



**GENDER BASED VIOLENCE
IN THE MEDIA**
A PROJECT BY AURA FREEDOM



Guidelines on Gender-Based Violence in the Media

A project by Aura Freedom in collaboration with feminist stakeholders from across Canada and beyond

Aura Freedom acknowledges the support of Women and Gender Equality Canada.



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Aura Freedom is a grassroots, intersectional feminist organization working in Canada and internationally to end violence against women and human trafficking. Our vision is a world in which all women and girls live free from violence. Each and every one of our initiatives strives to one day make that vision a reality.

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A Project by Aura Freedom International

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Land Acknowledgement:

Aura Freedom works upon the traditional, unceded territories of the Huron-Wendat, Anishinabek Nation, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. Today, the meeting place of Tkaronto is still the home to many Indigenous Peoples from across Turtle Island. As an organization working to end violence against women, we know that across Turtle Island, nobody experiences violence at the rate and in the way that Indigenous women, girls, Two Spirit and gender diverse people do. We will always strive to amplify the voices of Indigenous women and organizations and do all we can to see the day when peace and power is restored to Indigenous communities across Canada.

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Content Warning

The following document contains subject matter that some readers may find distressing, including descriptions of Gender-Based Violence and descriptive experiences of violence, sexism, racism, colonialism, and homo/transphobia. Take care of yourself when reading. Self-care, love, bravery, and resiliency to all.

Editor's Note & Introduction

Journalists have a unique and beautiful opportunity to make a positive impact with every story they write - even if the stories themselves are far from beautiful or positive. Indeed, journalists tell the stories of our time. The power that the media holds is undeniable - and *'with great power comes great responsibility'*.

The media have an important role in ending gender-based violence (GBV). If you are a journalist, reporter, editor, or other media professional, and you are here to better understand how to write about GBV, we thank you. You have taken a step in solidarity with countless survivors, and with advocates around the world who dedicate their lives to ending gender-based violence in their communities.

Historically, gender-based violence has been misrepresented and underreported in the media. Intentionally or not, media sources often play into harmful stereotypes or misconceptions, and might not always prioritize the safety of survivors, or the prevention of GBV.

In my work, I have come to recognize male violence against women as one of the most ignored and normalized human rights abuses in the world. Still considered private family matters or random acts by 'madmen', the many forms of violence against women and girls are rarely connected to wider social issues or systemic oppressions. One of the most powerful tools we have to help us connect those dots, is the media.

With care, courage, and intention, journalists can shift the conversation around gender-based violence in Canada by educating and empowering people with accurate facts and information, ultimately leading to prevention and, dare we dream, eradication. Media can help identify and hold accountable the oppressive systems that tolerate, excuse and 'explain away' gender-based violence, allowing it to thrive. A well-written news story on GBV can even uplift survivors and encourage them to seek support.

This is what we call [Transformative Media](#).

These guidelines aim to support journalists writing and reporting on gender-based violence by providing information, facts, words, suggestions, and frames for their stories. They are written under the assumption that journalists are writing from a place with good intentions and a desire to see a better world. We are aware that what we are calling for in this document requires an entire shift in the fast-paced culture of the media to truly change the way GBV is portrayed. Reporting on news as quickly as possible (and before anyone else) is often the main objective, and deadlines are tight. Yet, conducting the necessary research to write in a transformative way takes time. While revolutions cannot and do not happen overnight, journalists can still - article by article, word by word - strive to do better. We know that it is challenging to remember every guideline in this document. However, we also know that a GBV news story written by following even a few of these suggestions, along with compassion and respect, will always be more transformative - and revolutionary - than one that does not.

We recognize that there are many journalists already doing transformative work in the GBV space. We have seen writers and reporters - many of them women, racialized, or marginalized - dig deeper and tell the hard stories while facing harassment and pushback. Thank you for continuing to 'disrupt' in solidarity with us, and for walking alongside survivors and advocates with every piece you write.

In solidarity,

Marissa Kokkoros
Founder & Executive Director, Aura Freedom

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Acknowledgements

We did not do this alone.

The following guidelines have been created in solidarity with a group that sits at the heart of this project: our **GBV In The Media National Network**. Our National Network is a pan-Canadian group composed of Gender-Based Violence and human trafficking experts, frontline workers, academics, survivors, journalists, reporters, other media guideline creators, and more. The network includes a parallel, Indigenous-led network comprised of Indigenous GBV sector workers, educators, researchers, advocates, journalists, and others.

Over the course of two and a half years, the National Network members supported and informed the **GBV In The Media** project by providing their diverse range of expertise, insight, and feedback on key project materials, including these guidelines. Through this project, new partnerships across sectors have been cultivated and fostered, expanding upon the feminist movement in Canada and beyond.

