



Nokiiwin
TRIBAL COUNCIL

Human Trafficking Toolkit

Practical Resources for Prevention,
Identification, Response, and
Survivor Support



PURPOSE OF THE TOOLKIT

This Toolkit was developed to educate community members, service providers, and workers within Nokiiwin Tribal Council communities and organizations about how Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people have been disproportionately targeted for human trafficking and sexual exploitation in Canada. It aims to increase awareness, strengthen understanding of the root causes and warning signs of trafficking, and support communities in preventing exploitation through culturally informed knowledge and resources.

VISION

To be a leader in First Nation innovations, revitalizing cultural practices while building healthier, thriving communities.

MISSION

Nokiiwin Tribal Council unites and empowers First Nations by supporting growth, resilience and cultural pride while honouring the unique journeys of every Nation.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Seven Sacred Teachings serve as foundational guiding principles for Nokiiwin Tribal Council, deeply embedded in our Strategic Plan. Each of these teachings shows us a path toward fostering a harmonious and supportive environment for our members and the broader community.

- Love
- Bravery
- Honesty
- Wisdom
- Truth
- Respect
- Humility

Artist Acknowledgement

Peter Wesley is a self-taught Indigenous visual artist from Ginoogaming First Nation. Inspired by the vibrant beauty of nature and the rich cultural heritage of his people, Peter's work reflects a deep-rooted passion for storytelling, identity, and tradition. From a young age, he explored his creativity using whatever materials were available, developing a unique style grounded in perseverance and cultural pride. pwdesigns.com

WHAT IS HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Public Safety Canada defines human trafficking as the “recruitment, transportation, harbouring and/or exercising control, discretion or influence over the movements of a person in order to exploit that person, typically through sexual exploitation or forced labour.”

If a person is forced, coerced or manipulated into sex work by people, systems or institutions it is not consensual and is there for exploitation or trafficking.

According to the Criminal Code of Canada, a youth under 18 years of age cannot legally engage in sex work. This means that any youth under the age of 18 in the sex industry are considered victims of sexual trafficking.¹

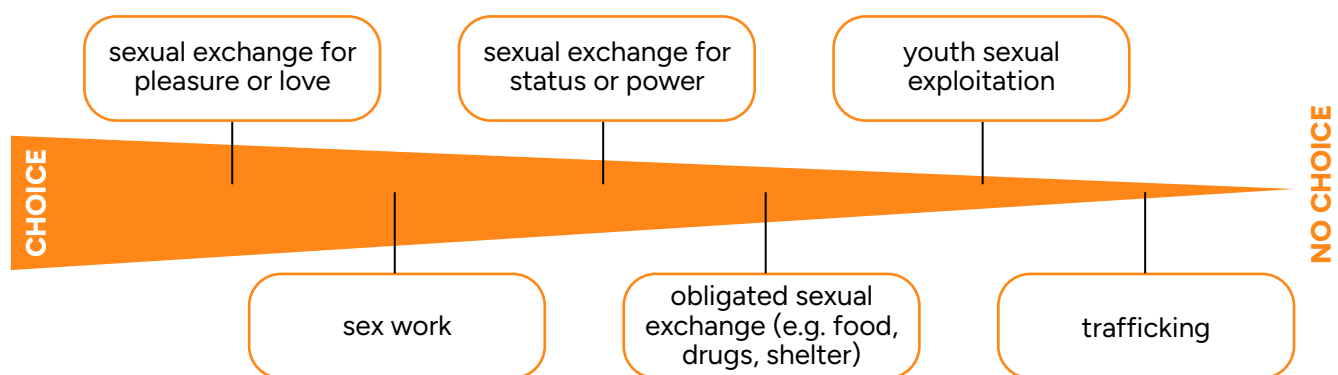
Definitions

Sex trafficking: Sex trafficking is defined as the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act where such an act is induced by force, fraud or coercion. Reference Definition is from TVPA (Palermo). 2000.

