. With new wellness modules released every year that help Indigenous youth develop mental health skills and literacy, the benefits of this program continue to grow.

Resources Around Me was enhanced to follow a distinctions-based approach as outlined in the guiding principles of Finding Hope. Indigenous youth can now access approximately 5,000 Indigenous-focused resources using Métis, First Nations, and Inuit filters.

Data gathered through program and service use is shared with Indigenous communities in adherence with the First Nations principles of ownership, control, access and possession

(OCAP™) to inform program delivery and identify emerging trends that could impact the well-being of Indigenous youth. We recognize the importance of knowledge sharing and established semi-annual Knowledge Exchange Forums for Indigenous Youth Wellness to bring regional and national not-for-profit organizations together to collaborate and share learnings.

Throughout the implementation of Finding Hope 2019-2022, we held to our guiding principles and the core values of KHP. We travelled a path in partnership with Indigenous youth and communities — a path that is only the beginning of a journey that will take us even further in our support for First Nations, Inuit and Métis young people.

Our Goals

The KHP Indigenous Advisory Council has challenged us to achieve six ambitious goals through the implementation of Finding Hope. These goals will be reached through partnership with Indigenous communities and the generous support of donors. Thirty-two actions will help us achieve the following goals.

Build trust through meaningful partnerships with Indigenous people and organizations

Build trust among Indigenous youth by remaining steadfast in our support and working with humility and transparency in partnership with volunteers, influencers and partners in Indigenous communities.

Empower Indigenous communities through data

Inform Indigenous communities of emerging trends, identify gaps in supports and demonstrate the need for further research by sharing data insights in a responsible and respectful manner while adhering to OCAP™ principles.

Foster a workplace that is inclusive and informed on the realities of Indigenous youth

Create an even more diverse workforce by increasing the number of Indigenous employees and volunteers at KHP. We will also facilitate ongoing Indigenous-led training for staff, volunteers, donors and partners to help ensure we truly understand the meaning behind our words and actions.

Amplify access and awareness of KHP programs and services

Help ensure all First Nations, Inuit and Métis young people have equitable access to and awareness of KHP services no matter where they live, their living situation, what they're experiencing or who they are.

Support skills development, knowledge and literacy that promotes the mental, emotional, physical and spiritual well-being of Indigenous young people

Increase mental health knowledge and vocabulary among Indigenous peoples that will destigmatize mental health issues and encourage help-seeking behaviours.

Seek out opportunities to support Indigenous peoples through advocacy and knowledge sharing

Use our national voice to support reconciliation among Indigenous and settler people across Canada. We will create and contribute to forums that foster knowledge sharing, increase equity and celebrate First Nations, Inuit and Métis young people.

Guiding Principles

KHP Indigenous Initiatives will adhere to four guiding principles as identified by the KHP Indigenous Advisory Council.

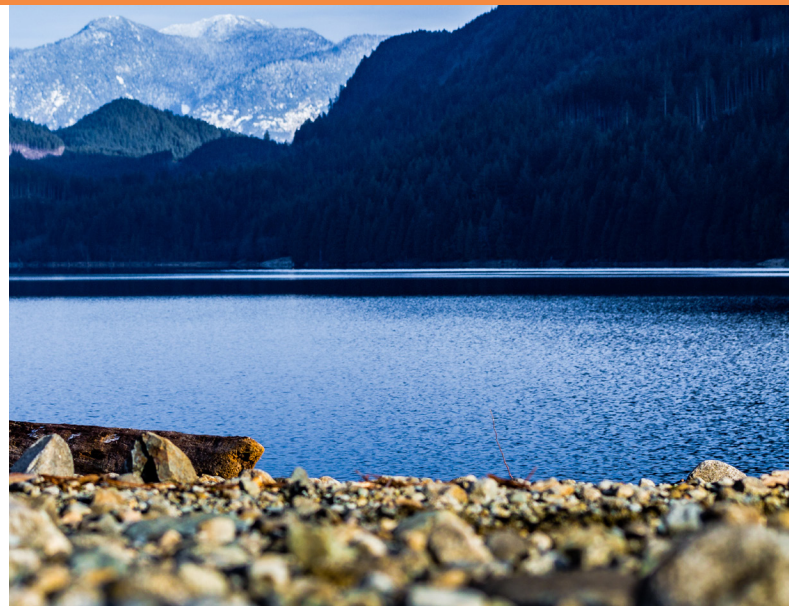
These principles are:

Recognize and respect the distinctiveness of Indigenous Nations and communities

As an organization serving youth from coast to coast to coast, we must make every effort to avoid pan-Indigenous approaches; however, we recognize that there are values found across Indigenous cultures and places in Canada. It is our goal to recognize local Indigenous Nations and their inherent connections to lands, waters and wildlife as we strive to develop programs, services and initiatives that recognize the tremendous diversity of the Indigenous communities and young people we serve.