We extend our gratitude and respect to all the people and organizations on our National Network who supported this project and these guidelines. We thank you for all your brilliance, your commitment, your laughter, your honesty, and your humanity.

Recognizing our National Network Members:

- AIDS Committee of Toronto
- Andrew McConnell, Independent member
- Ariana Magliocco, Independent member
- Asha Dahir, Independent member
- Battered Women's Support Services
- Bell Media
- Canadian Council of Muslim Women
- Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability, University of Guelph
- Canadian Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse
- Ci Ci Fan, Independent member
- DAWN Canada
- Deborah Sinclair
- Elizabeth Fry Toronto
- Enchante' Network
- End FGM/C Network Canada
- FCJ Refugee Centre
- Feminist Alliance for International Action (FAFIA/AFAI)
- Global News
- Global News (BC)
- Mark Pender, Independent member
- Melissa Compton, Independent member
- Michael Kehler, Independent member
- Mohawk College, Indigenous Student Services
- Native Women's Association of Canada
- Native Women's Resource Centre of Toronto
- Next Gen Men
- Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses
- Rogers Media
- Saturviit Inuit Women's Association
- Support Network for Indigenous Women and Women of Colour
- Toronto Rape Crisis Centre / Multicultural Women Against Rape
- White Ribbon
- Women's Habitat

We are not the first to do this. There are guidelines and other tools for reporting on Gender-Based Violence from advocates in Canada and around the world, some of whom collaborated with us on this [project](#). These **Guidelines on Gender-Based Violence in the Media** aim to complement and build upon existing feminist work as we collectively move the needle toward the eradication of GBV in our communities.



Additional Contributors:

The collaborators below attended focus group discussions organized by Aura Freedom to support the creation of these guidelines.

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- Centre for Independent Living in Toronto
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- eSafety Commissioner, Australian Government
- Jennifer Kagan, GBV Advocate
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- New Brunswick Aboriginal People's Council
- Nikki Dube, GBV Advocate & Social Worker
- Our Watch (Australia) including representatives from their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander department
- Prabhu Rajan, Domestic Violence Death Review Committee, Ontario
- The I Do Forced Marriage Project
- The Neighbourhood Group, Women's Program
- Victim Services Toronto
- Woman Abuse Council of Toronto
- Womenatthecentre
- YWCA Toronto
- Survivors who wish to remain anonymous

Methodology

The **GBV In The Media** project is based on a combination of literature-based research, as well as collaborative research and knowledge sharing with the National Network of experts and community stakeholders. Our research team conducted an initial analysis of existing media guidelines for the representation of GBV both in Canada and internationally. Then, we began a deeper investigation into Indigenous and non-Indigenous literature on this topic, including academic articles, State of Knowledge papers, meta-analyses, media guidelines, from grassroots organizations, and action plans put forward by the Government of Canada. Our separate analysis of existing guidelines, as well as academic research on GBV in the media, allowed us to identify opportunities for transformation and boundary-pushing. Alongside this, we conducted regular consultations with the National Network. The National Network is a pan-Canadian group of experts in GBV, media professionals, advocates, community stakeholders, and frontline workers. Rooting ourselves in the conversations and knowledge shared during these meetings, we received valuable insight from the Network that didn't always show up in the research. This insight allowed us to increase the applicability and accuracy of our guidelines, ensuring that professionals on the frontlines of GBV work and media will be able to put our work to use.

Considerations

While a diverse representation of perspectives and lived experiences was a top priority for this project, we must acknowledge that there are identities and perspectives that might not be represented on the Network and within these guidelines. This is due to limitations in time, capacity, and funding. In our guidelines, we strived to include examples pertinent to a wide range of marginalized communities and forms of GBV that often fall to the sidelines in conversations about GBV. In this way, we aim to be as inclusive as possible while recognizing our limitations in capacity and representation. We hope to continue building on these guidelines, and adding depth, range, and value to our project.

Definitions

Gender-Based Violence (GBV): is violence that is committed against someone based on their gender, gender identity, gender expression or perceived gender. GBV is experienced around the globe and is one of the most prevalent and normalized human rights abuses. Gender-Based Violence takes many forms: physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, spiritual, cyber, financial, and more. It can be any word, action, or attempt to degrade, control, oppress, humiliate, intimidate, coerce, deprive, threaten, or harm women and gender diverse people. The most common form of GBV is perpetrated by men against women, known as Violence Against Women or Male Violence Against Women (Aura Freedom International, 2020).

Violence Against Women (VAW): is *'any act of Gender-Based Violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life'* (United Nations, 1993).