Sexual Exploitation: Sexual Exploitation is defined as actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.²

Sex Work: refers to the choice, purposefully and willingly to sell sexual services. Sex work does not include people who are trafficked or sexually exploited as described above.

SPECTRUM OF SEX WORK VS HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND EXPLOITATION



Often sex work, sexual exploitation and trafficking are seen as the same thing. However, it is important to understand the difference between them in order to provide the appropriate law enforcement, healthcare or social supports to individuals.

<https://livingincommunity.ca/sex-work-101/>

1. Government of Canada. Age of Consent to Sexual Activity. Department of Justice. 2017.

2. TVPA- Summary of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) and Reauthorizations FY 2017. Alliance To End Slavery and Trafficking, March 10, 2016. <https://endslaveryandtrafficking.org/summary-trafficking-victims-protection-act-tvpa-reauthorizations-fy-2017-2/>.

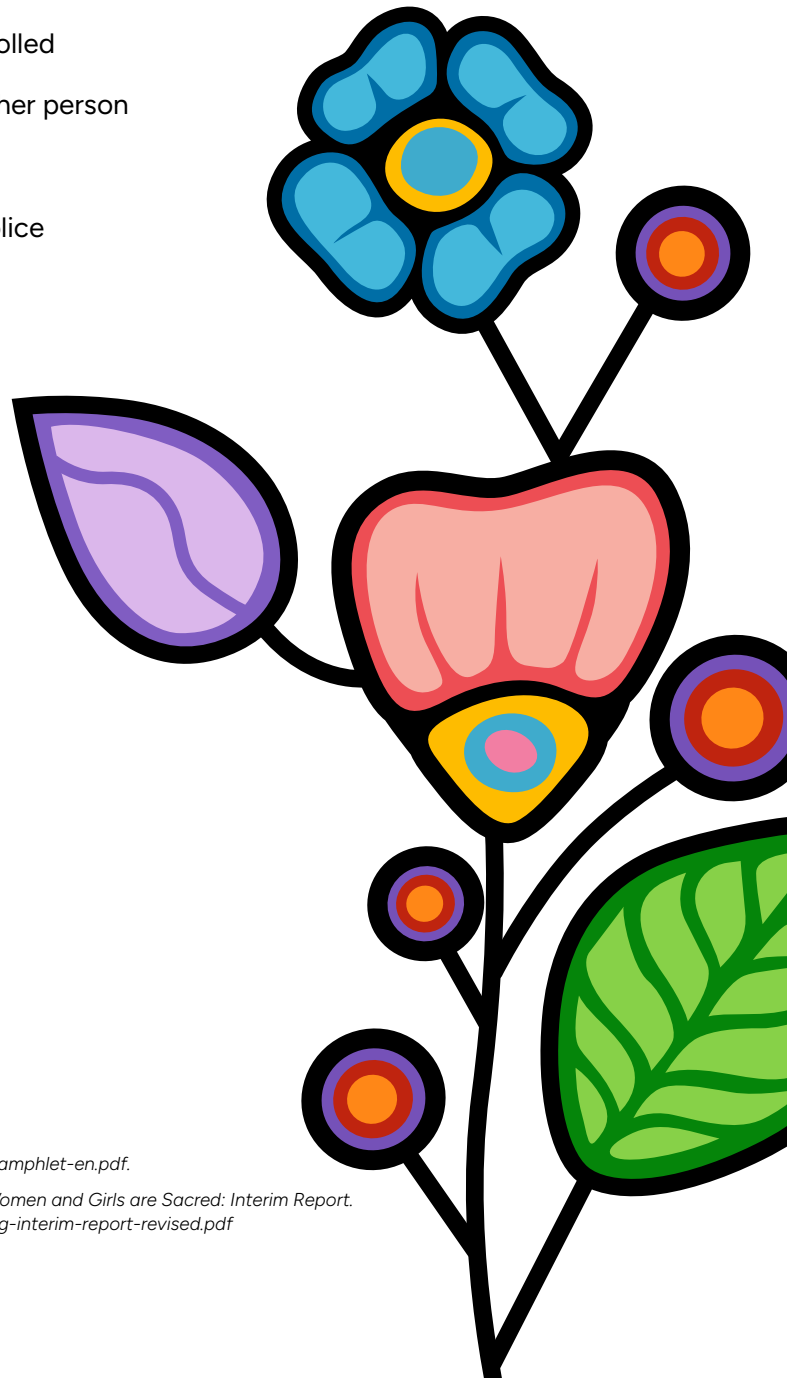
Who is trafficked and sexually exploited