Support inclusion and meaningful participation

We must ensure that Indigenous peoples have equal and equitable access, not only to KHP programs and services, but to our employment, volunteer and procurement opportunities.



Education is essential to the success of Indigenous initiatives

KHP employees and volunteers must receive regular Indigenous-sourced training that will inform our Indigenous initiatives.

We must work in partnership with Indigenous peoples

Indigenous peoples carry essential expertise in mental health care. We will work in partnership with Indigenous organizations, health experts, knowledge keepers, community leaders, champions and young people.

Primary Audiences

Indigenous children and youth living in remote, urban and rural communities across Canada are collectively the audience of this action plan. To focus our efforts, we have defined two primary audiences: those in greater need of mental health supports, and those well-positioned to assist KHP in achieving the goals set out in Finding Hope. The following is a non-exhaustive list of these primary audiences in no particular order.

Geographically displaced Indigenous young people

Connection to nature, family and community are central to the mental, emotional, physical and spiritual well-being of many Métis, Inuit and First Nations young people. Despite this, many Indigenous youth are forced to leave their communities to access even the most basic supports, including education, medical treatment and safe housing. Indigenous young people are vastly overrepresented in the justice system, are far more likely to be homeless or trafficked, and more Indigenous youth are in government care today than at any point in history. This disconnection from the lands and community is often detrimental to Indigenous young people. KHP will advocate for community supports that will reduce the number of displaced Indigenous young people, while at the same time, ensure that displaced Indigenous young people have equitable access to KHP services wherever and whenever they need us most.

2SLGBTQ+ Indigenous young people

Indigenous 2SLGBTQ+ youth are often marginalized, sometimes within their own communities. Indigenous peoples are holistic in their approach to community and family. The binary (male or female) approach to gender was imposed in many communities as a Western norm. Two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer Indigenous people “experience unique barriers to culturally safe health care, and are at greater risk for negative mental and physical health outcomes than their non-Indigenous LGBTQ peers or their non-LGBTQ2+ Indigenous peers”⁶. KHP has long advocated for 2SLGBTQ+ rights and will continue to recognize and support their unique needs.

6 TWO-SPIRIT AND LGBTQ INDIGENOUS 1. (n.d.). <https://www.rainbowhealthontario.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/2SLGBTQINDIGENOUSHEALTHFactheet.pdf>

Male-Identified Indigenous young people

Greater supports are needed for all Indigenous peoples, including those who identify as male. Toxic masculinity in communities has led to greater rates of trauma from both internal and lateral violence within Indigenous communities. Indigenous men and boys receive little focus in terms of research and programming despite accounting for 71% of all missing and murdered Indigenous peoples⁷. KHP will work in partnership with Indigenous organizations and communities to support Indigenous young people through service delivery, knowledge sharing, advocacy and special initiatives to address toxic masculinity impacting young Indigenous men and women.

Mental health workers and organizations

KHP services are part of a continuum of care. We do not replace community- or nation-based mental health supports; we complement them by offering access to support 24/7. We must work in partnership with organizations that provide mental health supports to build trust and ensure our programs and services are understood for referral purposes. We will also listen carefully to community needs and seek opportunities for collaboration.

Influencers of Indigenous young people

Extended families often hold important roles in the day-to-day lives of Indigenous young people. Educators, recreation workers, community mentors, Elders and community leaders are also in positions of influence in the lives of Indigenous children and youth. KHP will build relationships with these influencers and connect them with resources that support the mental, emotional and spiritual well-being of Indigenous young people.

⁷ Olivier, A. (2017, April 23). Global News. Retrieved from Global News: <https://globalnews.ca/news/3398446/necktie-campaign-focuses-attention-on-plight-of-missing-and-murdered-indigenous-men/>





We will achieve the goals of Finding Hope by implementing 32 measurable actions in partnership with Indigenous communities, allies and generous donors.

