



**Centring Relationships
To End Violence**

BUSINESS PLAN

2025 - 2028

September 2024



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Executive Summary

The Centring Relationships to End Violence (CREV) initiative enhances the well-being of Indigenous survivors of gender-based and sexual violence through a ground-breaking approach to integrated services through relationship building.

In 2021, the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services (AASAS), the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters (ACWS), and the Alberta Native Friendship Centres Association (ANFCA) launched CREV with a commitment to changing the way we operated – from leadership to front-line service delivery. Our shared purpose is built around three outcomes:

- 1 Fostering trusting, authentic relationships, mutual learning, and shared expertise
- 2 Strengthened culturally safe services through integration and capacity building
- 3 Systems change and policy development within our networks, our province, and beyond

This Business Plan describes the CREV strategic goals for 2025-2028, including plans to formalize our working relationships in our policy, staffing, and organizational development work among the 87 agencies we represent across Alberta.

CREV will expand our work, convening front-line leaders to build relationships across the sector, and enhancing their capacity to serve Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQ+ survivors of gender-based and sexual violence through culturally safe services. We will also launch new, community-based initiatives to better integrate our approaches and ensure that an Indigenous survivor finds “no wrong door” when seeking help.

Organizational Overview

The CREV Tri-Association represents 21 Friendship Centres, 15 Sexual Assault Service Centres, and 51 Women's Shelters across Alberta. Together, we serve thousands of individuals in more than 50 communities.

In 2021, the Provincial Association Leaders (PALs) came together to consider whether enhancing relationships might result in improved access to services, better meeting the needs of Indigenous women who have survived violence and abuse. We took inspiration from the opening chapter in the report on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls:



“Relationships are the key to both understanding the causes of violence and to making changes to end violence in the lives of indigenous [people]... the lives of our women in our community depend on it.”

- Expert Witness Sandra Montour,

a Mohawk woman and executive director of Ganahkwasra Family Assault Support Service.

(Source: National inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. “Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Volume 1a.” pp.93-94)

Leadership Team

Since launching this relationship-based strategy in 2021, the PALs have met twice monthly to grow mutual understanding and develop opportunities for service integration.

Our leadership team includes:



anfca
alberta native friendship
centres association

Jeannette MacInnis

Director of Strategic
Partnerships

ACWS
Alberta Council of
Women's Shelters

Jan Reimer

Executive Director

ASSOCIATION
OF ALBERTA
**SEXUAL ASSAULT
SERVICES**

Haley Scott

Co-Chief
Executive Director

Wise Practice

Dedicate *Quality Time*

The amount of time it will take to build authentic relationships is not predictable. It can't be work-planned or held to a schedule. It must happen organically and take as long as it takes.



Our Strategy

Such a relationship-based strategy is consistent with Indigenous values and practices, and reimagines colonized approaches that are commonly found in the social sector. Rather than adding collaboration as a component of a plan or deliverable, we pursue authentic relationships as foundational, creating opportunities for mutual learning, trust, and integration in our work.

CREV's Affiliation Charter states that the participating organizations agree to make key decisions and hold accountability together, sharing power and authority while delegating roles.

Responsibilities such as financial administration, project management, and communications are shared amongst the agencies depending on grant agreements, staff capacity, and critical timelines. These roles are expected to continue evolving over time.

In launching this relationship-based strategy, the PALs established principles to guide our actions. These principles were delineated in the CREV initiative's Wise Practices, which are listed throughout this document.

Wise Practice

Put *Relationships* first

The relationship facilitates collaboration that is grounded in trust and an understanding of one another's strengths and needs.



Needs Assessment

The Tri-Association works together to respond to a gap in effective services for Indigenous survivors of violence in Alberta. The lasting and pervasive effects of historic trauma and institutionalized racism create a fear and reluctance among Indigenous women and girls to report the violence they experience. The scope of gender-based and sexual violence is illustrated through the following statistics:

66% of Indigenous Albertans reported experiencing sexual violence in their lifetimes, as compared to 43% of non-Indigenous respondents.¹

Over 25% of Intimate Partner Homicide victims between 2014 and 2019 were Indigenous women.²

In 2017, rates of sexual assault against Indigenous women were **more than 3 times higher** than among non-Indigenous women.³

Between 2012 and 2020*, Indigenous women comprised **50-55%** of admissions to ACWS members shelters, and are consistently rated at **“extreme” risk of homicide (65-70%)**.⁴

¹ Alberta Association of Sexual Assault Services. “Prevalence of Child Sexual Abuse and Sexual Assault in Alberta.” January 29, 2020, p. 7 & 11.

