

Human Trafficking in the Prairie Provinces



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The voices of individuals
and agencies:

Scanning, listening,
seeking to understand

*“Respectful relationships
involve dismantling a
centuries-old political
and bureaucratic
culture...”*

*(Truth and
Reconciliation Commission)*

GOOD INTENTIONS; HARMFUL IMPACTS

This research project responds to the call for proposals issued by the Prairieaction Foundation for proponents to measure the scope, characteristics, and determinants of domestic human trafficking of women and girls within and across the three provinces of the prairies (Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Manitoba), and to gauge stakeholder services and supports available for those who are or have been impacted by sexual exploitation and human trafficking. While human trafficking is currently presented as an unproblematic subject of policy, decades of feminist intersectional and anti-racist research have documented the harms that this framework can reproduce if not analyzed critically.

Human trafficking has become a confusing shortcut to refer to the disproportionate levels of structural gender-based violence affecting particularly Indigenous women, girls and queer youth living at the intersection of multiple vulnerabilities. The evidence has documented exhaustively how these vulnerabilities are produced and reproduced by ongoing colonial policy and systems. Furthermore, the systems are directly responsible for neglecting basic human security to people who experience multiple barriers already because of ongoing colonial policy. Presenting the narrative of human trafficking as a modern-day slavery phenomenon renders invisible the structural inequities caused by colonial policy and the complex ways the state is complicit to exploitative labor practices.

When this project was initially undertaken, the research group viewed it within a much larger picture. The team viewed the collective condition and daily realities of trafficked women and children within a set of relations, and politically and socially constructed conditions. Rather than seeing women and children as victims, we see them originating from and situated within very rich and diverse cultures that have been trampled by a mode of development that is both historical and contemporary; within a culture that was structurally, and state supported, intentionally undermined through the process of colonization.

This research report provides context and suggests possibilities for transformation and change, not for the women, girls and two-spirit people that experience trafficking and exploitation, but rather the communities they inhabit, and most importantly, the social systems that produce similar conditions.

For healing to happen, and to ensure safety and security for all people, there is a need for reimagining and building socio-economic systems that honor life and center the organization and distribution of resources in protecting the most vulnerable - a system built for the greater collective good. Because much of this research project is centered around Indigenous realities and analysis, it necessitates solutions that emulate Indigenous world views and values which are laced throughout this chapter. If we are learning that the problem that creates human trafficking is relational and systemic, the solutions lie in restoring relationships and creating systems that put care at the centre.



HOPERESTORED
C A N A D A

