

Hospitality Module



What is Human Trafficking?

Human trafficking “involves the recruitment, transportation, harbouring and/ or exercising control, direction or influence over the movements of a person in order to exploit that person, typically through sexual exploitation or forced labour” (*Department of Justice, 2020*).

This can look very different from what you might expect. It isn't always obvious and there might not be any clear signs a person is a victim of trafficking. Some individuals might not even realize they are being trafficked yet. Later in this module, some signs of trafficking to look for in the hotel/ motel setting will be highlighted.



This is a good resource sharing common myths about Human Trafficking.



Safe Passage An Initiative of:



Native Women's
Association of Canada
L'Association des
femmes autochtones
du Canada



Why Indigenous Women & Girls?

Indigenous women and girls who live in Canada are six times more likely than non-Indigenous women to be victims of homicide (*Global Indigenous Council, 2020*). They are three times more likely to experience violence than non-Indigenous women (*Newfoundland & Labrador, 2020*), and three times more likely to experience sexual assault (*Department of Justice, 2017*). The RCMP estimates that between 1980 and 2012, 1,200 Indigenous women and girls have gone missing or been murdered in Canada (*RCMP, 2015*), though there are estimates this number may actually be as high as 4000. Additionally, data indicates that 51% of trafficked women in Canada are Indigenous, despite making up less than 5% of Canada's overall population (*Canadian Women's Foundation, 2014*).

Indigenous women and girls are more vulnerable to exploitation, trafficking, being disappeared, and being murdered because “they are (1) Indigenous and (2) female. Simply being born puts them into this high-risk category because of the deep racism and sexism that exists in Canada and its laws, policies, and institutions” (*Palmer 2016: 270*). In other words, these disproportionate rates of violence are all rooted in the effects of colonialism, which will be unpacked in the next section.

It's important to understand and think critically about colonialism. Awareness of how colonialism relates to the experiences of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people involved in trafficking will help responses to these issues be more informed.



Trafficking Indigenous Women and Girls

COLONIALISM

Colonialism is the practice of taking over parts or all of another land or country in order to exploit the land, resources, and people. In some cases, this land is also populated with settlers. While many people believe colonialism is something that only occurred in the past, it is actually a complex system that remains in effect today. It continues to constantly influence the lives of Indigenous women and girls. It also shapes media representations of Indigenous women and girls, which informs peoples' beliefs about their value and contributes to the indifference and racism they face across systems that are supposed to help support and protect them, including child welfare services, the justice system, and policing. Colonial influences in each of these systems contributes to the disproportionate rate of violence, sexual exploitation and trafficking experienced by Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.

The roots of this indifference and racism are in colonial narratives, which includes the idea that settlers are superior to, and have the right to take from and rule over Indigenous Peoples. Europeans portrayed Indigenous Peoples as "subhuman: inferior, backwards, uncivilized, deviant, dirty and inherently worthless to dominant society" (*Bourgeois 2015: 1445*). In addition to these negative portrayals, Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people experienced layers of sexism, homophobia and transphobia. They were framed as sexually available objects and placed in the lowest class of society (*Sikka, 2010*). This colonial hierarchy persists today and influences how Canada's governments operate, including laws, policies and practices. The outcomes of these influences may be more covert than they once were, but they continue to exist.

INDIGENOUS SLAVERY AND PROSTITUTION (HISTORICAL CONTEXT)

Colonial violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people has always been sexual in nature and it is used to construct an image of Indigenous women as being acceptable, disposable targets for colonial oppression (*Razack 2016*). Slavery was one method that Europeans communicated that they were responsible for determining the use and value of Indigenous Peoples and they could use slaves as they pleased (*Razack 2016 & Sikka, 2010*). During this time, the "average age of Indigenous slaves in Canada was 14 years old and 57 percent were girls or young women" (*Lawrence, 2016*). For two centuries, Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people were seen as property and bought and sold as slaves until slavery was abolished in 1834 (*Sikka, 2010*).