² Statistics Canada. (2020). Homicide in Canada, 2019.

³ Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces (SSPPS), 2018

⁴ Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters. “ACWS Annual Shelter Statistics 2019-20.” 2020.
*ACWS no longer identifies percentages of Indigenous clients in recognition of First Nations Principles of ownership, control, access, and possession of information (OCAP).



Wise Practice

Make *Generous* assumptions

This creates a space where judgment is suspended to facilitate vulnerability and open, honest conversation to promote deeper learning about one another.



The CREV participants recognize that enhancing the well-being of Indigenous survivors of gender-based and sexual violence will require transformational change to relationships between ANFCA, AASAS and ACWS and our member agencies.

During 2023 and 2024, participants in CREV-led engagements and Knowledge Exchanges throughout Alberta expressed their desire to begin this work, and identified the following goals for this initiative.

-  **Build authentic, meaningful relationships before attempting collaboration.**
-  **Enhance cultural safety, including reviewing policies and procedures.**
-  **Incorporate Indigenous practices in non-Indigenous agencies daily.**
-  **Encourage honest communication, learning, and understanding.**



Wise Practice

Start with *Purpose & Values*

This starts the relationship with a common vision to work toward and a common language to work from.



Milestones Achieved

The CREV initiative has resulted in a series of significant developments as a relationship-based strategy for inter-agency integration. Building on a regular and ongoing investment of time, the PALs have established the groundwork for expanding our engagement across our 87 member agencies in Alberta. This involved extensive cross-network engagement through regional Communities of Practice (COPs), 11 community engagement sessions, a meeting with Indigenous survivors of violence, and a provincial Knowledge Exchange conference.

CREV gratefully acknowledges the funding received from Women and Gender Equality Canada, Alberta ministry of Arts, Culture and Status of Women, and the Canadian Women's Foundation.



Wise Practice

Get to know each other as *People*

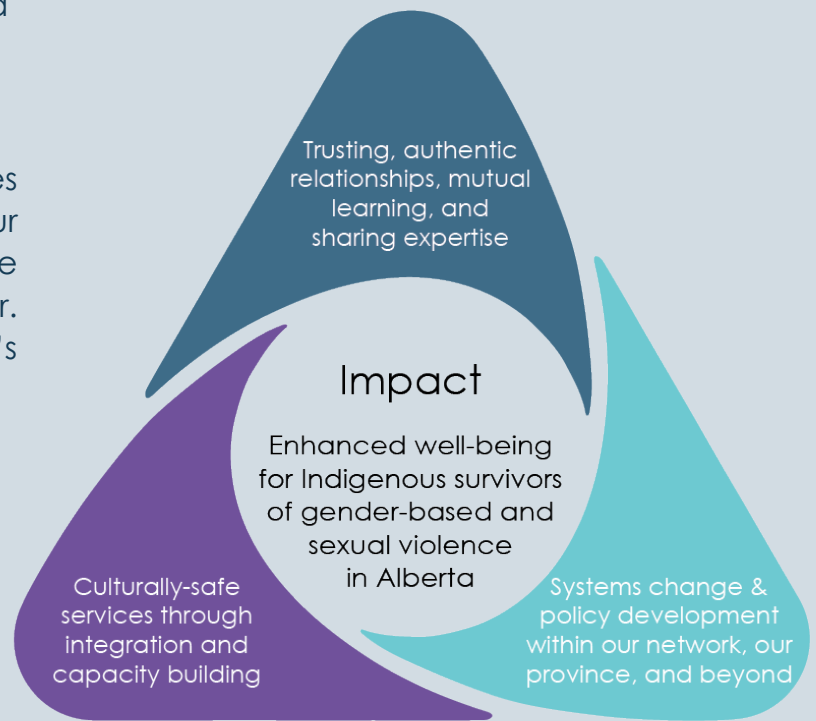
Knowing each other on a personal level helps to build trust that fosters every other aspect of the relationship and the work to be done together.

Impact & Outcomes

Centring Relationships to End Violence enhances the well-being of Indigenous survivors of gender-based and sexual violence in Alberta through:

- 1 Fostering trusting, authentic relationships, mutual learning, & sharing expertise
- 2 Strengthened culturally safe services through integration & capacity building
- 3 Systems change & policy development within our networks, our province, & beyond

This statement of purpose encapsulates the three measurable outcomes of our vision and expresses the impact we seek to achieve in coming together. These are the building blocks of CREV's outcomes measurement framework.



