

LET'S TALK...

ABOUT SURVIVING TODAY



Final Report – Phase 1

March/April 2018

'LET'S TALK ABOUT IT' project is a joint venture with Niagara Chapter-Native Women Inc., (PHASE I) Hamilton Native Women's Center, (PHASE II)
Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy 2017-2018

April 2018

This report, as well as additional information, can be found at: www.ncnw.net

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Words and sketch by Leona Skye

I will not be exploited,

I will be free of Danger, abuse and pain.

I will heal from my experiences; I will go on to live a happy prosperous existence. I am not broken! I am not damaged!

I will not allow my past to define me- I am more than that.

I am love, beautiful, valuable and down-right gifted. I may not feel it yet, but when I do....I will explode into excellence.

I am worthy of love and kindness, in my life - always.....

I am a Survivor Champion! Jan, 2018

Research and Report by **Leona Skye, Tammi Givans, Wendy Sturgeon,**

A special thank you to **Leona Skye** for use of her artwork “Hope” on cover and the

Ontario Native Women’s Association for permission to use the art piece they had purchased.

Acknowledgement

Welcome, we would like to acknowledge the traditional territory of Niagara; “Niagara is the home of the Aniishinabek, Attawandaron & Haudenosaunee Peoples. This territory is covered by the Original People's Treaty "Dish With One Spoon". We, as Nations, continue to live, work and thrive in Niagara under this Treaty”. Elaine Berwald, Elder

Niagara Chapter Native Women Inc. has entered into a very sacred relationship with Native Women’s Centre of Hamilton as a joint Survivor led initiative to end Indigenous People from being trafficked and sexually exploited. As we seek to educate and gather information about Indigenous Peoples of this land and the resultant vulnerabilities bestowed upon us for 525 years that have allowed our precious beings to become victims of human trafficking and sexual exploitation, we must give Thanks to our Creator for providing us this opportunity to engage with our community and community agencies to help move our peoples forward together safely and with a good mind.

We try to live our everyday lives within teachings such as the Great Law and our Seven Grandfather Teachings. With the help and guidance of our Elders, Teachers, Healers and Helpers, we will improve the lives of Indigenous people within and near Niagara. We acknowledge and thank our ancestors that have passed before us and were kind enough to shine their lights to lead the way for us and those still to come. We all walk a path in life; the Creator has given us a destiny, and we are forever grateful Gitche Manitou has provided this opportunity to bring our community together for this report. – Tammi Givans

Miigwetch, Nya:Wen



A Special Thank You to Ms. Leona Skye for agreeing to be involved in our Survivor led project and providing her specialized insights for the betterment of our peoples to help guide this project.



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OUR PROJECT

The Provincial Anti-Human Trafficking Coordination Office Ministry of Community and Social Services established an RFP (Request for Proposal) process in April 2017 for the newly developed Indigenous-Led Initiatives Fund.

Ministry Objectives

This Fund is intended to:

- Address existing service gaps and support a coordinated service delivery network that is better equipped to provide responsive, sustainable and comprehensive care for Indigenous survivors and persons with lived experience of human trafficking;
- Increase access to trauma-informed services that improve the short- and long-term safety and well-being of Indigenous survivors and persons with lived experience of human trafficking;
- Support opportunities for Indigenous survivors and persons with lived experience to hold leadership roles;
- Recognize the input of Indigenous survivors and persons with lived experience of human trafficking as a key component of effective person-centred service delivery;
- Facilitate training opportunities for Indigenous organizations and communities to develop localized and collaborative responses to human trafficking; and
- Develop and use culturally relevant models of evaluation and assessment that demonstrate improved outcomes for Indigenous survivors and persons with lived experience of human trafficking.

Native Women's Center of Hamilton approached us to work together and in partnership on an Anti-Human Trafficking project. This was partly because we know the focus area really well and partly because we are a sister chapter of Ontario Native Women Association. They would be the lead applicant working toward providing services and programs for delivery while we, Niagara Chapter-Native Women Inc. would work to gather and share information throughout our joint regions that would assist and help inform the development of relevant services.