Building trust

- 1. Actively seek out partnerships with governments, organizations and Indigenous individuals who support the well-being of Indigenous children and youth. These partnerships will further the objectives of Finding Hope by:**
 - a.** Ensuring new and existing programs, services, and initiatives benefit from the knowledge, experience and perspectives of Indigenous peoples;
 - b.** Building awareness of KHP as a trusted partner in reconciliation;
 - c.** Collaborating with Indigenous organizations and communities that are also in need of ongoing support and funding; and
 - d.** Exchanging knowledge and information that will contribute to the benefit of Indigenous and settler people in Canada.
- 2. Enhance eligibility and methods of gathering information about Indigenous resources for inclusion in KHP's referral database.**
- 3. Update KHP's donor policy to formalize alignment with the guiding principles of Finding Hope and ensure transparency with community program leads regarding funding sources for community-level programming.**
- 4. Conduct a review of Indigenous identification policies to help ensure KHP employment, volunteer and mentorship opportunities intended for Indigenous people go to Indigenous people.**
- 5. Explore opportunities for enhancing emergency referral processes to connect Indigenous youth with emergency services that best meet their needs.**

Service access

6. Collaborate with a growing number of Indigenous influencers to support the well-being of Indigenous young people.
7. Increase the amount of Indigenous-focused external-facing content published by KHP with emphasis on positive messaging.
8. Develop a mapping tool to visually track our outreach activities and relationships at the community level to ensure all Indigenous young people have access to KHP's services from coast to coast to coast.
9. Increase visibility of Indigenous peoples throughout our communications, marketing and awareness materials. This will be achieved in part through the expansion of our photo database to include images that respectfully and positively reflect the diversity and realities of Indigenous peoples today.
10. Develop new solutions for service access including an app to increase access to KHP content and services. App will provide offline access to mental health content for youth facing connectivity barriers. This app may be pre-installed on devices provided to Indigenous youth and added to curated catalogues.



Service awareness

11. Pilot a program to facilitate the installation of billboards, arena boards, wall murals and other signage in rural and remote Indigenous communities through community partnerships.
12. Promote KHP to the primary audiences of Finding Hope, guided by a nimble and responsive engagement strategy that focuses outreach in areas where awareness is most needed.
13. Create an annual awareness campaign to reduce stigma and support the well-being of male-identified Indigenous young people in collaboration with Indigenous partners and allies.
14. Build awareness and trust by strengthening and expanding relationships with Indigenous media.
15. Distribute free Indigenous-focused outreach materials to Indigenous organizations from coast to coast to coast, including schools, Friendship Centres, health centres and child and family services organizations, etc..

Empowerment through data

16. On request, share data insights gathered through Indigenous programming and service delivery with Indigenous communities in accordance with OCAP™ principles.
17. Explore the automation of the process by which First Nations, Inuit and Métis texters are matched with corresponding volunteer crisis responders.
18. Create a designated Indigenous queue in our phone counselling service that will emphasize that KHP is a safe space for Indigenous youth, enable better evaluation of our outreach efforts, and enhance the experience of callers.