While anyone can be trafficked or sexually exploited, there are circumstances that increase the risk including poor social or economic conditions, insecure housing status, lack of education, experience in child welfare system and a history of violence or abuse.

These factors are overrepresented in the lives of many Indigenous women girls and gender diverse people making them more likely to be targeted for trafficking.³ Indigenous women, girls and gender diverse individuals are more likely to be human trafficked or sexually exploited because of the ongoing impacts of colonization in Canada.⁴

Signs of Human Trafficking or Sexual Exploitation

- Being forced to work against their will
- Being threatened (explicitly or implicitly) if they want to leave their current situation
- Having their movements and activities closely controlled
- Being bonded by debt, coercion, or violence to another person
- Having limited contact with family or friends
- Being fearful or anxious in general or afraid of the police or other authorities
- Having their health deteriorate or display signs of physical or mental abuse
- Suddenly having nice things when they are not employed
- For children, living with someone unrelated to them who is not a guardian
- For children, not attending school or working during school hours



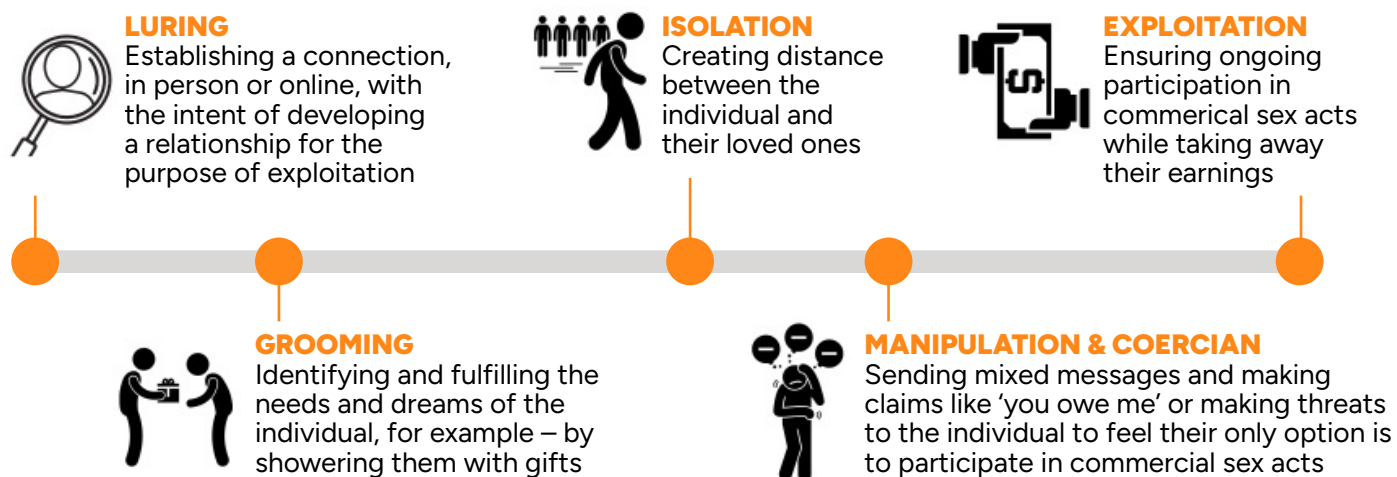
3. *Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Prevent and Protect What You Need to Know and Do*, www.who.int/docs/default-source/documents/ethics/sexual-exploitation-and-abuse-pamphlet-en.pdf.