(<https://www.mapquest.ca/>)

It has become common knowledge of those working in the Anti-Human Trafficking field that the region from Toronto, Hamilton, Niagara and / or London highway corridors (Queen Elizabeth Way, Highway 401, 403, 405 to U.S.A., Red Hill Valley Parkway and the Lincoln Alexander Parkway) is relevant to the movement of trafficked persons. The corridor extends beyond London to the Windsor- Detroit gateway which is Canada's busiest land border crossing. Others are Queenston Niagara, being primarily transport truck traffic; Niagara Falls being primarily tourists / individuals and Fort Erie being both. (Mto.gov.on.ca, 2018). All are very active border points of entry into and from the U.S.A. Some individuals work in one country while they may reside in the other, thus frequently, even daily moving across borders. They become "Trusted Travellers" by both countries and consequently, have fewer random checks on their crossings or none at all. (Ttp.cbp.dhs.gov, 2018)



Survivors are making the difference

Individuals being trafficked through any points on these corridors might be from anywhere in Canada or the U.S.A. or even elsewhere in the world. The total area for our project was approximately 6053.36 sq. Km (Hamilton 1,138.11 sq. Km; Niagara Region 1,854.25 sq. Km; Haldimand-Norfolk 3,061 sq. Km.) with total population of approximately 1,092,856 people. Haldimand-Norfolk had particular geographical challenges because it is comprised of many little towns that have great distances between them. We chose the Simcoe Library as our central location within Norfolk because it was relatively close to the Six Nations Reserve and easily accessible from Six Nations and Brantford.

Funding approval came late in the calendar year. A small amount of pre-planning was done in December so we could roll out in January. Funding was approved until March 31 (although an extension allowed us to wrap up into April) so we had a short time to complete a number of tasks and to gather and share as much information as possible.

OUR ROLE

NIAGARA CHAPTER-NATIVE WOMEN INC. is the lead agency for Stream One: Community Planning and Development, in collaboration with Native Women of Hamilton which is the primary lead. Phase Two is the Project Delivery and will be led by Native Women of Hamilton. The funds priority is to work toward the possible development of Prevention Services under the “Support opportunities for Indigenous survivors and persons with lived experience to hold leadership roles.”

Stream One will be Survivor Champion informed and guided. This critical first step will enable us to assess the situation as it relates to our Indigenous people with the view of further development of services and programs.

“LET’S TALK ABOUT IT” project

The Survivor Champion along with staff support will offer both group and individual engagements with the purpose of getting input and information and to share information we already know. The Survivor Champion will be involved in the reports and recommendations. The Survivor Champion will aide in the establishment of a Survivor Champions Group and liaison/work with the leadership table to provide guidance and direction in terms of moving forward with any prevention services and programs overlapping up to three years.

Deliverables included:

- Series of 8 community members’ engagements
- Series of 8 service provider engagements
- Up to 20 individual interviews with survivors and / or direct front line workers
- Possible establishment of ongoing survivors group
- Ongoing meetings with leadership table as established through partnerships.
- Draft report interim at March 2018 – final report by April 30, 2018

A culturally based and trauma informed approach would be key to the process. Indigenous knowledge would be respected at all junctures. Tobacco ties were given out as appropriate, a sacred fire could be initiated as necessary on our property. An Elder would be present at all engagements, be available for the Survivor Champion and could be part of the Survivors Group if they wished. Indigenous survivors, as lead resource, guide to ensure we go forward in a good way that works for all people



Hope

I journeyed over a 1000 miles
to free myself of you.
Your hate, your wrath,
Your darkened nights, and deceptive ways.
I lost myself within your darkness,
Covered my pains in your man made patches.
I am someones daughter, Sister, Niece, And cousin.
You can not,
You will not drown my spirit.
“I will survive,I have to survive!!!”
I have travelled over a 1000 miles to rid myself of your pain
blames, hate, and disregard.
I am a survivor
“I AM HOPE”

possibly involved currently and/or survivors to ensure there is no re-traumatization/re-victimization would be key to the entire project.