Male Violence Against Women (MVAW): specifically names men as the perpetrators of the violence and includes any 'sexual violence and abuse, physical violence, domestic abuse, sexual harassment, street harassment, verbal abuse and threats, stalking, coercive control, online abuse, forced marriage, honour-based abuse and female genital mutilation' committed by men against women and girls (National Institute for Health and Care Research, 2022). MVAW is a major public health concern of pandemic proportions that affects the physical, sexual, psychological, and emotional health of women on an individual level and has steep negative social and economic impacts.

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV): is one of the most common forms of Gender-Based Violence and Male Violence Against Women. It is any physical, sexual, psychological, and emotional abuse by an intimate partner. IPV occurs in all settings and among all socio-economic, religious, and cultural groups. When the partners live together, it is also known as Domestic Violence, although Intimate Partner Violence is preferred by many advocates. IPV comes in many different forms, including physical- beating, biting, choking, use of weapons, etc., sexual, including marital rape, emotional and verbal insults, humiliation, name calling, psychological, coercive control, manipulation, threats, gaslighting, harming other family members/animals, neglect stalking/cyberstalking, financial abuse, and femicide (Aura Freedom International, 2020).

In the following guidelines, 'GBV' includes Gender-Based Violence, Violence Against Women, and Male Violence Against Women.



Definitions

Coercive Control: is an ongoing pattern of domination where abusive partners engage in repeated psychological and emotional violence while using intimidation, deprivation, degradation, isolation, and humiliation. It can include cycles of physical and sexual violence as well, but not always. Coercive Control is present in many Intimate Partner Violence and sex trafficking situations. It is an insidious form of violence that is constant, repetitive, deceitful, and aims to break a person down from the inside. It is overwhelmingly perpetuated by men against women. The primary outcome is a condition of hostage-like entrapment.

Coercive Control is hard to ‘see.’ It is a challenge to identify because it is often a long pattern of abuse—emotional, psychological, financial, and physical—and when viewed in isolation by an outsider, some of the behaviours may not raise red flags. In Canada, Intimate Partner Violence is often viewed as a single physical event. Because of this, Coercive Control is often not recognized, even though it is extremely damaging and can be deadly. We must recognize the serious impact Coercive Control has over survivors. The extreme distress, fear, and mental torture survivors experience robs them and their children of their right to live freely and peacefully (Aura Freedom International, 2020).

Intersectionality: is a term created by Black feminist scholar Dr. Kimberle Crenshaw that describes the ways in which aspects of our identities (gender, race, religion, class, location, ability, etc.) and life experiences overlap to create discrimination and disadvantage. It allows us to understand how a person, a group of people, or a social issue (such as Gender-Based Violence) is affected by different factors that exist in an unhealthy, co-dependent relationship - such as racism, sexism, colonialism, transphobia, and more. (Crenshaw, 1989; Aura Freedom International, n.d.).

Human Trafficking: *“Trafficking in persons” shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.’* (United Nations, 2000). **The guidelines in this document reflect human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation, also known as sex trafficking.**



Definitions

Our definition was inspired by the *Out for Change Transformative Media Organizing Project*, and incorporates other elements relevant to our project.

Transformative Media: Transformative media pursues social change from an intersectional perspective rooted in an understanding of power structures, the dismantling of colonialism, and the intersection of race, class, gender, sexuality, ability and other positionalities; it is creative and imagines forms of solidarity that push beyond traditional boundaries and break the traditional moulds of media and journalism; it is rooted in the lived experiences of the communities it seeks to represent and is accountable and sensitive to the needs of these communities; it is an iterative, collaborative movement for liberatory social change (Aura Freedom International, GBV In The Media Project, 2022).

A Note on Transformative Media

We understand that journalists may be in varying positions of power to push boundaries and show solidarity with the movement to eradicate GBV in their professional position. Systems of inequality affect who has access to a seat at the decision-making table, and who does not get the privilege of breaking norms and traditions. We understand that these differing positions of power affect media professionals' ability to enact these guidelines without risk.

Trauma-Informed Approach: Trauma-informed approaches to media representation are survivor-centric and consider the needs and wellbeing of both subjects and audiences of the media. It requires that steps be taken to avoid re-traumatization and re-victimization, placing power back in the hands of victims and survivors of GBV and VAW to share stories on their own terms (Western University, 2020).

Violence-Informed Approach: Violence-informed approaches are related to trauma-informed approaches, as violence is one of many sources of trauma. While violence and trauma can take many forms, violence-informed approaches are distinct in that they intend to minimize the possibility of further harm, both socially and structurally. Violence-informed approaches both recognize and seek to avoid perpetuating ongoing violence rather than focusing on past trauma (Western University, 2020).