As slavery practices began to decline, a "near universal conflation" of Indigenous women and prostitution emerged (*Sikka 2010: 207*). However, it's important to note that slavery was not the only factor driving this conflation. Because Indigenous women were seen as 'unhuman,' sexual violence against them became normal and was never punished. These are the early roots of trafficking, and this violence continues today.

The continuation of this violence today is particularly true for Inuit peoples. The government began relocating Inuit in the 1950s and 1960s, changing people's names and identifying them with tags, forcing them to new areas, and killing all of their sled dogs so they could not leave or hunt. Forced into poverty, Inuit were exploited by government and RCMP. What's more, is that all of these experiences have occurred in a single lifetime. Because these stories are not told, these experiences of trafficking and exploitation are seen as normal.

SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND TRAFFICKING AS COLONIAL VIOLENCE (PRESENT-DAY CONTEXT)

Sexual exploitation and trafficking have always been a part of colonial violence in Canada. It is not a coincidence that Indigenous women and girls are ten times more likely to be trafficked than non-Indigenous women and girls; this is part of the “enduring colonial racist and sexist” construction of Indigenous females as “sexually available and therefore sexually violable” (*Bourgeois 2015: 1442*). Across the country there are predators seeking to exercise and reproduce this colonial power; and who may be more interested in hurting people than in sex when engaging with Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people in the sex trade (*Kingsley & Mark 2000*).

The violence that Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people face is so pervasive that violence has become “part of the ‘package’ that some Johns pay for and feel entitled to” (*NWAC 2014: 47*). Testimonies provided by individuals who have been exploited indicate the violence they experience is so extreme, it may be best characterized as torture.

**See NWAC 2014 for more information.*

VICTIM-BLAMING

Because Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples are viewed as inherently inferior, they are seen to be particularly blame-worthy and therefore undeserving of sympathy (*Palmer 2016; Canadian Women’s Foundation 2014; Human Rights Watch 2013*). In other words, the violence they experience is seen to be “a natural consequence of the life that [they had] chosen to occupy” (*Sikka 2010: 201*). This belief is communicated through the failure to “properly investigate the murder of Indigenous women [and] missing Indigenous girls” (*Palmer 2016: 283*) and perpetrators continuing to enact this violence with impunity.

WHY INDIGENOUS WOMEN, GIRLS & 2SLGBTQQIA PEOPLE ARE TARGETED

Though it is well-known and documented that poverty, histories of abuse, involvement in child welfare, and criminalization all increase Indigenous women and girls’ vulnerability to exploitation and trafficking (*NWAC 2014*), these factors are too often ignored. In fact, there are countless shortcomings in supports for these experiences.

Traffickers know this and target individuals with these experiences, as they often have harmful and isolating effects. For example, a study of sex trafficking in Canada by the Canadian Women’s Foundation found that 50% of victims were “recruited between the ages of 9 and 14,” 87.5% had been sexually abused before being trafficked, and “71% reported being forced to have sex with doctors, 60% with judges, 80% with police, and 40% with social workers” (*Canadian Women’s Foundation 2014: 31*). Additionally, it found that that 51% of trafficking victims had been in the child welfare system (*Canadian Women’s Foundation 2014*). Once again, these numbers demonstrate how systems that are supposed to protect Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people are not only indifferent in their exploitation, but may be actively involved.

Indigenous women and girls, who are already devalued by settler society are further dehumanized “by their involvement in the sex trade”, which acts to make violence against them more acceptable and even expected (*Bourgeois 2015: 1442*). These ideas are not just historical patterns, they are real beliefs held by perpetrators such as John Crawford, an American serial killer who targeted Indigenous women: “I remember thinking, she’s only worth \$50. I’m not going to jail. She has no right to live” (*Lucchesi 2019: 13*).

Trafficking & Hotels/Motels

HOW TRAFFICKING & HOTELS/MOTELS ARE CONNECTED


The main reason hotels/motels are used as hubs for human trafficking is because of the anonymity they provide. This convenient invisibility has only increased since the introduction of, and greater reliance on automated services. Rooms can be booked and people come and go through the hotel/motel without staff ever knowing the real identity or activities of their guests.

