



Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Motion 29-19(2): Systemic Racism

Motion

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Deh Cho, that this Legislative Assembly calls upon the Government of the Northwest Territories to review its policies and practices for racial and cultural bias, especially as they relate to education, health and social services, justice, housing and government hiring;

AND FURTHER, that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a comprehensive response to this motion within 120 days.

GNWT Response

Systemic racism is real. It exists in the Northwest Territories (NWT), and it exists in our government. Sadly, some of our institutions, policies, and practices continue to disadvantage or discriminate against people based on their national origin, race, religion, ethnicity, gender and culture. This type of discrimination has the harmful effect of excluding, displacing, or marginalizing some groups of people, or creating unfair barriers for them to access valuable opportunities and services.

The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) is committed to addressing systemic racism. One way we are doing this is through working on reconciliation and the affirmation and advancement of Indigenous rights and self-determination. Currently, the GNWT is engaging with Indigenous governments to identify changes required in legislation and policies to best reflect the principles set out in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UN Declaration). Consistent with Article 38 of the UN Declaration, the GNWT is working in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous peoples of the NWT by first understanding what implementing the UN Declaration means to Indigenous governments. A working group has been established with Indigenous governments to identify approaches to the implementation of the UN Declaration. Part of this implementation is looking at GNWT policies into ensure the principles of the UN Declaration and Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission are advanced. Work is also being done to improve reporting of GNWT activities relevant to the modern agreements and treaties.

Determining what bias exists in an organization requires changing the ways in which we design policies and programs and deliver services for residents. To that end, the GNWT recently committed to incorporating Gender-Based Analysis+ (GBA+) in decision making processes of Cabinet and the Financial Management Board. As an analytical tool used by governments, including the federal government, GBA+ assesses the potential impacts of policies, programs, services, and other initiatives on diverse groups of people.

The “plus” in GBA+ is important because it reflects that this analysis goes beyond biological (sex) and socio-cultural (gender) differences; GBA+ encourages the consideration of many identity factors, including Indigenous status, religion, sexual orientation, race, age, language, socio-economic status, and mental and physical ability, to critically assess how government activities impact northerners. The Gender Equity Division – a new unit established within the Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs – will be responsible for promoting GBA+ and training staff on how to use it. An online GBA+ course is available for all GNWT employees to complete through GNWT Online Learning.

The GNWT is committed to building and maintaining a workforce that embraces diversity, cultural awareness and inclusion. To that end, an Indigenous Cultural Awareness and Sensitivity Training program, *Living Well Together*, was launched in early 2021. This self-directed course provides skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism. The training is provided in two series: The Truth series, which focuses on awareness about colonization, residential schools and Indigenous, non-Indigenous relations; and the Reconciliation series, which focuses on developing cultural sensitivity and the practice of reconciliation. *Living Well Together* was developed by the GNWT departments of Finance, Education, Culture and Employment, and Health and Social Services. These departments, in turn, collaborated with many Indigenous Elders, community members and Indigenous artists to ensure the training reflected the diverse and authentic perspectives of Indigenous peoples from across the North. This self-directed training also fulfills the GNWT’s commitment to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action #57:

“To provide professional development and training for public servants on the history of Indigenous peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Indigenous rights, Indigenous law, and Indigenous–Crown relations. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism.”

These are just some of the ways in which the GNWT continues to seek ways to advance reconciliation, recognize and affirm Indigenous rights, build and maintain a diverse workforce, develop policies that are inclusive, and support expanded program and service delivery.

Outlined below, GNWT departments and agencies engage in other activities designed to address racial and cultural bias. This comprehensive response provides further information on the legislation, policies, programs, services and other initiatives that the GNWT currently has in place to mitigate systemic racism, with a focus on education, health and social services, justice, housing and government hiring.

Education

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) is mandated is to provide residents of the NWT with access to quality programs, services and support to assist them in making informed and productive choices for themselves and their families with regard to education, training, careers, employment and labour, child development, languages, culture and heritage.

The NWT education system makes Indigenous worldviews, culture, heritage and language central to learning. Culturally appropriate education programming is offered across the education continuum, and includes the promotion of Indigenous language, culture and heritage, as well as lessons and training on the history and ongoing legacy of colonization and residential schools for students and teachers.

Early Learning and Child Care

ECE has supported several initiatives that promote culturally appropriate early learning and child care through the 'Canada-NWT Early Learning and Child Care Agreement'. Examples of initiatives include developing a book called "Full of Feelings" that has been translated into all Indigenous languages; supporting professional learning opportunities from BushKids, an organization who provides forest and nature school learning opportunities for early childhood educators; and offering a Cultural Resource Grant, established by ECE, for the purchase of cultural materials and/or services to develop welcoming, culturally appropriate environments for children and their families within early childhood programs.

The draft NWT Early Learning Framework (ELF) was developed to include traditional knowledge. In preparation for piloting the ELF, it will be reviewed by Elders during the 2021-22 fiscal year. The ELF and associated Educator Guide is designed to support early childhood educators with a common vision, expectations, and shared understanding of creating optimal early learning environments for young children, from birth to school entry. Further, the ELF is an invitation to reflect on what we know about children's learning and development, and what early learning environments can be within the context and lived experiences of young children's families, communities, land and culture.

Junior Kindergarten to Grade 12 (JK-12) Education

Two foundational curricula have been developed within the NWT to respect the languages, worldviews and land of Indigenous peoples in the NWT: *Dene Kede* and *Inuuqatigiit*. Using the curricula appropriate to their school and community, all school administrators and teachers are expected to base their teaching in all subject areas on the Indigenous worldviews, cultures and languages of the communities in which the school is located. In addition, the *Our Languages* JK-12 Indigenous languages curriculum is the approved curriculum for the preservation and revitalization of the Indigenous languages of the NWT. Last year (2020-21) marked the first year of full implementation of this curriculum.