4. *National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (2017), Our Women and Girls are Sacred: Interim Report*. Retrieved online at <http://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wpcontent/uploads/2018/03/ni-mmiwg-interim-report-revised.pdf>

Stages of Sexual Exploitation

Victims are not usually chosen at random but chosen because they are lacking things in their life that the trafficker is ready to provide for them. Although the traffickers may form different relationships with their victims (i.e., romantic partner, friend, drug dealer, protector, etc.), this pattern of stages is still typically seen, just with different actions.

SEX TRAFFICKING: HOW IT HAPPENS



canadiansextraffickinghotline.ca

Reasons for Not Leaving

This list has been adapted from the Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking and while this list is not exhaustive it does help understand why many individuals might not feel they can leave exploitative or trafficking situations:

- Not seeing themselves as victims because they have a relationship with their trafficker- it could be their partner, family member or friend
- Not trusting people in positions of authority
- Not knowing their rights or services they are eligible for
- Feeling as if they have a debt to pay back for things like gifts, substances, accommodation or food
- Feeling alone, isolated, helpless with no where else to turn
- Fearing for their safety or the safety of others known to them
- They may have taken part in survival sex exchange – being trafficked for food shelter or substances
- They may be experiencing severe trauma which makes them unable to advocate for themselves.

Engaging with Survivors of Human Trafficking

Engagement with human trafficking survivors must be built on choice, safety and consent. Ensuring that engagement is Culturally based, Gender Responsive and Trauma informed are key. We must ensure these are the key factors in implementation so that we can stop the ongoing victimization of Indigenous people in the institutions built to empower them.

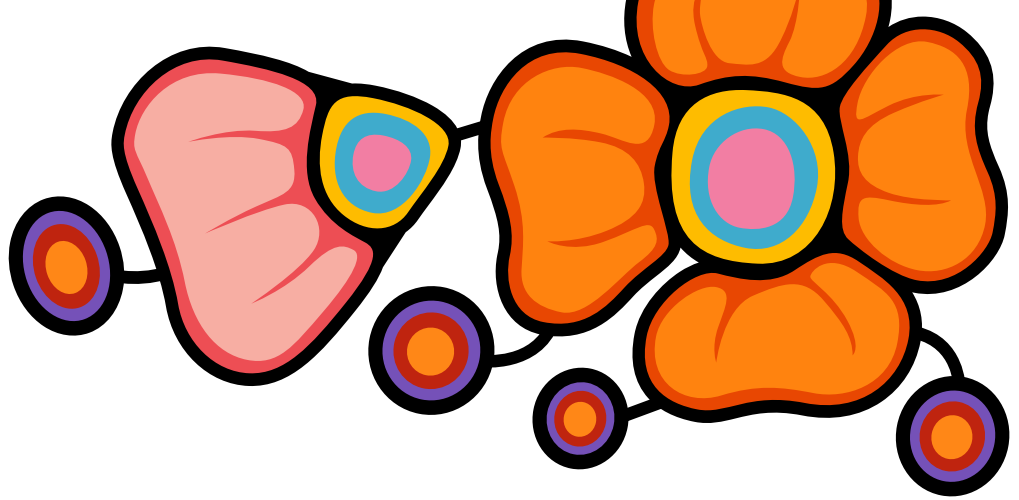
It often takes several attempts to leave an abusive situation (on average 7). Wrap around comprehensive services will be instrumental in their recovery with survivors often benefiting from 24-7 services to assist them during recovery.

Ongoing case management for human trafficking survivors/victims will be crucial so that they have a connection to supports to meet basic necessities such as food, shelter, trauma counselling, money and health care court support.

Once basic needs are attended to they may require additional supports including assistance in registering for school or alternative education programs. They may also be looking to seek employment opportunities or life skills training opportunities. Should a survivor/victim request they may want to communicate with police or lawyers in legal proceedings which they may need support, as well as regaining access to identification.