Photo: Jenna Mae Photography

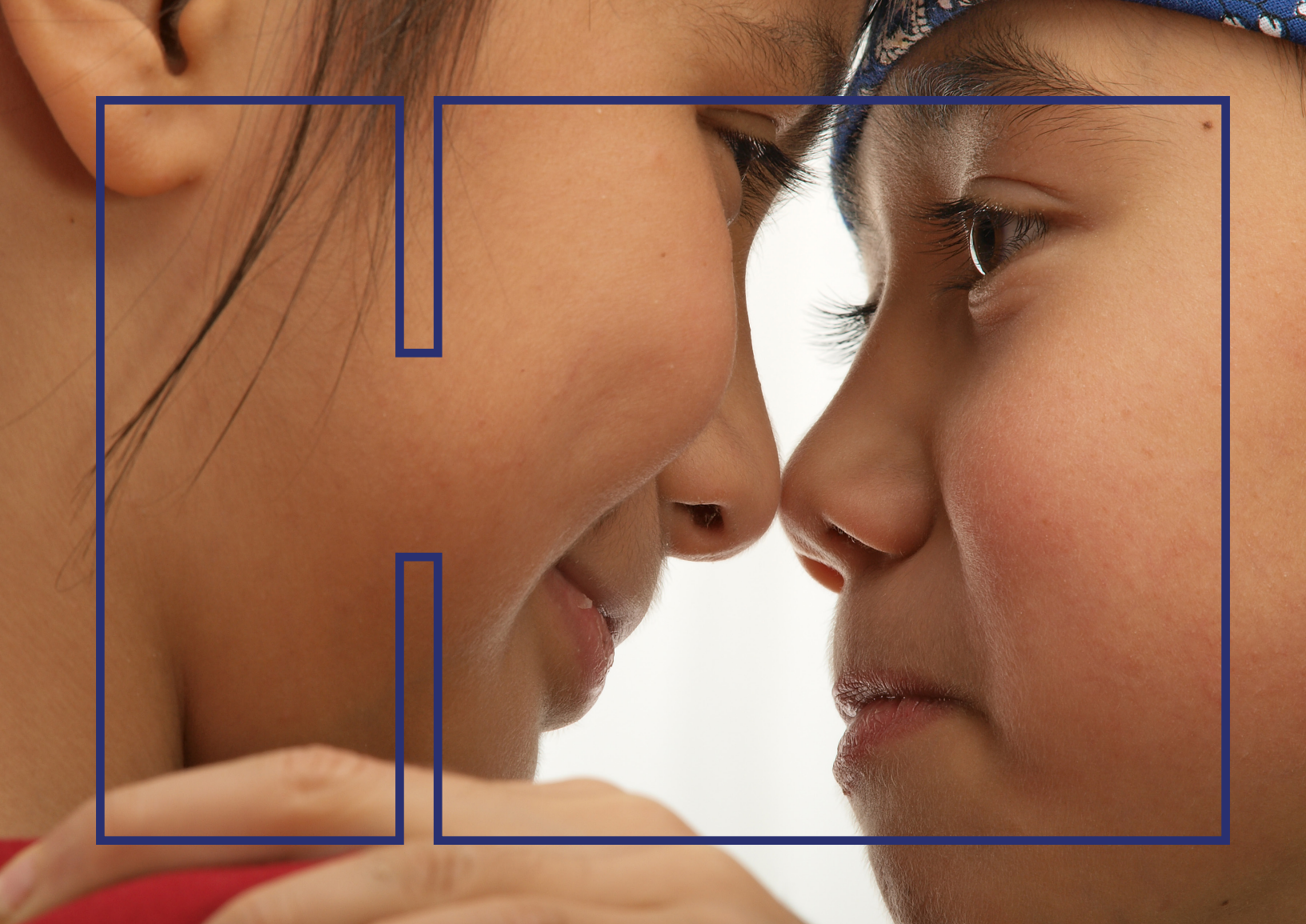


Skills development

- 19.** Expand Brighter Days: An Indigenous Wellness Program supported by Sun Life to more young people. Continually develop new wellness modules informed by the needs of communities to develop skills on more topics – including healthy relationships, grief and suicide.
- 20.** Launch a mentorship program that supports the transition of Indigenous health and social services students into the workforce.
- 21.** Be leaders in the decolonization of volunteerism by expanding our definition of volunteer experience to be reflective of the opportunities and realities of Indigenous peoples and offering meaningful volunteer opportunities to Indigenous peoples within their communities.
- 22.** Expand Weaving Threads: An Indigenous Engagement Program to include more volunteers, an expanded age range, more resources, and a new “Ambassador” level of the program that will provide additional training and responsibilities for volunteers.