Residential school awareness is explored in Grade 4 and 5 Social Studies and studied in greater depth at Grade 10 in Northern Studies. The material is age appropriate at all levels. Grade 4 Social Studies explores the places, stories and traditions of the people of the NWT, while Grade 5 explores the history of Canada. Students learn about the historical, social and cultural characteristics of the NWT and develop understanding of diversity and shared experiences. Students also consider how life in Canada's North has changed and remained the same over time, especially since contact with European societies.

Northern Studies 10 is a mandatory graduation requirement, and it teaches about the land, languages, history, and cultures of the territory. It digs deeper into the history of the North, including colonization and the ongoing legacy of residential schools. The *Living Well Together* module, which focuses on historical and modern treaties, land claims and self-government agreements, as well as the *Residential School Awareness* module were developed collaboratively with residential school survivors, Northern leaders and educators who helped shape the content and objectives of the outcomes and lessons. Discussions and issues confronted within this course are important to our collective understanding of how we got here and how we live together today. ECE is currently working in partnership with Indigenous governments to develop Northern Studies 20 and 30.

ECE has also committed to providing higher-level academic courses to students in small communities through the Northern Distance Learning (NDL) program. This program helps to ensure that all students are given equal access to educational opportunities and not disadvantaged due to where they live. To date, the NDL program is offered in 19 small communities.

ECE is also working with the Black Advocacy Coalition (BACupNorth), a Black led non-profit organization committed to empowering the Black community and advancing racial justice and equity for all Black people in Canada's North. Together, they discuss their thoughts and recommendations on the inclusion of resources for NWT schools. They also work together to ensure that all NWT schools have access to books that represent students of colour so that they may see themselves reflected in their classrooms.

The Education Renewal and Innovation Framework: *Directions for Change* released in 2013 identifies 'Diversity' as one of eight Foundational Statements used to guide education in the NWT. The statement speaks to ensuring that diversity is recognized and valued in the education system, furthering that when people have different social, cultural, historical, linguistic, geographic, economic, spiritual and political backgrounds, they carry different world views, ways of learning and ways of doing.

Within *Directions for Change*, the GNWT also makes a commitment to ensure that the school and community work together to build and renew positive relationships, and to ensure that the strengths and realities of small communities are recognized and built upon in order to ensure equitable, quality education in all NWT communities.

The NWT School Funding Framework is a funding allocation tool used to distribute funding for JK-12 programs. Through this funding framework, ECE supports education bodies to provide Indigenous language education and enhance cultural teaching and learning within NWT schools that reflects the worldviews and cultures of the community.

Legislation and Policy

ECE is guided by legislation that promotes cultural diversity and inclusion. As set out in the *Education Act*, the NWT education system recognizes the relationship between languages, culture and learning, and that school programs must be based on the cultures of the NWT. The Act defines provisions regarding cultural diversity and language of instruction, governance and financial matters.

In addition, the foundational principles of the Ministerial Directive on 'Inclusive Schooling' respect *NWT Human Rights Act*. This legislation enables Inclusive Schooling to provide JK-12 students with programming focused on each student's unique strengths and learning needs, within a common learning environment in the community in which the student resides. Inclusive Schooling programming is inclusive of culture, language and context set within the classroom, school and larger communities.

The NWT JK-12 Indigenous Languages and Education (ILE) Policy highlights the ongoing commitment of ECE to reconciliation. ILE Policy supports education bodies in welcoming students within learning environments that center, respect and promote the Indigenous worldviews, cultures, and languages of the community in which the school is located. The NWT JK-12 Indigenous Languages and Education Procedures Manual and the NWT JK-12 Indigenous Languages and Education Handbook: *Our People, Our Land, Our Ways, Our Languages* (ILE Handbook) further outline how education bodies and their schools are expected to implement the new ILE Policy.

The ILE Handbook is a compilation of the research, promising practices and anecdotes of lived experiences and information for NWT educators to better understand how to operationalize the ILE Policy. In addition to containing wise practices regarding Indigenous languages and education programming in the NWT, the ILE Handbook serves as a user-friendly field guide, outlining actions and activities that educators can take to deliver quality education that promotes and enhances Indigenous languages and education in the NWT. Each section of the ILE Handbook corresponds to the defined principles of the ILE Policy.

Training

ECE provides Residential School Awareness Training for all teachers. This training ensures teachers learn about the history and legacy of residential schools in Canada and the NWT. Teachers also learn about the effects of intergenerational trauma that continue to impact teaching and learning in the NWT. In addition, the New to the NWT Educators' Conference (N2NEC) is a professional learning opportunity for all teachers new to teaching in the NWT, which includes Residential School Awareness Training and provides guidance on Indigenizing education, Inclusive Schooling, and trauma informed practices.

School principals are key in supporting students and their families, their staff, and the school-community relationship. Principals also need opportunities to learn, with supports to help them manage their many different responsibilities. Through the Educational Leadership Program, ECE delivers training and certification to NWT principals. Three days of the ten-day program are dedicated to land based activities where participants explore their role as leaders in their schools for promoting Indigenous languages and Indigenizing teaching and learning practices. These activities provide participants opportunities for examination of their personal values, beliefs and perspectives as a means of developing into culturally responsive school leaders.

The *Living Well Together* cultural sensitivity and awareness training program has also been made available to all teachers. NWT educators have begun to work through the program's modules, which include learning about decolonization and cultural safety focused predominantly around the impact on Indigenous peoples of the NWT.

Languages

ECE is responsible for the administration of the *NWT Official Languages Act* including the nine Indigenous languages: Dëne Sų́nė (Chipewyan), nēhiyawēwin (Cree), Gwich'in, Inuinnaqtun, Inuktitut, Inuvialuktun, Dene Kede (North Slavey), Dene Zhatı́e (South Slavey), and Tłı́chǝ. The Indigenous Education and Languages Secretariat is in place to support efforts to revitalize, promote and preserve Indigenous languages throughout the NWT. To support the efforts of Indigenous people and communities – who are best suited to preserve, revitalize and strengthen their languages and cultures – ECE provides funding directly to Indigenous governments to develop and provide language programs and services in their communities.