Key elements to include were:

- To involve an Indigenous Survivor first-person experience. “Survivor Champion”
- They were culturally knowledgeable and practicing and/or striving to practice.
- They had a trauma informed approach, knowledge and willingness to speak to individuals and groups about Human Trafficking
- The “Survivor Champion” is actively engaged with self-care.
- Ability to communicate, have connections with and/or knowledge of relevant individuals, groups, agencies and services. This would include: on the street, outreach services, victim recovery services, health systems, policing units, victim services, safe houses and shelters, children’s services and investigations for example.

Administration:

- Computer literate and internet user
- Ability to roll up engagements reports
- Coordination of group events
- Adherence to required procedures ie: financial requisitions, etc.

PROJECT MODIFICATION

Due to time constraints we were approved to plan for 6 engagements, 3 for community members and 3 for service providers; up to 8 individual interviews, if possible, the establishment of the leadership table and ongoing survivor group.

WHAT HAPPENED AND WHAT DID WE FIND OUT.

The Time is NOW!

First thing.....Survivor Champion added to the title “Surviving Today” and we started! Overall the demand for information is here and the **Time is NOW!** We planned for and hosted three (3) Service Provider Information sessions and three (3) Community Members Information sessions. One ended up being cancelled. Locations planned were Niagara Falls, Hamilton and Norfolk County respectively. We wanted to include Six Nations of the Grand River, however, a local agency was conducting a similar project in that area. Nevertheless, some employees did attend our events.

126 people in total engaged with us and we presented our project to an additional 130 individuals: 100 via Ontario Native Women’s Association as speakers at a conference for



256
participants
received or
shared
information.

Ministry of Attorney General, Office of the Children's Lawyer (OCL) lawyers and the Niagara Branch of Ontario Social Workers Association 30 participants.

At each event a pre-survey and post-survey was given to participants with the exception of the Social Workers, Niagara Branch as we were part of an overall panel and not the coordinating organization but a guest. At each and every event, *including* the Social Workers Niagara Branch, disclosures came forward. Some were anonymous via the survey; some were in person; some were soon after the fact via phone calls wherein they identified being at the session; and in one case at a Community Members session 2 participants disclosed right in the session and one asked to speak to the group of her experiences for the first time. A total of 8 disclosures were either:



1. The realization that they themselves had been trafficked or sexually exploited.
2. The realization they themselves had trafficked or sexually exploited someone else.

In addition to the group information sessions, a number of individual interviews were conducted by the Survivor Champion.

In total, 8 individuals, male and female agreed to person to person interviews. These 8 are not necessarily any of the individuals who may have disclosed through realizations in the information sessions. All 8 had been sexually exploited and the majority had stated "early abuse by a family member". Some were still being trafficked at the time of their interview. The number 1 reason for not leaving or trying to leave or escape their situation was unanimous for all 8: **FEAR OF DEATH**. One interviewee feared even doing the interview at all. Survivors stated this type of project "should have happened a long time ago", they thought it was a "good" thing and were appreciative of the project wishing us well with it. Survivors talked about the learned behaviours within sex trafficking and the resultant "self-exploitation" that had happened with some of them because of it. All survivors were guaranteed their anonymity and yet even with **FEAR OF DEATH**, several offered to help us anyway they could.

What We Learned

- i) **Anti-Human trafficking services must be Survivor Champion informed and led.**

- ii) **Alternatives for those wishing to exit trafficking must be safe, resilient, open and easily accessible.**
- iii) **Agencies involved in delivery of such services need strong, accepting and supportive leaders who are not afraid to share leadership and take direction.**
- iv) **The entire catchment area covered is requesting more information.**
- v) **Community members, service providers, law enforcement, Ministry personnel, front line emergency services, Fire Departments and Paramedics are in need of the Indigenous point of view and support for victims.**

ENGAGEMENTS SUMMARY, PANEL SPEAKERS AND LINK TO OTHERS

The Let's Talk initiative was created to bring information to the Niagara Region, Norfolk, Hamilton areas specifically about Indigenous People in Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking.

This was a welcomed source of information to these areas; survivor led, along with other survivors speaking about the realities of sexual exploitation, child welfare agencies, drugs and street trafficking.