Workplace inclusion

- 23. Infuse ongoing counsellor, crisis responder, volunteer, employee and Board of Directors training with Indigenous education that:**
 - a.** Recognizes the uniqueness within and among First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples;
 - b.** Is developed and delivered in partnership with Indigenous knowledge holders;
 - c.** Utilizes a variety of training methods including e-learning; coaching; attending webinars, workshops, and conferences; and knowledge translation of research findings;
 - d.** Will increase understanding among professional counsellors and volunteer crisis responders of the importance of data collection, in terms of documenting Indigenous service users, and its utility to the organization and in supporting Indigenous young people;
 - e.** Encapsulates the effects of colonization and reflects the realities of Indigenous young people in urban, rural and remote settings; and
 - f.** Recognizes the value and efficacy of Indigenous healing practices in the treatment of Indigenous peoples where requested by Indigenous service users.
- 24. Ensure the design of KHP workspaces reflects the diversity of Canada.**
- 25. Develop a land acknowledgement policy that recognizes the long-standing relationship of Indigenous peoples as stewards of the lands, waters and wildlife during public events and speaking engagements.**
- 26. Develop communication protocols for Council, Board and Committee meetings that address identified barriers – including technological barriers – to inclusion and meaningful participation.**
- 27. Conduct a review of KHP’s procurement policy and engage with Indigenous experts in business development to ensure our policy encourages the purchase of products and services from Indigenous businesses.**
- 28. Replace mandatory Indigenous cultural-competency training for all staff and with updated and additional trainings for all staff and volunteers that will focus on KHP Indigenous initiatives and the implementation of Finding Hope.**



Advocacy and knowledge sharing

- 29.** Host Knowledge Exchange Forums for Indigenous Youth Wellness to explore opportunities for collaboration; identify overlaps, gaps in service and emerging trends; share best practices; and foster pathways for connections that will maximize support for Indigenous youth across Canada.
- 30.** Participate in committees and conferences that seek to advance the mental, emotional, physical and spiritual well-being of Indigenous children and youth, identify barriers to access, and inform our Indigenous initiatives.
- 31.** Support events and campaigns that recognize and contribute to the mental, emotional, physical and spiritual well-being of Indigenous young people through participation and/or promotion when possible.
- 32.** Raise awareness of issues impacting Indigenous youth through media and public engagements.

Glossary

Colonization

Colonization is the act of a group of individuals who take over a selected territory and then exert their own laws and policies in order to maintain control of the resources and peoples of the new territory. Colonization is not a single event of first contact, but rather a long-term, deliberately damaging process that continues to this day in Canada – including through inequitable access to essential services, discriminatory policies and the underrepresentation of Indigenous peoples in Canadian economies.

First Nations

First Nations are the largest of three distinct groups that make up Canada's Indigenous or original peoples. There are more than 600 First Nations (e.g. Wemindji Cree First Nation) that are part of broader Nations (e.g. Cree Nation) or confederacies. Each First Nation has its own unique history and rich culture.

Indigenous

The term Indigenous is used in many countries, including Canada, to describe the original peoples of the lands. There are three main, unique groups of Indigenous peoples across Canada: Métis, Inuit and First Nations.

Intergenerational trauma

Intergenerational trauma is stress-induced trauma that is transferred from one generation to the next when left untreated. In Indigenous contexts, it is particularly common among descendants of survivors of the Canadian Indian residential school system and their communities.

Inuit

Inuit are one of three distinct groups that make up Canada's Indigenous or original peoples. Inuit refers to specific groups of Indigenous people generally living in the far north who are culturally, linguistically and historically distinct from First Nations and Métis. Inuit Nunangat is the homeland of the Inuit in Canada and includes four regions.

Métis

Métis are one of three distinct groups that make up Canada's Indigenous or original peoples. Métis is both a legal and general term for people of mixed First Nations and European ancestry, from specific historic communities. Métis people have settlements and groups in different geographical areas across Canada, with traditional Métis homeland including the Canadian Prairies.

Pan-Indigenous

Pan-Indigeneity, in a Canadian context, is the practice of grouping Inuit, First Nations and Métis peoples into one category without recognizing the distinctiveness of not only these three groups, but also the unique cultures and communities they encompass. As an example, the Mi'kmaq Nation on the East coast is vastly different from the Haida Nation on the West coast of Canada in terms of language, cultural practices and traditions – though both nations are represented under the broader First Nations category of Indigenous.

Reconciliation

Reconciliation is the process of restoring the respectful relationship between Indigenous and settler people in Canada and working together to overcome the devastating affects of colonization.

Settler

A settler, in the context of this document, is a non-Indigenous person living in Canada.





Whenever you need to talk, we're open.
[KidsHelpPhone.ca/Indigenous](https://www.kidshelpphone.ca/Indigenous)



Text 686868 (Youth) or 741741 (Adults)



Call 1-800-668-6868 press 3

Indigenous people can connect with an Indigenous volunteer crisis responder when available by messaging **FIRSTNATIONS, INUIT or METIS over text.**