

Partnerships for Success

Government partnerships with positive outcomes for Indigenous people, businesses and communities

The Men of the North: Building Stronger Communities Through Traditional Healing

In November 2022, the Government of Saskatchewan announced the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls+ Community Response Fund dedicated to violence prevention and building safety for Indigenous women, girls and Two Spirit+ people in Saskatchewan.



The Men of the North (MOTN) Strengthening Families Project is among many initiatives to receive funding through this grant. In 2023, the project received nearly \$40,000 from the fund to address violence against Indigenous women.

MOTN, a non-profit organization, was launched in 2020 to provide healthy opportunities for men, their families, and their communities. Prioritizing personal integrity, accountability and honouring shared humanity, MOTN seeks to create a positive

impact that extends beyond the individual and benefits the wider world.

Their funded project, *Strengthening Families*, includes workshops and communication programs for men, women, and couples to foster healthy coping strategies and develop respectful communication. MOTN acknowledges that preventing violence against Indigenous women and girls begins in the home and in daily relationships. The project aims to cultivate healthy relationships and cultures of safety to reduce violence by expanding cultural connections, ceremonies and traditional practices.

One of the key themes identified during the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls was within the context of healing and highlighted the importance of healing men as a way to combat violence. This theme was addressed in the final report and in Call for Justice 7.3, which calls for governments and health service providers to support Indigenous-led prevention initiatives in the areas of health and community awareness, including programming for Indigenous men and boys.

"Our program's foundation lies in the belief that everyone plays a vital role in actively participating in their journey towards well-being and recovery," said Christopher Merasty, the Program Director for Men of the North. "The positive impact of the Strengthening Families Project on our community has been truly heartening. Witnessing two young women receive their Indian names during our recent ceremony, with attendance from individuals who had never participated before, speaks volumes. Their testimonials about improved health and well-being since then are incredibly encouraging."

The commitment of MOTN to nurture healthier relationships, fortify communities, and embrace cultural traditions is being recognized across the province. The MOTN story has motivated other northern communities like Île-à-la-Crosse, Cumberland House, and Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation, to establish a MOTN program in their communities.

In the future, Merasty added that their team envisions the program expanding its impact by collaborating with local schools to introduce wellness education, traditional teachings, communication skills, and vocational training opportunities. There is a role for everyone to reduce violence against Indigenous women and girls, and it begins by empowering individuals and community with the tools to become the best versions of themselves.

The Strengthening Families Project and, “the profound resonance of hope reminds me of our collective strength and resilience, affirming that together, we can overcome any obstacle,” Merasty said. He hopes that the programming of MOTN and their work to address root causes of violence against Indigenous women and girls “demonstrates hope and persistence in the journey towards a future of healing.”

The Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls+ Community Response Fund provided \$800,000 in 2023 to support projects like the MOTN Strengthening Families Project. These grants help the Government of Saskatchewan achieve its goal of ensuring the safety and well-being of all Saskatchewan residents.

For more information on this government initiative, please visit saskatchewan.ca.