Our first panel of speakers were brought in from an already established network in the Winnipeg, Manitoba area. Our panelists were able to provide information on Manitoba's well established network on the prevention and reduction of Human Trafficking strategies of affordable housing, safe houses, outreach and mentor programs, and cultural reconnections. Youth and families are striving through traditional approaches and the careful guidance of survivors to attain personal and familial success.

There was a correlation between drug/alcohol abuses, child welfare systems misplacing Indigenous children, childhood sexual molestation, the child's need for love (grooming), and physical and mental abuse.

The survivors did establish similar connections in regard to their individual stories.

One of the panelists spoke to the lack of resources, and supports specifically for transgender people with regards to her own sexual exploitation and street trafficking by recounting the events she endured as a young child being directed to a large city by Children's Aid Society, and exploited by older men as a means of sustenance and survival.

The child welfare system failed the second woman, a mother of 7. Her story was a drug fueled journey brought forward by the numerous placements and her need for acceptance. She was placed in over 30 different foster homes, running from these locations back to the family home where the abuse initially occurred because she was seeking family, community and familiarity of the known. Peer pressure and guidance led her to street trafficking, drug abuse, prison, loss of her own children and long-term traumas.

She also spoke of sexual abuse within the home, the peer pressure, drug addiction, luring (the act of promising gifts and love) and the truth behind the purchases and sales of children for the purposes of sexual exploitation by adults for adults.



Our male speaker shared his exploitation at the hands of a trusted family member, his journey into drug related crimes, gangs, and violence.

With a total of 3,100 Canadian Indian Reservations (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_reserve), if we neglect the needs of even ONE of our Indigenous youth from each Reserve, that is a total of 3,100 children exposed to sexual exploitation and human trafficking. According to the Child Sexual Abuse (The Canadian Badgley Royal Commission, Report on Sexual Offences Against Children and Youths), 1984. (pg 180) sexual abuse starts at the median age of 9 years old, and 54% of girls under the age of

21 reporting an assault; 22% of those reporting state 2 or more sexual assaults are the first exposure to sexual experiences in or out of the home by a family member or someone known to these children as some form of sexual misconduct, exposure, violence or drugs/alcohol.

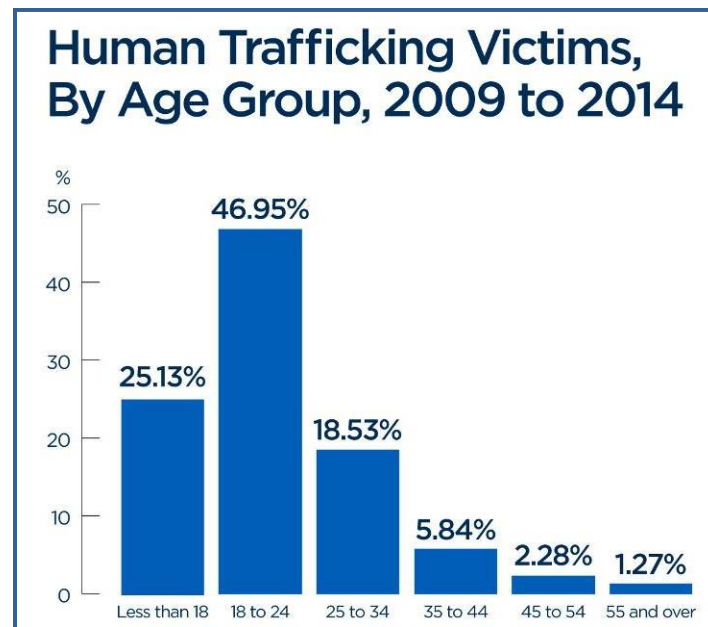
That number on its own becomes recognizably astonishing. Depending on the size of the community 1 in 3 children will become a victim or re-victimized.
(www.sacha.ca/resources/statistics, 2018)

Another study indicated that 25% of trafficked peoples in Canada are between the ages 12 - 14, and remain trafficked on an average, until the age of 18. While others remain to be exploited in their relationships even after street and sex works have ended continuing the trauma-based relationships as guideline to further generational traumas. (Remiorz, R. (2016).