Following are a few frameworks to lean on in your trauma informed practice.





Stages of Change

Healing from trafficking is not a linear process. Assessing an individual in relation to stages of change can help you better understand what they need and guide your engagement with them.

The stages of change model teaches us there are no standard lengths of time for each stage, and many individuals move back and forth among the stages. They may progress quickly through one stage, then may require longer at others, and then may be at a standstill in another. Trauma-informed care will be the best tool to provide the compassionate, patient and non-judgmental care survivors need.

Recognizing stages of change is like a sign post that allows the Advocate to assess the capacity of a survivor. With this knowledge, we champion their empowerment to make the changes they want in their lives. It's also a reminder that progress occurs in stages and that the work is a long-term, dynamic and wholly individualized process.

The stages of change (or the transtheoretical model), developed by Prochaska and DiClemente⁵, breaks down the stages as follows:

- 1** Pre-contemplation: At this stage, people are not thinking about change or planning on taking action in the foreseeable future.
- 2** Contemplation: People at this stage are starting to think about change and weighing the pros and cons.
- 3** Preparation: Here, people are motivated to change. They believe change can lead to more positive outcomes and are taking small steps towards it.
- 4** Action: This is when people have recently changed their behaviour and intend to keep moving forward with these changes.
- 5** Maintenance: At this stage, people have sustained the change in behaviour and intend on continuing their effort to maintain the change.

Depending on which stage of change the person is in, they will be more or less open to the idea of changing and having discussions about it. Therefore, it's important to adjust your engagement accordingly to not push them away or further cause harm.

5. Prochaska, J. O., & DiClemente, C. C. (1982). *Transtheoretical therapy: Toward a more integrative model of change*. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research & Practice*, 19(3), 276–288. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0088437>

Working with the stages of change

The following are a few guiding points, to help you work with individuals at each stage of change:

Pre-contemplation

- Explore survivors' thoughts and feelings. Find out what they're focusing on and how they would like you to assist them.
- Use motivational interviewing techniques to discover moments of internal conflict and talk about it with the survivor.
- Relationship development will be key here – empower them without pressure

Contemplation

- Help them identify the pros and cons of given issues or desired outcomes.
- When the pros outweigh the cons, they may be motivated and ready to move to the next step.
- Utilize this time to provide other options in non challenging ways- hang posters- start conversations-

Preparation

- Support survivors to identify concrete steps towards their goals:
 - If they're looking to quit drinking, inform them of resources and options available to help them such as detox programs, peer support groups, medication, etc.
- Determine together what you can do to support them with these steps.
- Be honest about potential barriers so they are prepared, but also help remove barriers for them by advocating within systems prior to starting the process
- Assist by attending if requested with them to appointments, or any expectations to feel they are supported in change
- PRAISE PRAISE PRAISE

Action

- Working with the survivor, help them put their plan in place and activate it:
 - If the survivor would like to join a support group, you can accompany them for the first few meetings if it's helpful.
 - Begin adding other supports that can provide wrap around support for them when we might not be available