ECE has also launched an Indigenous Languages Revitalization initiative called the Mentor Apprentice Program (MAP). MAP is an innovative program that brings together a fluent Indigenous language speaker (mentor) and a learner (apprentice) who work together in their language to build language understanding and fluency. ECE partners with six Indigenous governments including: the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, Gwich'in Tribal Council, Sahtu Dene Council, Dehcho First Nations, Tłı́chǝ Government, and Akaitcho Territory Government to advance community MAP learning in the NWT.

Apprentices who have completed at least 25 hours in the program have seen an increase in their Indigenous language oral proficiency levels according to the MAP evaluation metric. Further, positive anecdotes from the regular check-ins with the MAP Project Coordinators have apprentices sharing their learning stories that include not only stories about fun and games using MAP learning resources, but also revitalization stories, such as awakening sleeping languages, reconciling identity issues, healing from intergenerational trauma, connecting families to their culture, and dealing with systemic racism. Some of the most powerful stories include dealing with the shame and inferiority that comes with not knowing or speaking one's Indigenous language.

Culture and Heritage

The GNWT acknowledges the importance of culture and heritage, together, and that a strong connection to one's culture has been shown to reduce crime, increase well-being, and help to address complex social problems¹. When communities engage in cultural activities together, a sense of belonging and teamwork result². From this acknowledgment, ECE developed a 10-year Culture and Heritage Strategic Framework (CHSF) followed by an Action Plan in 2019. The CHSF is a reflection of the collaborative work of all GNWT departments and contains actions to be carried out within specific departments. The CHSF and Action Plan applies to all GNWT departments, and promotes cultural tolerance and diversity within the NWT.

The Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre (PWNHC) acquires and manages objects and archival materials that represent the cultures and history of the NWT. The PWNHC plays a primary role in documenting and providing information about history and culture, and provides professional museum, archives and cultural resource management services to partner organizations.

¹ Cuypers, 2011

² Davis, 2014

By working with communities represented in museum exhibits, ECE is helping to spread tolerance and understanding of cultural diversity. For example, the PWNHC worked with the Tłıchǫ government in 2021 to host a community exhibit on the 100th anniversary Treaty 11.

Health and Social Services

The mandate of the Department of Health and Social Services (HSS) is to promote, protect and provide for the health and well-being of the people of the NWT. Throughout the NWT, the HSS system works to provide quality services for all NWT residents in the form of care that is respectful, responsive, and accessible. Research shows that Indigenous peoples experience a disproportionate amount of negative health and social outcomes in comparison to non-Indigenous people^{3,4}. It is our responsibility as a government to address this inequity directly by making sure that all aspects of the HSS system are culturally respectful and safe for Indigenous peoples. This also includes respecting Indigenous understandings of health and wellness and finding ways to accommodate traditional healing in our system.

Legislation

Federal legislation, *An Act respecting First Nation, Inuit, and Metis children, youth, and families (Federal Act)*, came into force on January 1, 2020. The *Federal Act* establishes new principles and standards for service provision that apply on a national level when providing services to Indigenous children, youth, and families. The *Federal Act* also affirms the inherent right of self-government, which includes jurisdiction in relation to child and family services (CFS). HSS is very supportive of Indigenous governments who are working to, or who are interested in, exercising jurisdiction over CFS, either through the pathways set out under the *Federal Act* or through a Final Self-Government Agreement. Indigenous governments lead the process, and HSS is assisting wherever possible with a focus on positive government-to-government relationships and information sharing

HSS has created two new CFS practice standards and aligned seven existing practice standards with the *Federal Act* to ensure consistent frontline service delivery across the NWT. As of April 2021, Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority and HSS have met with 4 Indigenous governments to discuss GNWT's implementation of the *Federal Act* and the impact of implementation on CFS delivery to their community members. These meetings have also focused on the strengthening partnerships in the best interest of children and youth. To ensure continued success, CFS has committed to ongoing and regular information and data sharing with Indigenous governments.

Initiatives

The GNWT has made it a priority to address systemic racism through the implementation of cultural safety and anti-racism initiatives across our health care system. We know that when barriers like systemic racism are removed, Indigenous residents are more likely to access health services when needed, leading to improved health outcomes.

³ Pan-Canadian Public Health Network. 2018.

⁴ 2019-2020 Report of the Director of Child and Family Services. 2020.

In response to the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action, the GNWT recognizes that cultural safety and anti-racism is an essential element of our health and social services system. Cultural safety is an outcome where Indigenous peoples feel safe and respected, free of racism and discrimination, when accessing health and social programs and services. HSS is now developing an NWT Cultural Safety Framework, which is being reviewed by the Indigenous Advisory Body and the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Leadership Council. Progress on the NWT Cultural Safety Framework, as well as work done by Cultural Safety and Anti-Racism Unit (described below), is reported quarterly to the Leadership Council and annually to the Indigenous Advisory Body. This reporting allows for ongoing feedback and guidance.

A Cultural Safety and Anti-Racism Unit was established in 2020-21 to lead HSS efforts to tackle systemic racism by operationalizing cultural safety and anti-racism into educational initiatives, policies, and processes. The Unit includes five new positions dedicated to these key areas: Manager, Cultural Safety and Anti-Racism; Senior Advisor, Culturally Safe Child and Family Services; two Content Specialists, Cultural Safety; and one intern. An existing position, Senior Advisor Indigenous Knowledge and Wellness, will also be part of this team. The unit will establish a Cultural Safety and Anti-Racism Learning Centre to strengthen staff capacity to deliver culturally safe care, program, and services. The Learning Centre will develop and evaluate evidence-based resources, tools, and training to address anti-Indigenous racism. This team will also be responsible for the development and delivery of cultural safety training.

This Unit also applies a critical lens to racial disparities; conducts research and engagement with clients, community members, policymakers, and front-line staff; undertakes concept-tests; and develops system-level capacities in the provision of culturally safe policies and practices. The Cultural Safety and Anti-Racism Unit team is comprised almost entirely of Indigenous staff from multiple nations and regions in the NWT, and has had Director and Manager roles filled by existing Indigenous staff who have been mentored and received education and professional development support. As the team expands, HSS is committed to building on this recruitment strategy while ensuring that positions are open to applicants from any community in the NWT to advance the work of operationalizing cultural safety and anti-racism.