Wise Practice

Provide tangible *Allyship*



All organizations serving Indigenous survivors of gender-based violence must be prepared to provide holistic support for a broad range of needs to effectively serve Indigenous clients even if their organization typically has a much narrower scope.

4-Phase Plan

CREV began with an informal question:

What transformation might result from starting with authentic relationships and a sincere approach to understanding the experiences of Indigenous survivors of gender-based and sexual violence?

As ACWS, AASAS and ANFCA have observed the benefits of this approach and the need to extend it beyond provincial leadership, we are formalizing it through a multi-year Business Plan.

While we envision a timeframe of at least three years, this process is reliant upon authentic connections among people and communities. As such, we expect progress in the direction we have established, while acknowledging that timelines will require elasticity based on the organic approach to relationship building.

During 2025-2028 the CREV participants intend to build on our experience by further engaging and equipping the 87 Board of Directors, Executive Directors, their management teams, and front-line staff across Alberta to centre relationships within their communities and regions. This new growth process will be supported by dedicated staff within each association and a Guiding Circle of experienced advisors drawn from among our member agencies.

CREV's unique leadership role through each provincial association allows us to be catalysts for sector-wide transformation and community-specific initiatives. The new CREV provincial strategy will progress through the following phases:





Foundation

Staffing

One (1) Program Lead (Indigenous) will direct the work of three (3) Program Coordinators. Each Coordinator will be based within one of the Association offices, and be responsible for engaging member agencies and facilitating knowledge exchange and cross-network relationship-building.

Guiding Circle

A group of 12 experienced representatives from a cross-section of member agencies and Indigenous Knowledge Keepers will identify new approaches to linking and improving service integration.

Program Design & Planning

With input from the Guiding Circle, CREV staff will convene for planning and advise the PALs on promising approaches to serving Indigenous survivors through increased connection and integration between agencies serving the same populations.

Key Steps

- ◆ Tri-Association leaders initiate hiring and onboarding of staff
- ◆ Recruit a Guiding Circle
- ◆ Prepare for activities in the next phases of the program.



Sector-Wide Initiatives

Convening Member Agencies

CREV Coordinators will bring agency leaders together via online relationship-building events through four region-specific Communities of Practice each quarter. This opportunity to connect across service areas within geographic quadrants of Alberta is a primary method of growing understanding and trust between leaders. An annual Knowledge Exchange conference will gather representatives from across the province to promote participation, cultivate new relationships, and assess progress toward enhancing the well-being of Indigenous survivors.

Developing Cultural Resources

Drawing upon the PALs experience and input from Knowledge Keepers, Coordinators will share culturally safe practices and policy resources to assist agencies in better serving Indigenous people. These will include curriculum development and capacity-building training for Executive Directors, Boards, and front-line staff.

Improving Member Communication

CREV will launch new methods of promoting learning and participation in cross-agency relationships through an electronic newsletter highlighting positive experiences from members and best practices. We will also produce orientation videos highlighting the PALs experience of centring relationships and provide social media channels for member participation and networking.

Key Steps

- ◆ Hold 16 online Communities of Practice per year
- ◆ Convene 1 Knowledge Exchange gathering per year
- ◆ Develop and share culturally safe practices, policy resources, and capacity-building training for member agencies
- ◆ Initiate member communication via video, newsletter and social media





Community-Specific Initiatives

Fostering Local Relationships

CREV Coordinators and Guiding Circle will work to identify leading communities where two or three member agencies are ready to pursue more intentional relationship growth and service innovation.

Launching Proposal-Based Programs

CREV will invite these promising groups to apply for funding through a proposal-based initiative targeting relationship-based service integration. Applicants will be responsible for designing a needs assessment, program plan, and evaluation process, with support from CREV Coordinators.

Three projects from across the province will receive two-year funding, with Coordinator support for proposal development and reporting. Each project will be eligible for a maximum of \$200,000 per year, and CREV will require applicants to allocate funds equitably between participating agencies.

Enhancing Service Integration

Initiative concepts may include cross-training opportunities for staff, culturally safe service provision within women's shelters or sexual assault service centres, access to trauma counselling for Indigenous women within Friendship Centres, or other innovative ideas. Each proposal will integrate CREV's Wise Practices alongside relationship-building investment by participating members.