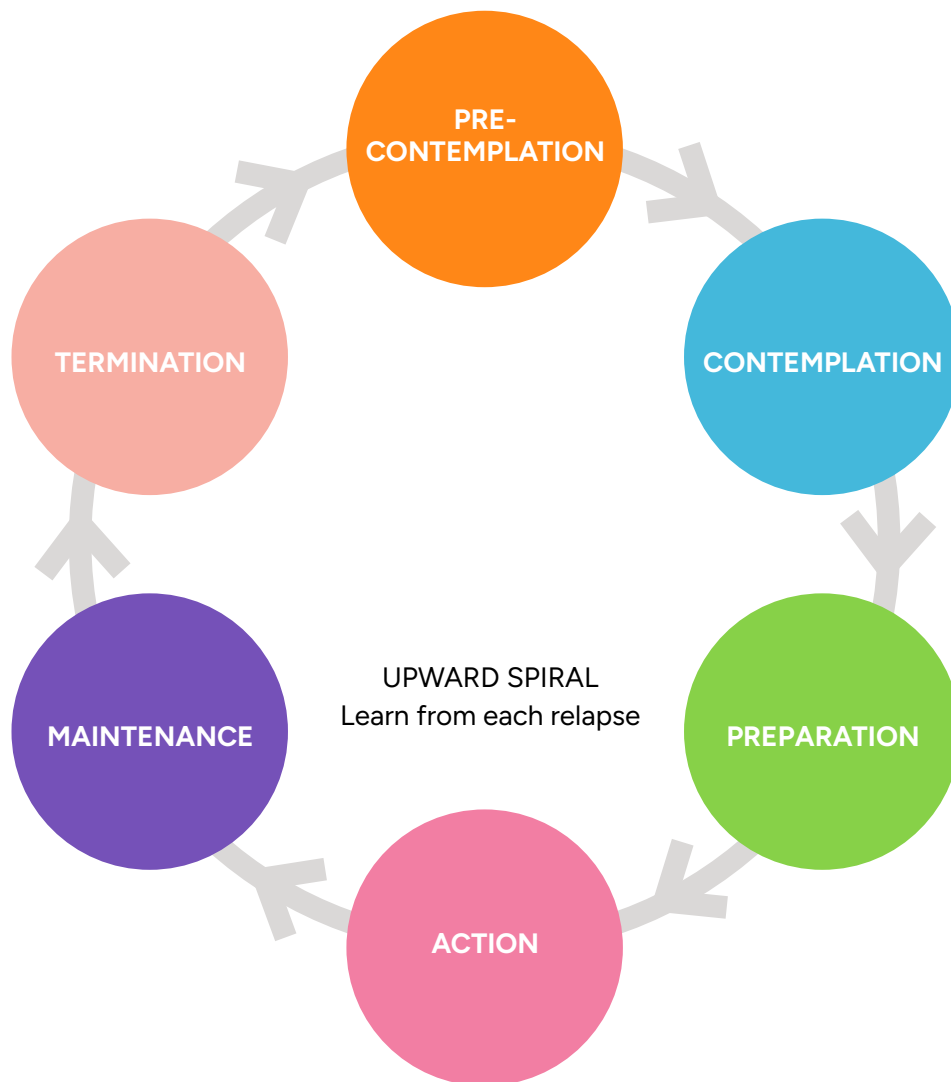
Maintenance

- With the survivor, identify strategies they can apply to maintain the gains they've achieved.
- Together, determine if other instrumental supports can also assist with maintenance.
- This is an opportunity to identify additional goals (new goals as well as goals they may have previously had which may appear much more achievable now).

Listen patiently and attentively, use open-ended questions and offer a safe space for the person to speak. Doing this builds your relationship, gives you a better sense of how they feel, what their needs are and how to move forward.

As service providers, our mandate is to offer assistance in the best way we can and much of that is about meeting the individual where they're at in their journey. They will shift and change only when they're ready to do so.

THE STAGES OF CHANGE MODEL



Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs & Human Trafficking

Human trafficking exploits the basic needs of victims, often targeting those who are vulnerable due to unmet physical, emotional, and psychological needs.

Physiological Needs: Traffickers often prey on individuals who lack access to food, shelter, and basic necessities. Victims are manipulated with promises of support.