Between December 2018 and July 2020, HSS delivered thirteen cultural safety training sessions. As part of pilot training designed to inform the final training model, course content included Indigenous medicine teachings, Indigenous experiences of residential schools and intergenerational impacts, and racism at interpersonal and systemic levels. Approximately 225 HSS employees participated in these pilots. Beginning June 2021, Cultural Safety Training will be offered regularly to HSS staff moving forward.

Additional initiatives which address systemic racism in our health care system include:

- developing a standardized approach for document reviews by the Cultural Safety and Anti-Racism Unit for larger HSS system;
- developing fact sheets for HSS divisions on ways to embed cultural safety and anti-racism in work; and

- establishing a Community of Practice of Indigenous HSS staff with the purpose of identifying and implementing supports for other Indigenous staff across HSS, as well as to enhance training, knowledge translation, and share innovation to be implemented across HSS.

Improving Outcomes

HSS continues to focus on quality initiatives in adapting services to best meet the needs of children, youth, and families. This work helps to better coordinate services, respect the cultural needs of children and youth, and provide necessary supports for parents. CFS also continues to update Standards and Procedures to ensure they align with the principles of the *Federal Act* and with current best practice.

In January 2021, HSS released the *Health Care for Transgender, Non-Binary, and Gender Nonconforming People: Guidelines for the Northwest Territories*. The Guidelines establish a clear referral process and reduce wait times for transgender, non-binary, and gender non-conforming health care services for NWT residents. Indigenous peoples who are part of the transgender, non-binary, and gender nonconforming communities may face added barriers due to racism, sexual orientation, and gender discrimination. The Guidelines were developed with the contributions of family advocates, clinical experts, the HSS Indigenous Health and Community Wellness Division, and the Rainbow Coalition of Yellowknife and include a section outlining HSS's commitment to cultural safety, including health care provider responsibilities related to gender-affirming health care, trauma-informed care, and how unconscious bias may influence patient treatment.

Within HSS, the Indigenous Health and Community Wellness division was established in 2013 with a mandate to improve Indigenous health inequities. That division, now named Community, Culture and Innovation, has been renewed with an expanded scope to drive change across the health and social services system. In addition, new funding has been approved for 2021/22 to establish Indigenous Patient Advocates in the four NWT Acute Care Units. This new approach is aimed at improving cultural safety and patient experience. It also supports Indigenous patients in resolving concerns, complaints, and questions as well as bridging cultural and language barriers. Indigenous Patient Advocates assist to ensure access to cultural, spiritual and emotional support, such as connection to family, Elders, and community partners, and ensure the provision of culturally safe care.

Strategic Planning

Following extensive community collaboration, the GNWT have released our commitment to action with the Building a Culturally Respectful Health and Social Services System (2016) and accompanying Action Plan (2019). Grounded in community voices, the Action Plan took a “nothing about us without us” approach, resulting in over 30 meetings across the NWT over nine months. GNWT staff met with HSS Indigenous Staff and Indigenous and northern residents — including NWT health system's governance councils, which are primarily comprised of Indigenous representatives as well as Indigenous non-governmental organizations such as the Native Women's Association of the NWT.

Since the release of the Action Plan, HSS has delivered and developed cultural safety training; formalized a Primary Health Care Reform project team to incorporate relationship-based care in primary health care; and reviewed policy to increase delivery of traditional foods for Indigenous clients.

HSS has also developed an engagement toolkit for staff to improve and promote meaningful engagement processes when working with Indigenous peoples and communities. This document promotes provides staff with ways to think about engagement, rather than create a formal script to follow. It also offers “reflection questions” designed to help the reader think through their own relationship and approach to the wise practice.

One of the priorities within HSS’s Human Resources Strategic Plan (2015) is building local and territorial capacity to help ensure safety and quality of care. The GNWT has tools that are being utilized to ensure that the workforce better reflects our cultural environment. In addition to the recruitment and retention programs offered by the Department of Finance (detailed below in the ‘Government Hiring’ section), HSS offers a Targeted Academic Support Program aimed at current employees who want to expand their scope of practice. This program provides employees with up to \$50,000 towards continuing education, academia or technical, through an accredited post-secondary institution. The intent of this program is to promote mobility between professions, and strategically align employee development to address current or future gaps within the HSS system. All program decisions for allocation of funding follow the *Affirmative Action Policy*.

COVID Secretariat

While only set up for a short period of time to support the implementation of public health orders to address public health risk, the COVID-19 Secretariat is addressing systemic racism by implementing hiring targets. These targets are based on the *Affirmative Action Policy*, which provides priority hiring, training and promotion to eligible target groups. The hiring target achieved by the COVID-19 Secretariat is 40.5% of priority candidates, which broken down means 29.7% of those hired are Indigenous Aboriginal Persons (P1) and 10.8% are Indigenous Non-Aboriginal Persons or Resident Disabled Persons (P2). This hiring target is slightly higher than the 39.8% of current GNWT employees identified as P1 or P2⁵.

Justice

The Department of Justice (DOJ) has the mandate for the administration of justice in the Northwest Territories, including policing and corrections, in a manner which respects community and Indigenous values and encourages communities to assume increasing responsibilities.

⁵ As of March 31, 2021, 29.3% of GNWT employees are identified as P1 (Indigenous Aboriginal) and 10.5% are P2 (Indigenous Non-Aboriginal).

Legislation

The NWT *Human Rights Act* safeguards the protection of human rights for all NWT residents. The NWT *Human Rights Act* addresses anti-racism and prohibits discrimination based on a range of factors including race, colour, ancestry, place or origin, ethnic origin, family affiliation, social condition, gender identity, gender expression and more. When enacted in 2004, the NWT *Human Rights Act* had the widest protections for individuals among all human rights statutes in Canada and it has been further updated since.