25% of Canada's human trafficking victims are minors: *Statistics Canada.* [online] Global News. Available at: <https://globalnews.ca/news/2819281/25-of-canadas-human-trafficking-victims-are-minors-statistics-canada/> [Accessed 3 May 2018].)

*More than half of these victims are INDIGENOUS. (www.sacha.ca/resources/statistics, 2018)



(Statistics Canada)

The second part of the Let's talk ... about surviving today, (Niagara Falls Public Library) initiative was presented in two locations. At the Niagara Falls public library, we hosted approximately 25 community members. Present were our two survivor champions Caroline Pugh-Roberts and Leona Skye, along with two invited survivors from our



community one aged 25 and the second 74 years of age. Through this engagement we established a third survivor who wanted to share her story, and the fourth survivor guest was trafficked, non-sexually, but exploited as a labour immigrant. With our community event questionnaire



being similar we found the speakers were able to teach the community what exploitation actually is, and it was acknowledged in the question---- "have you ever exploited or trafficked" went from NO to YES. This finding....the fine line between harassment and exploitation was exposed and identified, that everyone has been exploited or has exploited in various degrees of the terminology.

The first set of questionnaires presented to our Community member audience was handed out prior to the engagement speakers and were returned prior to the speakers starting. The

question that posed the most significance to both our Survivor Champions was “have you ever exploited another person for the purpose of personal gains?”

The group of Questions presented to the community members were presented with a more direct approach. After our Champions told their stories the same questions were then presented again in hopes of finding small significant changes in the answers. There was a change in response to the question “Have you ever exploited another person for the purpose of personal gain?” Some of the people that answered NO changed to a Yes or Maybe.

Carolyn Pugh-Roberts spoke as a Champion Survivor of human trafficking beginning at the age of 35 years. A well-educated, strong willed individual caught within the grips of, in her words, “her beginning began as a woman, not a child, or teen” establishing that age or race do not bear a significant role in the matter of Human Trafficking. That ANYONE can be exploited, groomed and trafficked at any age.

Leona Skye, our Indigenous lead Survivor Champion began her presentation with a light hearted note on sexual harassment and the different ways it could be described, with statements including “Hey Baby”, “cat calls”, “whistles”, etc.... and then proceeded to change the word harassment to exploitation after nearly all the attendees had raised their hands and agreed that at some point in time they have sexually harassed another in a light hearted banter, flirting with a waitress, bartender, or anyone.

In the second round of questions, with the information provided by the survivor champions, our guests were able to recognize how easily one can exploit or be exploited.

Those sessions were a success when providing valuable information to our community members in regards to the insensitivity being presented throughout our social norms as “harassment” or “light hearted sexual banter”.

Our communities are unaware and uneducated in terminologies assisting in the lack of sensitivities in our youth, and those at risk of being exploited/trafficked. This resembles a lack of control, and control to those who traffic within the vulnerabilities of community desensitization. Sometimes a crude gesture “baby that is a fine ass”, although badly constructed and ignorantly phrased can be perceived as flattering to those most vulnerable, those who wish to be loved, protected, those who wish to protect, those searching out a new life, which only reiterates our finding that we need to educate and start from a young age to remove these vulnerabilities.





SURVIVOR INTERVIEWS

Sixteen (16) questions were devised to help prompt conversations with key individuals that the Survivor Champion was able to connect with in person. Questions flowed from the usual and then they got into deeper areas. Some questions went unanswered due to the drift of the conversation. 'At what age were you sexually exploited and by whom? Were you ever a ward of the courts? If so, at what age were you apprehended? Were you abused sexually while in

SURVIVORS HAVE THEIR SAY

"LISTEN,
IT'S NOT A FUCKING
JOKE, YOU CAN'T MAKE
THIS UP AND I DID
NOTHING TO CAUSE IT, I
DID NOTHING TO STOP
IT."