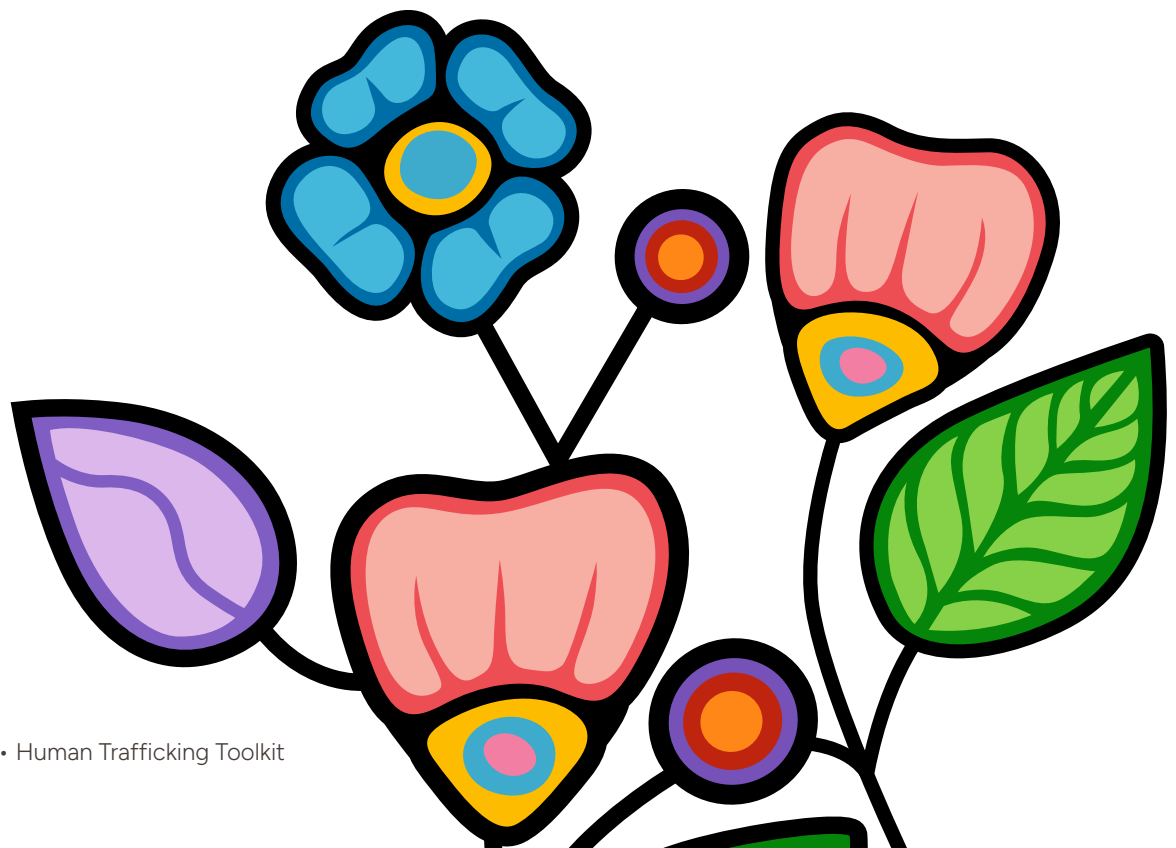
Safety & Security Needs: Victims are often isolated, stripped of security, and made to feel unsafe, making escape seem impossible.

Belonging & Love Needs: Traffickers exploit emotional vulnerabilities, promising affection, care, or a sense of belonging.

Self-Esteem: Victims may suffer from a loss of self-worth, with traffickers using manipulation and control to break their spirit.

Self-Actualization: Victims are often deprived of the opportunity to reach their full potential, kept in situations of exploitation and fear.

Understanding these needs helps us see how trafficking exploits the human psyche. By addressing these gaps, we can prevent trafficking and support survivors in rebuilding their lives.