The NWT *Corrections Act* ensures the secure custody of offenders as ordered by the Court, as well as their rehabilitation toward reintegration into the community. The legislation recognizes the cultural and historical legacy of offenders in the NWT and sets the framework for incorporating these elements into the rehabilitation process. Though not yet in force, the new *Corrections Act* received assent in August 2019 and is anticipated to be fully implemented late summer 2021. There have been significant philosophical changes in the field of corrections since the 1980s, when the priority was the good governance of the facility. The new NWT *Corrections Act* reflects this shift, with an emphasis placed on the rehabilitation of the offender. Key areas for staggered implementation include:

- Establishment of Investigation and Standards Office;
- Adjudicators that are independent from correctional facilities;
- Separate Confinement and Disciplinary Segregation;
- Community Advisory Boards;
- Staff Code of Conduct; and
- Search and Seizure Processes.

As per the principles of the new NWT *Corrections Act*, opportunities for the integration of services are encouraged between GNWT departments and agencies, members of the public, organizations, and other governments including Indigenous governments, to assist with the rehabilitation, healing and reintegration of inmates and offenders.

Strategic Planning

Every year, the Minister of Justice provides direction through Ministerial Policing Priorities to the RCMP G Division to aid in the administration of justice. The current policing priorities are consistent with themes of reconciliation that have come from the UN Declaration, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, the Calls for Justice from the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Inquiry, and the voices of NWT communities.

Community Policing Action Plans are developed annually in a partnership between the RCMP and community leadership, based on the specific needs of each community. Working together enhances communication between partners and increases the level of commitment and trust towards achieving local goals, in effect creating conditions necessary to address racial or cultural bias. In addition, communities benefit from this process by being active partners and having a direct role in making their community safer.

And for those smaller communities who do not have permanent RCMP detachments, they receive policing services through regular patrols from adjacent communities, or by RCMP officers responsible to their community.

Programs and Services

Support for Offenders

In 2020-21, 87% of adults in custody in the NWT were Indigenous. To help offset this overrepresentation, two alternative courts, Wellness Court and Domestic Violence Treatment Options Court (DVTO), are used and available to eligible offenders who plead guilty for specified offenses. Rather than focusing on the offence, these alternative courts are rehabilitation focused, seeking to help offenders address the underlying reasons for offending and re-offending.

The Wellness Court offers a supervised program that applies a model that seeks to address underlying issues of drug and alcohol addiction, mental health and cognitive challenges. The first sitting of the Wellness Court was in October 2014, and since then a total of 167 individuals have been referred to the program. Of those individuals, 73 participated in the program for some length of time. DVTO Court has existed since 2011 and is an option for low to medium risk offenders who take responsibility for their actions (i.e. plead guilty) and agree to attend an eight module program as ordered by the Court. The program provides opportunities for therapy and counselling that can reduce the risk of reoffending. The program has been operating for nine years in Yellowknife and five in Hay River. To date, 181 participants have successfully completed the program.

All NWT correctional facilities incorporate Indigenous cultures and traditions in the way that all programming is delivered. Dedicated services also involve Elders in the sharing of traditional knowledge, the provision of traditional counselling and support services to inmates. Where possible, in-house traditional facilities are used and inmates, youth and adults, may be taken out on the land to engage in traditional activities. Some examples of corrections programming which aims to provide offender healing and rehabilitation include:

- The North Slave Correctional Complex has four traditional areas for the delivery of programs to inmates and youth by a traditional counsellor: two areas inside the facility, and two areas outside within the secure perimeter. These areas are used for smudging, one-on-one counselling and sharing circles.
- At the Fort Smith Correctional Complex local Elders attend land-based events to share traditional knowledge with the inmates about being on the land.
- The South Mackenzie Correctional Centre offers a made-in-the-NWT Indigenous Pre-Treatment Healing program that prepares offenders to begin their healing journey and to engage in more structured core correctional programming. The program is delivered with the participation of Elders and rooted in NWT Indigenous traditions, spirituality and worldview. It is envisioned that this program will become the cornerstone of the Therapeutic Community model to be implemented at the South Mackenzie Correctional Centre.

Community-led Programs and Services

Community Justice Programs and services are offered by partnering with Indigenous Governments, Indigenous organizations and other local organizations. DOJ is increasingly prioritizing such community-based services where possible.

DOJ supports communities to develop alternatives to the criminal justice system through Community Justice Committees (CJCs). In 2021-22, there are 26 CJCs with funding agreements to provide community-led diversions, community service options, and crime prevention programs from the unique cultural context of their community. CJCs provide diversion programs, community service options, and crime prevention programs including on the land programs that are rooted in Indigenous traditions and traditional knowledge. DOJ supports local community justice programs to access funding for community safety and crime prevention initiatives. CJCs are made up of local volunteers and are led by a local Community Justice Coordinator.

In some cases, the RCMP or the Courts may divert selected criminal matters away from the traditional court system to be handled by CJCs. When hearing a diverted matter, CJCs will hear from all persons involved with the offense and attempt to create a resolution which is satisfactory to all parties. When a matter is selected to be referred to a CJC for diversion in a community that does not have a CJC, DOJ staff will work in partnership with the community and a more established CJC in a neighbouring community to get the diversion completed. Through a restorative process, victims have a powerful voice which allows them to be heard and to heal, while at the same time holding the offenders accountable for their actions.

The NWT Victims Services Program provides funding to Indigenous Governments, Hamlet Councils and other organizations to deliver victim services across the NWT, taking into consideration the unique context and needs of their community. Services can range from the provision of immediate support, accompaniment to court or to an appointment, assistance with victim impact statements, or completion of applications to the Victims of Crime Emergency Fund administered by DOJ which provides victims of a serious violent crime with emergency financial assistance for expenditures arising from the crime, and more. To support greater access to these services, DOJ has recently reallocated funding to increase the number of local service providers from eight communities to ten and the number of Victim Service Providers from 11 to 13 in 2021-22.