Key Steps

- ◆ Prioritize community-based, cross-network relationship building among leading member agencies throughout Alberta
- ◆ Launch 3 grant-based initiatives during years 2 and 3
- ◆ Develop integrated, culturally safe service provision and policies in participating Friendship Centres, sexual assault service centres, and women's shelters.



Systems Change

Public Awareness

This multi-year plan provides an opportunity to build public awareness of innovative approaches to enhancing well-being for Indigenous survivors. The PALs will continue to exercise a primary role in external communications through the shared CREV website, videos, social media, publications, and representing our members at the provincial, national and international levels.

We believe a relationship-first strategy is a replicable model for reconciliation efforts and social justice work across all sectors.

Policy Analysis & Engagement

Indigenous cultural safety and the integration of services form the basis of new policy models for agencies in the non-profit space as well as funding entities. The relative absence of viable examples serves to highlight CREV's importance, and the potential for transformative approaches that arise from Indigenous values and practices.

Evaluation & Reporting

CREV will develop evaluation frameworks and reporting systems that embody Indigenous wisdom while addressing qualitative and quantitative indicators of our impact.

Key Steps

- ◆ Increase public awareness and communications in support of the CREV relationship model and enhanced well-being for Indigenous survivors of gender-based and sexual violence
- ◆ Create new policy models for use among non-profits and external partners such as funding agencies
- ◆ Develop impact evaluation and reporting methods relevant to Indigenous approaches and reconciliation within Alberta and beyond.



Activities

Our multi-year Business Plan incorporates activities that directly contribute to these outcomes, through the following indicators:

Impact	Outcomes	Activities	Year(s)		
			2025	2026	2027
Enhanced well-being for Indigenous survivors of gender-based and sexual violence in Alberta	Trusting, authentic relationships, mutual learning, and sharing expertise	PALs meet bi-weekly to embody Wise Practices & share learnings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Enlist Guiding Circle for program input by member agencies	<input type="checkbox"/>		
		Quarterly online Communities of Practice in each province quadrant	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Annual Alberta-wide Knowledge Exchange conference	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Community-specific, proposal-based initiatives - relationship building		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Culturally safe services through integration and capacity building	Member communication; video, newsletter, social media, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Culturally safe practices, and policy resources development and training for member agencies		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Community-specific, proposal-based initiatives for service integration		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Systems change & policy development within our network, our province, & beyond	Public awareness via PALs-led communication activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Evaluation framework development and outcomes reporting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Policy analysis, development and engagement to promote CREV model			<input type="checkbox"/>

Resources & Implementation

The program outcomes require a high degree of regular, ongoing contact and support, alongside diligent financial accountability. Achieving our ambitious Business Plan will require each association's CREV Coordinator to serve as a liaison with their respective member agencies across Alberta while implementing activities in tandem with the two other Coordinators, the Program Lead, and the PALs. Their financial and administrative support will ensure that accountability and reporting requirements are met.

CREV's innovative approach to community-specific initiatives will provide funding for leading member agencies to develop new ways of working together and sharing experience and expertise regarding services for Indigenous survivors of gender-based and sexual violence.

ACWS will serve as the fiscal agent for the CREV affiliates, while ANFCA will provide Program Leadership specific to Indigenous cultural safety and engagement. AASAS will contribute its expertise to overall project management and communication.



Wise Practice

Create *Transparency*

Carve out time to check in with one another and have informal conversations to help deepen and strengthen relationships in addition to necessary business items.



Resources

A risk assessment defined potential setbacks and mitigation strategies to ensure the CREV program's success in achieving its outcomes.

Risk / Constraint	Mitigation
<p>Loss of momentum and shared knowledge due to staff turnover or additional of new leaders (Coordinators, etc.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Meaningful participation in PALs by 2 contacts from each association ● Coordinators join as a group of 3, and have a Program Lead to guide ● Thoughtfully designed orientation process for new leaders ● Develop shared record-keeping via online file storage system
<p>Differing scale of associations (# of member agencies) could place unequal demands on coordinators or limit participation within each network</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Program Lead to monitor coordinator workload distribution ● Coordinators will lead sector-wide initiatives as a team ● Community-specific initiatives are limited in scale
<p>Failure to secure adequate funding to fulfil CREV Business Plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Scale projects to sustainable level, leveraging in-kind resources ● Outreach to funders
<p>Competing priorities from projects within each association could shift focus away from CREV work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CREV incorporated into each association's strategic goals and planning to ensure continued alignment ● PALs regular meetings and monitoring progress of Program Lead and Coordinator according to established timelines
<p>Local communities unable to fulfil their commitment to special initiatives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Co-define outcomes with member agencies ● Ensure application process qualifies applicants 'capacity to meet goals ● Coordinator engagement to monitor and encourage progress ● Project charters include deliverables, termination clause, and staggered payment schedules



Wise Practice

Educate Partners

Building authentic relationships requires a supportive environment and that takes education and negotiation.