care and if so by whom? How old were you the first time you were paid / rewarded for a sexual act? How old were you when you were first introduced to drugs/ alcohol during your trafficking? During your exploitation how many times per day did you get exploited for sex? How many times did you attempt to escape Sexual Exploitation/ Human Trafficking before you succeeded? Did you succeed? How did you escape sexual exploitation/human trafficking? How long (months, years, days, weeks) were you sexually exploited/ trafficked? After being sexually exploited by others, how long did you continue to exploit yourself and / or others? How did you continue to exploit yourself, and why? Why is ending the cycle of sexual exploitation/ Human Trafficking important to you? What would you like people to know? Tell me how this affects your life daily, parenting, relationships, trust issues and fears? What type

of help/guidance do you feel should be implemented in assisting presently exploited/trafficked people, people exiting, people surviving, and people championing? How do you feel in regards to issues like this being survivor lead? We are still in the early stages of a very large problem; at

some point in the future would you be willing to assist us again in finding answers, setting up and participating in panels, to make this initiative work?”

INTERVIEW FINDINGS

A total of 8 survivor interviews were completed with a variety of trafficked survivors and victims of sexual exploitations, within the Niagara region.

Although not all survivors’ exploitations originated within the region, some of our interviewed have

found safe

haven within our communities, were migrated from other communities and remained, or were raised within the region, trafficked elsewhere and returned home to our community.

The findings were very similar with the common age of 0-7 to 7-14 as being the ages of first sexual abuses, with the majority of abuse being implemented by a family member or friend of the family.

Findings show that the common theme why the survivors fear exiting is that they believe and fear they will be killed by their trafficker.

Our numbers have been forwarded safely and the presentation of a Survivor Champion is extremely well received by exploited and locally trafficked individuals.

The safe familiarities shared by a survivor champion and those who have escaped, trying to escape and even those who remain of their own free will, insight comments like “should have happened a long time ago” “good”, “ safe” and appreciative comments and well wishes for the project.

It’s a totally mixed response with the survivors interviewed, as the homosexual male explained he felt no harm in doing what he is still doing although he was trafficked into the industry at a young age feels he has empowered his situation being “able to meet interesting and exciting men through sex work and being paid for it is a bonus.” I interviewed a 36 year old heterosexual male, whom was exploited as a child, he finds the “exploitation and trafficking of any persons disturbing and wrong.” His journey began with sexual exploitation at age 7 through sports groups (lacrosse) and hazing. He was then trafficked as a “gay for pay” by the age of 14 and ended up on the street at 16. His journey of exploitation is still prominent today and he too clearly recognizes how he has continued to self-exploit and concerned that he too might just be gay, and places himself in sexually dangerous positions on a regular basis such as unprotected sex, sexual deviance, violent sexual acts, orgies, etc.

SURVIVORS HAVE THEIR SAY

**“DON’T TALK ABOUT US
WITHOUT US!”**

SURVIVORS HAVE THEIR SAY

**“SHIT LIKE YOU ARE DOING,
FROM THE STREETS, TELLING
THE TRUTH, NOT JUDGING, I
CAN TALK TO YOU BUT
METHODONE CLINIC, HOSPITAL,
COPS ALL LOOK AT US LIKE
WE’RE NOTHING....SO WE GIVE
THEM NOTHING.”**

Two sisters are being exploited by the same trafficker, residing within a “STABLE.” A stable is a situation where one trafficker has more than one exploited sex worker within their grasps and these stables can either have all workers together within the same location or a variety of locations spread around, but closely watched. Within these stables, not only is the fear of abuse present by the traffickers, but also the daily punishments that occur by all residents due to the ‘failure’ of the one individual within these communes. This causes the re-enforcement by the others, and torture to insure the safety of all those directly involved.

Both sisters, although only one is still involved placing ads and still meeting up with regular clients, feel that prostitution should be of a woman’s free will and being exploited/trafficked for the gain of a PIMP “is unacceptable, but, the way it’s always been” “Sometimes you just got to do whatever it takes...”

The issue regarding human trafficking and sexual exploitation when correctly explained brought tears to the elder of the two sisters who at that time felt/realized her impact on the trafficking of her younger sister. Both women claimed that once free of their exploiters they took charge and began working in agencies that were just as bad, claiming up to half the asking price for services, but state it was better than not getting anything at all.