Policing

Expansion of the First Nation Policing Program to the NWT aims to provide a dedicated, professional and culturally responsible policing service to Indigenous communities. DOJ currently has nine First Nations Policing positions funded under a First Nations Community Policing Service Framework Agreement. These positions are located as follows:

- Inuvik (1),
- Behchokò (3),
- Fort Simpson (2),
- Fort Good Hope (1),
- Fort McPherson (1), and
- Tulita (1).

Of the above nine positions, five were recently approved in 2020-21 and were allocated to Behchokò (2), Fort Simpson (1), Fort McPherson (1) and Tulita (1). DOJ is working with the Federal Government on a longer term framework agreement and is anticipating the continuation of funding approval for the new positions.

Legal Aid Commission

All NWT residents are entitled to fairness and the opportunity to protect their legal rights, regardless of their national origin, race, religion, ethnicity, or culture. To that end, the Legal Aid Commission operates an Outreach program which provides legal information services to the public without requiring a legal aid application. The Outreach services relate to civil matters affecting an individual's livelihood, their physical or mental health, or their ability to provide food, clothing and shelter for themselves or their families. Civil matters include housing, landlord and tenant disputes, CPP, disability issues, employment insurance questions, workers' compensation claims, debt protection remedies, wills advice, mental health and guardianship applications, child protection issues and elder abuse. Providing support for these issues is important because they often underlie other legal issues related to criminal or family law matters. The Outreach program was expanded in 2017 to increase accessibility to legal aid services.

Person Centred Case Management

The Integrated Case Management (ICM) program was developed to provide case management and service access support for individuals with complex needs. ICM was developed from a recognition that government services must be accessible and delivered in a timely and flexible manner, but that not everyone starts from the same place. Currently four pathfinders provide person-centered case management service, each with a caseload of 20-30 active program participants. An intern pathfinder, hired through GNWT's internship program, assists those who are eligible and waiting to be assigned to a pathfinder. Due to the complexities and nature of the issues that lead to the barriers in accessing services, individuals can require ICM services for many months. When it's determined a client has addressed the referral barriers or is now capable of navigating them on their own, decisions are made to transition from a pathfinder.

New or Upcoming Initiatives

A shift in the culture of service provision

The need for Integrated Service Delivery (ISD) has been identified consistently across several GNWT departments for the last 15 years. Territorial, national and international research shows ISD is an effective way to address and prevent complex social issues. In particular, ISD addresses barriers to service access, including those driven by systemic racism and a lack of cultural safety in our systems. ISD is envisioned to benefit all residents of the NWT through enhanced system capacity, and the integration of service provision along a spectrum.

ISD is not a program; rather, it is a fundamentally different way of doing business which requires a shift in the culture of service provision across sectors. GNWT social systems are deficit-focused, and were built to address one problem at a time rather than to support the healthy outcomes we know people want for themselves and their families.

A whole of government, integrated approach to service provision acknowledges the critical nature of providing a continuum of care and support to residents, regardless of how we have organized the GNWT for administrative and management purposes.

In this context, work on ISD implementation to date has been focused on making sure the GNWT as a whole is on the same page as to why we need an integrated approach to service provision. However, the recently completed the ISD Conceptual Framework (June 2021) provides the path forward and leads into the first steps of engaging with communities to seek their wisdom in how best to proceed in their communities.

A New Option for Offenders in Custody

The field of Corrections is evolving with greater emphasis now placed on the rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders. The DOJ is preparing to launch a Therapeutic Community at the South Mackenzie Correctional Centre in Hay River – a first in the NWT. The therapeutic model incorporates the “Seven Laws of Living” and the traditional Medicine Wheel which supports the cultural teachings of Indigenous peoples. Activities will include opening and closing ceremonies, sharing circles, drumming, smudging and traditional land-based teachings by local Elders. Therapeutic Community uses active participation in group living and activities to drive individual change and the attainment of therapeutic goals. With an emphasis on social learning and mutual self-help, Therapeutic Community participants have a role in each other’s recovery as providing support to others is seen as an important part of changing oneself. The transition of South Mackenzie Correctional Centre to a Therapeutic Community is expected for November 2021.

Community-led public safety

A Community Safety Officer (CSO) Pilot program is being designed to provide a proactive, sustainable, trauma-informed, holistic approach to community safety, and bridge the gap between community safety needs and the role of the RCMP. The objective of the program is to contribute to the overall safety and wellness of the community, as well as provide the community an alternative to calling the police for non-criminal matters. Many NWT communities, especially Indigenous communities, benefit from community-led programs that build capacity and social trust.

The Hamlet of Fort Liard was the successful proponent from an expression of interest process for a CSO Pilot Program. The program will be administered and delivered entirely by the Hamlet, with support from the GNWT, RCMP and other community partners. CSOs themselves act as liaisons that assist the community with a variety of issues ranging from the mandate of public safety through to assisting with health, social services, and community care. While they have no specific legislative authority, CSOs are service providers who assist with a variety of community events, such as intervening in public intoxication incidents and assisting the elderly. The deadline for community leadership expression of interest for a CSO Pilot program was May 2021, and the pilot community is expected to be announced in July 2021.

Housing

The Northwest Territories Housing Corporation (NWTHC) works in partnership with residents, where appropriate and necessary, to ensure access to affordable, adequate and suitable housing.

Initiatives

The NWTHC has two initiatives which together combat systemic racism by empowering community and Indigenous Governments design their own housing planning, programs and policies.

First, Community Housing Plans is an initiative that integrates community housing values and priorities with housing data, statistics and program information to form a comprehensive map. This map is then used to better direct housing investment in the community. Housing plans are important for empowering communities because they allow local values and priorities to inform a roadmap for future housing initiatives in a given community, while also providing Indigenous and community governments with a better understanding of the housing needs of residents. The goal of this initiative is to develop housing plans with all 33 NWT communities. As of June 2021, the NWTHC has met with 23 and has housing plans at various stages of completion. The NWTHC will continue to work with communities on the development of Community Housing Plans, monitor these plans and collaborate with community leadership on progress in addressing their housing aspirations.