Hotels/motels that are used for trafficking are usually located in poorer or 'red-light' districts, and generally in areas where Indigenous populations are more likely to live.

Many hotels/motels are even aware that trafficking is taking place in their establishment, but turn a blind eye because they make large profits off the hourly rated rooms used by traffickers. There is a priority to meet customer demands, even if that means permitting known violence to continue.

For hotels/motels that are actively and openly against trafficking, individuals being trafficked are trained how to enter and access these spaces without drawing attention to themselves. These victims may be extremely well-dressed and seem to 'belong.' They are taught to blend in and may have briefcases, be on a phone call, or visibly showing a key card (that may only look similar to an actual key card for that hotel/motel).

Victims of human trafficking may be well-disguised. Consider an example provided by a survivor:



"Sometimes the victim is accompanied by another person that is also inconspicuous in nature. A female may accompany a youth or child as though they are the mother (holding hands or even arguing about things to put off staff - 'I'm not buying you \$200 runners on this trip it simply isn't affordable.'"

This is only one example of many tactics used by victims and traffickers to avoid catching the eye of hotel/motel staff.

It's important to note the difference between providing safety versus over-surveilling individuals in need. In practice, this can look like being open in offers to be of help, and/or being engaged with guests, particularly trafficking victims while still respecting their privacy and activities.

What to Look For:

Guests with few personal items

Guests without ID

A "Do Not Disturb" sign on the door all the time

Individuals loitering in hallways

Guests who pay with cash or a preloaded credit card

Guests who frequently request new linen and towels, but decline cleaning services

Little to no eye contact from customers

Many guests going in and out of the same hotel/motel room

Guests who request rooms in areas with the least visibility

What to Do if you Suspect Trafficking

- Do not directly engage with the suspected trafficker or victim, as it may put the victim in danger
- Call the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline (1-833-900-1010)
- Contact a local organization that supports victims and survivors of trafficking. This is preferred over law enforcement because there is a risk that officers may hold racist views or stigma against Indigenous women, girls or 2SLGBTQQIA+ people involved in trafficking.



Next Steps

SUGGESTIONS FROM A SURVIVOR

- Lobby elevators that can only be accessed with key cards
- Front desk staff dedicated to engaging customers
- Greeters at entrances trained to look for cues of trafficking
- Cameras and warnings placed in visible areas that extend outside the parking lots
- Post a symbol or sign that lets customers know they support anti-trafficking initiatives and are affiliated with law, and/or local organizations working against this issue

PREVENTATIVE STEPS

- Ensure hotel/motel staff are trained to recognize signs of trafficking (that is specific to the type of work they do at the hotel/motel, e.g. front reception will have different cues to look for than cleaning staff)
- Ensure hotel/motel staff have a safe and optionally anonymous way to report suspected trafficking. Some staff don't report suspicious activity for fear of reprisal
- Be aware if your hotel(s)/motel(s) are located on a trafficking route and put safety measures in place accordingly
- Consult with organizations that support victims and survivors of trafficking
- Engage in full reference checks for new hotel/motel staff
- Design a clear plan of action if staff identify a possible trafficking situation

Challenge Colonial Narratives

- Learn about colonialism and colonial violence and understand how that affects Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people being trafficked.
- Tell others about how Indigenous women and girls are marginalized, exploited, and made vulnerable by colonialism.
- Treat Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people with respect, approach them as equals and see that they are sacred.
- Value the lives of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, believe they are deserving of protection and safety, and act on that.
- Ask women who may be in need if they want help, and if so, how they may be helped.
- End the cycle of perpetrators enacting violence with impunity.

"The hotel and trucking industry have the power and means to advertise and make a huge impact on this most horrendous act that has been overlooked for too long. Please, I implore every one of you reading my words to stop and imagine that at any time these poor children, women and men could be your very own loved ones. Lastly, no one is safe from becoming a victim, not your children, wives, mothers, brothers or even yourself, and that is the sobering reality of human trafficking. As humans, it is our responsibility to take action."

- Survivors Circle Participant



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