The younger of the two sisters, agreed with her sister’s account of the trade and would be most likely to have continued had it not been for breast cancer, a mass mastectomy, and her raising children.

Both women are still on the run from the exploiter from Halifax Nova Scotia and have resided within the Niagara Region for the past 9 years.

With the scars and tattoo upon her face our last survivor interviewed shared her tortures and actually feared the repercussions of participating in our interview questions but knowing the survivor support, Leona Skye, became willing to share with the reassurance of anonymity.

This woman escaped her exploiter when she was sentenced to an 8 year prison sentence. She lost her children, her family, and has been off the methadone program for 11 months.

“He still haunts me” are the only words she can use to describe the tortures she endured. “I was once beautiful, I swear I really was”.

Drowned, beaten, and facially tattooed with his mark torments her daily life. “I have tried to kill myself so many times” but now locks herself indoors to stay away from judging eyes and reminders of her past.

“I don’t know what I can do to help, but I will try” she explains.

The journey of all those interviewed in this process is an enlightened us to know there is no changing where they came from but with a survivor led support, a difference can be made in regards to human trafficking and sexual exploitation.

SURVIVORS HAVE THEIR SAY

“KEEP GOING! I KNOW A FEW SILLY BITCHES THAT COULD USE HELP LIKE THIS, BEFORE THEY GET SMACKED DOWN OR DEAD.”

WHAT IS NEXT - RECOMMENDATIONS - Leona Skye, Survivor Champion

In my opinion, moving forward with these types of initiatives a more front line and communal approach should be implemented.

- When presenting to service providers, it should be done in-house, at the organization. In doing this we can tailor the information to the organizations' immediate needs and directly related to their participants. I, as a Survivor Champion, hope to see something like this happening 3 times a week in places such as schools, shelters, police, EMS, Niagara College, Brock University, Faculty Alumnae, FACS, CAS etc.
 - Community events that include a panel of speakers, more generalized presentations are provided, whereas an in-house service provider's event can elaborate and detail certain areas.



Front-line involvement regarding this program.

- Ensure an option for potential survivors and those exploited, to have a Survivor Champion present in all decisions, therapy, court sessions, and one-on-one informal representation and counselling, healing and venting.
- Having a Survivor present should alleviate the sense that they are alone, nobody else can relate, and they may be re-traumatized/ re-victimized by their service providers.

SURVIVOR CHAMPION SAYS!

**“THEY SHOULDN'T
HAVE TO WALK
ALONE.”**

- Monthly sweats to encourage self-care for service providers, Survivors and support people. By offering traditional healing for Survivors, Indigenous and non-Indigenous support workers and consultants, it will encourage a relatable traditional understanding, reconnection, while also encouraging teachings and a greater understanding into our traditionally based approaches.
- To honour our Survivors and those seeking assistance in exiting, we should gift a medicine bag and smudge bundle. We should offer the guidance, support and love from the organizations assisting in the Creator's work.

- An Elder is a must. They will provide guidance not to just those Surviving, championing, but also agency personnel. There should be an Elder actively involved in all aspects surrounding the program. Continuous feedback on status' and teachings, involvements with a clear mind and concise input on the benefits of potential relationships being formed. In doing this, an unbiased opinion can be established, provide stability and needed direction, positive and negative feedback and keep the initiative on track.
- To create a social media connection via a private, by invite only, Facebook group, making us easier to find and contact available 24 hours a day, 7 day a week.
- Indigenous Survivor Champions and the work we do...ie: through Let's Talk for example....need to be sought after as the experts on Indigenous Human Trafficking. In order to improve community, a more personal knowledge of the Indigenous ways, historical oppressive structures. Non-Indigenous persons should not be speaking for Indigenous Survivors.