Second, the Community Housing Support Program supports Indigenous government and community agencies to develop innovative, community-driven housing projects of their own design. Through this program, the NWTHC works in partnership with Indigenous governments and communities to provide opportunities to design their own programming, and choose the clients and types of projects they see as a priority. Examples of these projects include:

- new affordable housing units for the Salt River First Nation, Whatì and Jean Marie River;
- modernization of affordable housing units in Inuvik;
- homeownership repair programs with the Kátł'odeeche First Nation and the K'asho Gotine Housing Society;
- a log home project in Colville Lake; and
- connection to a biomass heating system in Aklavik.

The key to this program is its flexibility. NWTHC contributions through the Community Housing Support Program are available in numerous forms, including a grant, grant-in-kind, program and policy design, technical expertise, land management, or surplus units when appropriate.

Currently, the NWTHC is engaged in a renewal process which will set the stage for future success. This renewal process recognizes the need for organizational change and building on NWTHC's success. Among the many priorities of this renewal, some actions aim to mitigate systemic racism, such as promoting reconciliation through a recognition that choices about housing location and type have been a tool of colonization in the NWT in the past.

Going forward, NWT HC will engage with Indigenous Governments on the type and location of housing within their communities, which will include resolving land tenure issues. NWT HC will also advance self-government, even where Indigenous governments have not yet chosen to exercise jurisdiction under a self-government agreement, and communicate messages in Indigenous languages where appropriate.

Other actions which aim to mitigate systemic racism as part of NWT HC's renewal process include:

- training staff to refocus on social-housing delivery as an integrated service;
- recognizing that NWT HC programs and policies need to be fair, transparent, and internally coherent and the criteria for deciding on applications should be published;
- innovating in construction programs, taking into account cultural appropriateness; and
- engaging effectively through the Council of Leaders, bilateral MOUs and other opportunities.

Government Hiring

The Department of Finance (Finance) serves as the corporate human resource agency for the GNWT and provides human resource management services to all GNWT departments and agencies. As such, Finance is responsible for recruiting and retaining a competent, representative public service; developing programs and policies that effectively serve the human resource needs of the public service; and creating a work environment that promotes employee development, safety and wellness, and positive labour/management relations.

Affirmative Action Policy

The GNWT is committed to developing a competent public service that is inclusive and representative of the people it serves. To achieve this, the GNWT established the *Affirmative Action Policy* in 1989. This Policy provides for priority hiring, training and promotion to eligible target groups that are under-represented within the public service. Through the Policy, the GNWT gives preference in hiring designated members of targeted groups, such as: Indigenous Aboriginal Persons; Indigenous Non-Aboriginal Persons; Resident Women; and Resident Disabled Persons.

During the October 2020 Session of the Legislative Assembly, the GNWT committed to reviewing the Policy during the term of the 19th Assembly. Historically, it has not been reviewed with the intention of amending any of the eligible target groups because the objective of a representative public service has not been achieved. To achieve this objective, the Policy is only one part of a suite of tools used to ensure a representative workforce.

Programs and Services

The GNWT recognizes the need to increase the recruitment and retention of Indigenous employees.

Established in 2009, the Indigenous Employee Advisory Committee provides employees an opportunity to provide advice on strategies and approaches on attracting, recruiting, advancing, and retaining Indigenous employees within the GNWT. It was established with the primary goal to increase the representation of Indigenous Aboriginal people at all levels of the public service, and to create a working environment that supports and promotes Indigenous Aboriginal people in the GNWT workforce.

More recently, to support Indigenous residents and employees of the NWT, two programs were launched in October 2018. The Indigenous Career Gateway Program (ICGP) was created to target Indigenous Aboriginal candidates for entry-level opportunities with the GNWT. The ICGP supports Indigenous people to obtain sustainable employment within the GNWT by creating workplace training opportunities in entry level positions and by fostering an environment that values development. In 2021-22, there are currently thirty (30) participants within ICGP.

The Indigenous Management Development and Training Program (IMDTP) was created with the purpose to retain and advance Indigenous employees within the GNWT. The IMDTP also supports the professional development of Indigenous employees by providing funding for employees to obtain the necessary skills training and/or work experience for career advancement. Since 2018, thirty-eight (38) employees received funding to access skills training for career advancement through the IMDTP.

The Human Resources Branch also recently launched the Building Capacity with Indigenous Governments (BCIG) program in 2021. The BCIG is a secondment program designed to support Indigenous Governments in all regions develop human resources capacity. When discussed with Indigenous governments during engagement sessions, the BCIG has been welcomed with enthusiasm. Since the launch in June 2021, two (2) secondments have been approved, one (1) with the Gwich'in Tribal Council and one (1) with the Délı̨nę Government. A third secondment is pending.

Training

To ensure a diverse and inclusive workplace, anti-racism training and resources are available for GNWT employees. By learning about anti-racism, managers and employees will be better equipped to dispel common myths and misconceptions about biases, racism, power and privilege so they can take steps in becoming agents of change in confronting racism. A workshop series titled 'Equitable Workplace: Cultivating Attitudes of Anti-Racism and Allyship' creates space for learners to explore their own personal experiences with racism and allyship. The workshop helps participants identify how these experiences impact our lives daily, especially within the workplace. It also teaches participants to deconstruct what they thought they knew about social norms while discovering tools to help them reshape the way they see the world and our interactions with each other.

Finance launched an anti-racism campaign between March 16 and April 21, 2021. The goal of this campaign was to encourage employees to learn about anti-racism so they can take steps to stand against systemic racism and stand up for marginalized persons within our government and broader communities. This campaign included a print and video resources which encouraged public servants to explore anti-racism and take action against all forms of racism when they see it. Due to the uptake and positive review of this training, sessions have been extended until March 2022.

This is one small but important step towards building a culture of anti-racism within the public service which is necessary to eliminate systemic racism.