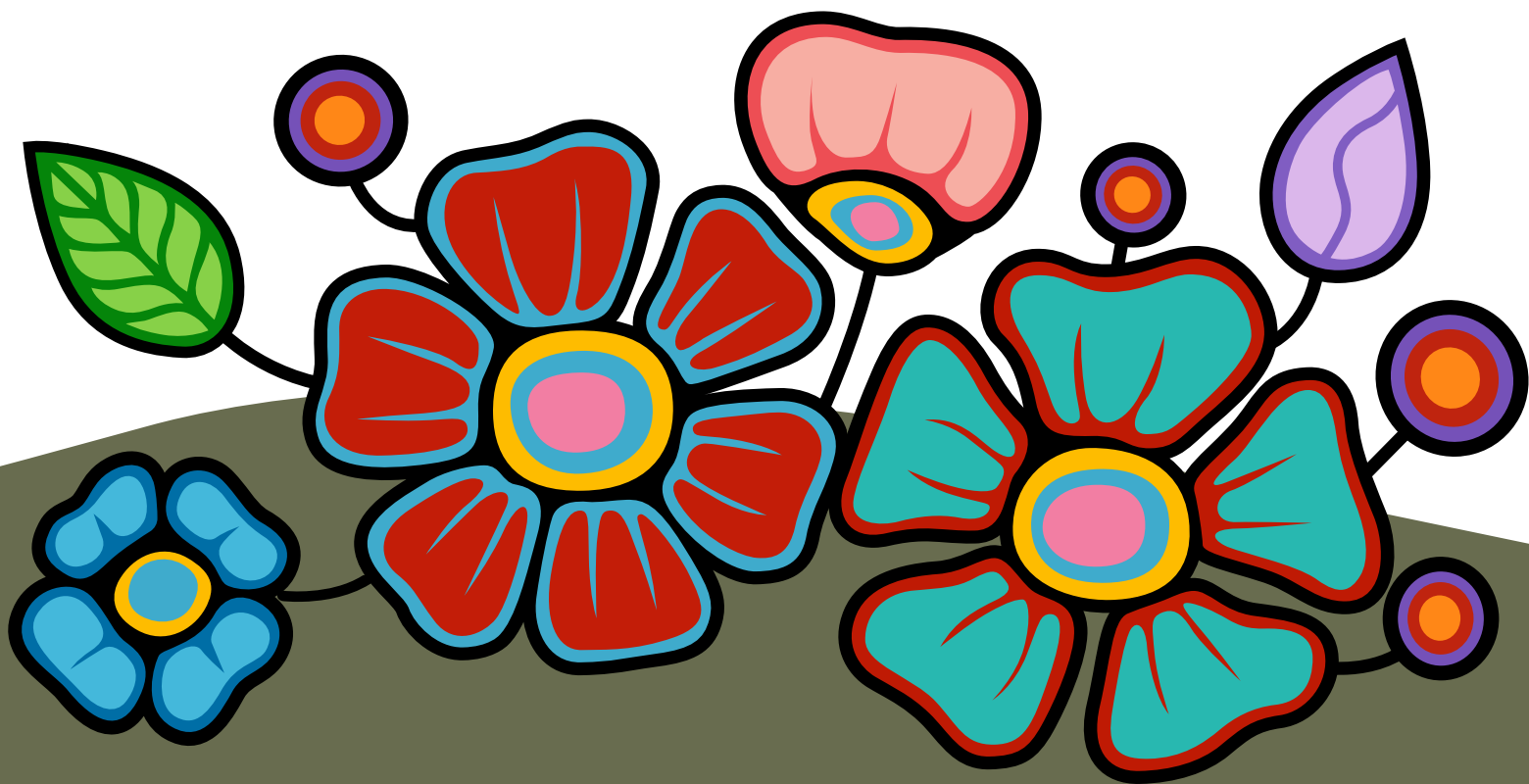


Nokiiwin Tribal Council is committed to working in partnership with its Member First Nations to foster unity, strengthen communities, and support sustainable growth, well-being, and prosperity. Through collaboration, respect, and shared leadership, Nokiiwin strives to empower its Member First Nations while advancing community priorities and opportunities for future generations.

Our communities include:

- Animbiigoo Zaagi'igan Anishinaabek
- Biinjitiwaabik Zaaging Anishinaabek
- Bingwi Neyaashi Anishinaabek
- Fort William First Nation
- Netmizaaggamig Nishnaabeg
- Ojibway Nation of Saugeen





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