Staff engaged with the LET'S TALK PROJECT

Tammi Givans; Child and Youth Worker; Anti-Human Trafficking Program Coordinator. She hit the floor running, got us up and going in record time to meet almost all of our goals. Here is what Tammi had to say about her experiences:

Leona Skye is the lead Survivor Champion for the first phase of the Anti-Human Trafficking campaign. During the initial planning of the vision and direction we wanted this campaign to go. I have worked with Leona on the phase 1 of the project as her assistant and I have taken some observations over the past several months. The benefit of having a survivor led initiative proved invaluable because Leona came with experience, knowledge, networks, connections and explicit details of being trafficked for sex and how that impacts your family, mentality and children. It's my opinion that without a survivor, someone who can relate, who has been in the situation, escaped and survived, we would not have had the panellists, community turnout, and people coming forward to tell their stories and/or ask for help to escape. It also would have been difficult to get people to take value in the information being received because it was "text book" without intimate knowledge of the ins and outs of the human trafficking world and it would be someone up there talking at us as though it was a school unit. Leona was able to have the attendees visually envision what she felt, saw and experienced.



Leona was brave to stand before these communities and tell people explicitly about being sexually abused, sold as a toddler and into preteens by her parents to various family members, the family being torn apart, saving her sister and then her own children and how she was able to save her children from being subjected to that world. Leona lacked an administrative skillset,

but was willing to learn these aspects. Together we put together three service providers' engagements and two community member engagements. This is where she told her story within her own community for the first time publicly. She did well, but it was obvious that she struggled emotionally with telling the world what she had endured. There were three back-to-back sessions for service providers. What she did extremely well was that she brought a panel of guests that could help give the service providers direction and ideas to help people leave human trafficking, help the service providers understand human trafficking and identify what our community lacked to support those at risk or involved with human trafficking. Three days in a row was too much, as the stress of being open and confronting her past became emotionally trying and several days to recover from the re-hashing of trauma. The correlating of information started as well as the planning of the community engagements, where this led to serious reservation because this is now not only her community attending, but her peers; people she sees regularly, works with, goes to Pow-Wow with etc., and she was mentally preparing for her peers to know her truth, preparing for any backlash that could arise from this. This time we had a week break between the community engagements so she had time to get through the triggers and emotions that comes with telling her story.

The final engagement was too far apart and we determined that about two days between events would be ideal for survivors. Each time Leona spoke her story came from a different perspective and during the last session she shared more than she had in any other session, specifically about how her abuser attacked and left her for dead while abducting her child and selling him to a family that could not bear children. It was coming to a close and the reality had hit. Leona is an outstanding woman and she was able to rise to each task thrown her way. When she needed help either emotionally or administratively, she was always able to do so or ask for space if she needed it. It wasn't without hardship to her and her vision to fight for what needed to be done, but she did a fantastic job to get the process started and open doors for our community to help end the cycle of human trafficking.



A few words from Wendy Sturgeon, ED, Niagara Chapter-Native Women Inc.

Our human resiliency and capacity for love is still truly one of the greatest forces on the planet. I thank Creator that it is alive and well. This project has reconfirmed that for me. When so many in our world are fighting, carrying hatred, negativity and greed we must continue to love, to give and be kind. I knew so little about Human Trafficking when this project started. I just knew we had to "DO SOMETHING" as our children, young women and men were and are desperately needing us to be there for them. The day I met Leona in the smoking area...little did I know where we would end up. This entire project would not have been at all possible without her and we owe her so much gratitude for sharing with us, guiding us and giving freely of her love for humanity. I have learned so much Chi Miiigwetch Leona from my heart to yours. The truths were tough, the laughs were great and the tears we always celebrate as they help us move on in our journeys.

~Here's a poem I wrote during the project



(Leona Skye, age 6)

LOVE PREVAILS

"My Life Shall Not Be In Vain" she says....love rises from the ashes of split souls,

Burned and charred by the stolen innocence and tortured flesh.

I have seen it with my own eyes, heard it with my own ears.

Love prevails.

She sits before me an open book giving of her most precious self,

Dreaded memories, insights, tears and glory.... I listen, I witness....

I shudder in my gut. I want to puke. I hold it together

Because someone has to...and after all, I'm supposed to be able to right?

And then I pray. And then I cry... and then my blood boils with rage

I only know that I know that we must move forward somehow...

For that little one...and that little one and all the little ones

No matter how old or adult they seem

The children are still there and....

Love must prevail.

~dedicated to the little ones



“Surviving Today”

By: Leona Skye