Strategic Planning

As part of GNWT's commitment to a representative workforce, an Indigenous Recruitment and Retention Framework (Framework) and Action Plan has been developed. The Framework is focused on mitigating systemic racism through policy changes and program development to increase Indigenous representation across the GNWT. In addition to encompassing and supporting existing programs designed to recruit and retain Indigenous employees, the Framework's goals include:

- supporting departmental priorities to achieve a culturally inclusive workplace;
- enhancing Indigenous representation throughout departments;
- building capability and career development; and
- fostering Indigenous leadership through talent management.

Through the Action Plan, these goals will be integrated into business practices, programs, and services throughout the GNWT. Each department will be required to complete Indigenous Employment Plans which will include short, medium, and long term goals and targets. Completing department-specific Indigenous Employment Plans will allow departments to address barriers to employment for Indigenous peoples that can be unique to their departments.

The first step in the development of the Framework and Action Plan was engagement with internal and external partners, including Indigenous Governments throughout the territory, which identified barriers within the GNWT for the recruitment and retention of Indigenous people. The barriers guided the development to ensure the GNWT is combating systemic racism.

Finance is also in the process of developing a strategic Diversity and Inclusion Framework (DIF) and implementation plan to drive diversity and inclusion throughout the GNWT. Work is underway to integrate the DIF's goals into business practices, including recruitment and retention strategies. Additionally, an implementation plan will support business units in recognizing and incorporating diversity and inclusion perspectives in policies, programs and services. Engagement has commenced with internal and external partners to identify areas for growth to ensure all employees feel safe and valued, and have equal opportunities for professional growth and development within the Public Service.

Governance and Capacity

The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs (MACA) is responsible for the development and maintenance of community governments. Community governments face capacity challenges with both elected officials and administrative staff. Specifically, elected community government leaders face challenges related to developing their capacity to lead effectively, manage limited resources, hire, manage competent administrators and make significant decisions on issues with long term implications. It is also challenging for community governments to hire, train and retain skilled staff in the various positions critical to the operation of a community government.

MACA offers various types of capacity building and training opportunities for both elected officials and administrative staff through the School of Community Government. Through the Public Service Capacity Initiative – a partnership initiative between MACA, the NWT Association of Communities and the Local Government Administrators of the NWT – the Department continues to focus on recruiting, training, and retaining senior level community government staff in communities across the NWT.

Other Government Initiatives

Across the GNWT, departments have in place policies, programs and services which address racial and cultural bias.

Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs (EIA)

During the 19th Legislative Assembly, the Gender Equity Division (GED) will develop a Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Action Plan in response to the Calls for Justice from the Final Report of the National Inquiry.

The Department continues to negotiate and implement land, resources and self-government agreements with its partner Indigenous governments and organizations. These agreements not only advance the political and constitutional development of the NWT, but most importantly, they empower people in communities to plan and manage the government structures that impact their day-to-day lives. We know that enhancing self-determination - which is an essential component of basic human rights - is a powerful tool for promoting equality.

The Department will also continue to promote a greater understanding in the NWT of Indigenous rights. Ensuring that the public understands how such agreements benefit the entirety of the NWT population is another means by which biases can be addressed and eliminated.

Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment (ITI)

ITI's Client Services and Community Relations (CSCR) division works as a facilitator of relationships between mineral resources sector companies and the communities / regions they are interested working in. CSCR was formed to assist and connect industry, communities and governments to build mutually beneficial working relationships that help maximize socio-economic opportunities in responsible resource exploration and development. ITI also negotiates and actively monitors Socio-Economic Agreements with major resource developers such as the NWT's diamond mines in partnership with ECE and HSS. These Agreements establish project development targets and capture commitments made by developers with respect to Indigenous employment and business opportunities; sustainable development, cultural well-being, and traditional economy; and community, family, and individual well-being.

The Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment (ITI) partners with ECE and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in delivering the annual Tundra Science and Culture Camp. At this on-the-land, experiential learning summer camp, NWT high school students work closely with a variety of instructors, including scientists, environmental educators, on-site researchers, and Tłı̨ch̨o Elders.

The focus is on learning about the land from both the western science and Traditional Knowledge perspectives. This camp introduces Indigenous students to potential scientific careers which in time will help reduce the systematic barriers that prevent western science from giving Traditional knowledge its appropriate weighting.

Finally, procurement policies have been used to stimulate innovation and entrepreneurship as well as social outcomes such as racial and gender equality. For instance, the GNWT has committed to developing an Indigenous Procurement Policy. Working in collaboration with Indigenous governments, this Policy will address systemic barriers faced by Indigenous businesses and communities when participating in government's procurement opportunities. Reducing these barriers will contribute to increased opportunities for Indigenous participation in the economy.

Department of Lands (Lands)

Lands offers a Resource Management Officer Program to provide Northerners with job opportunities. This program works by focusing on training and capacity building, rather than standard educational and experience requirements. It provides opportunities for individuals with a desire to use land-based skills for career development.

Lands also provides staff with plain language training and has a Departmental Writing Style guide. These initiatives aim to build staff capacity to communicate with the public in a clear and concise way, which in turn helps mitigate issues that may arise from literacy and language barriers with clients. In addition, staff have been directed to incorporate *Living Well Together* training into their learning plans this fiscal year.

Department of Municipal and Community Affairs (MACA)

MACA and territorial partner organizations work to support and protect the well-being of NWT athletes, including the prevention of harassment, abuse, and discrimination in sport. In 2019, the Minister of MACA joined other Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers in endorsing the Red Deer Declaration – a commitment for the prevention of harassment, abuse and discrimination in sport. MACA intends to include the Red Deer Declaration in the Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation (SPAR) framework. Once finalized, SPAR will serve as a core leading policy document for the sector.

MACA also provides financial assistance through contributions to eligible sport organizations for the development and delivery of sport and recreation activities in the NWT. Some of these eligible sport organizations include the Aboriginal Sport Circle of the NWT, NWT Recreation and Parks Association, Mackenzie Recreation Association, Sport North Federation. While safe and inclusive sport practices and policies are typically specific to each sport organization, MACA will examine the need for a territorial safe sport policy framework following the implementation of SPAR.

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