Budget

	Year 1 25-26	Year 2 26-27	Year 3 27-28	TOTAL	
Staff wages & other related staff costs	\$ 464,230	\$ 496,441	\$ 503,663	\$ 1,464,334	
Sector-Wide Initiatives	i. Guiding Circle	\$ 20,640	\$ 20,640	\$ 20,640	\$ 61,920
	ii. Communities of Practice	\$ 13,080	\$ 13,080	\$ 13,080	\$ 39,240
	iii. Knowledge Exchange	\$ 87,500	\$ 87,500	\$ 87,500	\$ 262,500
	iv. Culturally safe practices & policy resources	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000	\$ 60,000
	v. Curriculum development	\$ 35,000	\$ 35,000	\$ 35,000	\$ 105,000
	vi. Professional fees	\$ 6,000	\$ 6,000	\$ 6,000	\$ 18,000
Community-Specific Initiatives	\$ 0	\$ 600,000	\$ 600,000	\$ 1,200,000	
Systems Change	i. Social Policy Analysis & Engagement	\$ 12,500	\$ 25,000	\$ 12,500	\$ 50,000
	ii. Evaluation framework, data collection, reporting	\$ 25,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 15,000	\$ 50,000
	iii. Professional fees	\$ 51,000	\$ 57,000	\$ 51,000	\$ 159,000
Other Project Costs	i. Office Expenses	\$ 70,378	\$ 53,778	\$ 55,778	\$ 179,934
	ii. Communications & Marketing	\$ 40,000	\$ 40,000	\$ 40,000	\$ 120,000
Administration Costs	\$ 126,799	\$ 219,666	\$ 219,024	\$ 565,489	
Totals	\$ 972,127	\$ 1,684,105	\$ 1,679,185	\$ 4,335,417	



Invest Resources

Wise Practice

Relationships require human and financial resources to create a space where other aspects of work will not be compromised, and people can be fully present.

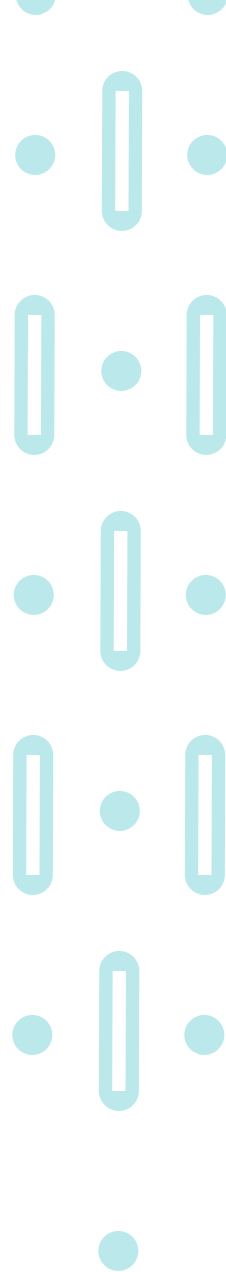


Conclusion

Centring Relationships to End Violence represents an approach to improving cultural safety and program integration that would be impossible through traditional methods of planning that utilize inflexible pre-determined objectives. Our model emerged from a commitment to relationship-building and a shared learning process, informed by the *Wise Practices* that continue to guide our journey.

As we engaged our 87 member agencies and shared these principles, they identified gaps in resources for fostering authentic relationships and ensuring that services available to Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQ+ people are culturally safe. Our multi-year plan provides for the personnel, programming, and policy initiatives to address these needs through local and province-wide initiatives.

We will continue to enhance the well-being of Indigenous survivors of gender-based and sexual violence by supporting our member agencies in transforming their relationships, integrating services, and creating systems and policy change throughout our network, across Alberta, and beyond.



Wise Practice

Support each other through adversity
& *Celebrate* successes together

This forum provides a place to share challenges and frustrations as well as successes and proud moments with people who truly understand.





centringrelationships.ca