Voices

The theme of *Voices* points to how media portrayals of GBV determine whose voices, stories and perspectives are uplifted, and whose are silenced, as well as whose voices are considered experts on the subject of GBV. These guidelines emphasize the importance of using true expert voices to ensure appropriate and accurate representation of GBV in the media and provide concrete steps to building knowledge and sustainable relationships with the GBV sector.



Voices

GBV Expert Voices

- Centre the voices of experts to get a clear understanding of GBV, its causes, nuances, and how it can be eradicated.
- Be open to changing your views on who the real GBV experts are. Police and government agency sources have historically been seen as the experts on GBV, which could not be further from reality. GBV Experts include, but are not limited to:
 - People with lived experience
 - GBV frontline workers and organizations (shelters, sexual assault centres, helplines, etc.)
 - GBV sector organizations both large and small (non-profits, research centres, grassroots advocacy groups, etc.)
 - Community activists
 - Academics and Policy workers
- Reach out to GBV experts about breaking stories. GBV organizations are often aware of breaking GBV stories in their communities—they are an underused resource and can add valuable insight to breaking news stories that normally only rely on police press releases as their primary source.
- Ensure your expert sources are vetted and work from an intersectional feminist lens. See [Frameworks section](#) for more.
 - **Alignment with the Canadian Association of Journalists Ethical Guidelines:**
'News organizations—including newspapers, websites, magazines, radio, and television—provide forums for the free interchange of information and opinion. As such, we seek to include views from all segments of the population.'
- Experts may change depending on context. For example, survivors may not always be experts on GBV/VAW statistics, and policy workers in the GBV sector may not be experts on the lived experiences of survivors.
- Allow GBV victims, survivors, their families, and their communities to guide the voice and narratives of their own stories.
- *Become* the experts—invest in trauma and violence-informed and GBV-literacy training to educate yourself and your staff on how to interview for, and write about, GBV. Conduct staff training for the implementation of these and other GBV guidelines. For increased sustainability, consider adding a staff member to your team with a background in GBV.

Who is writing stories on Gender-Based Violence in your agency? Should they be writing those stories? Is there someone more suitable and informed?



Voices of Journalists

- Do not centre your own voice or opinion. *'Transformative journalists are storytellers, not story takers.'* (Duncan McCue, Indigenous television and radio journalist, CBC, as quoted by Goldsbie 2022) They recognize they are not the ones speaking—they are giving a platform to the victims, survivors, their families, communities, as well as community experts and GBV organizations to share their stories and knowledge from their perspectives.
- If called to write an article about GBV in a community whose context you are unfamiliar with, include a blurb that outlines your positionality as someone who is not an expert, but learning about the issues.
- Use your voice as a peer. If you read an article that doesn't align with these (or other relevant) guidelines, reach out to the journalist/author/organization, and share resources to encourage a transformative approach to stories on GBV.

Police Voices

- Avoid using voices in law enforcement or the criminal justice system as the sole voices of authority on GBV, especially if they are not actively engaged with the survivor, their family and/or community. When necessary, hold these systems and your organization accountable by offering your readers full transparency on the source, status, and potential bias of the information you receive, as well as any efforts to follow up or contextualize this information
 - If your story requires voices from law enforcement and criminal justice systems, place them among voices from relevant experts such as GBV organizations and contextualize information with statistics on GBV. This may mean that GBV stories are not rushed, and deadlines are mindful of the importance of accurate GBV reporting. **After all, people's lives are on the line.**
 - **Alignment with the Canadian Association of Journalist Ethical Guidelines:** *'We are disciplined in our efforts to verify all facts. Accuracy is the moral imperative of journalists and news organizations, and should not be compromised, even by pressing deadlines of the 24-hour news cycle.'*
 - If it's necessary to have a criminal justice voice, seek out the local Victim Services team where you might find experts in both GBV and the criminal justice system who often walk with GBV survivors and their families for longer periods of time than police do.
- Be mindful of the community within which the survivor exists and their relationship with police/law enforcement
 - Ex: Avoid centering the voice of police for BIPOC survivors or victims; recognize the relationship between Black and Indigenous survivors and police in your reporting.

When using non-expert voices, acknowledge their lack of authority on the subject of GBV.

Voices of Neighbours

- We recommend not centering the voices of neighbours and other acquaintances who do not know the survivor/their family well. These individuals may have no idea about the violence occurring in homes in their neighbourhood and quoting them can perpetuate GBV myths and even affect court cases.
 - Ex: Quotes like *'He was a really nice guy and always helped shovel our snow'* are not relevant to GBV cases as many abusers and perpetrators of violence often show the public a very different side of themselves.

Men's Voices

- Incorporate men's voices into your coverage of GBV. Emphasize men's roles as allies when covering stories of Male Violence Against Women and ensure men's voices of allyship are explicit and loud in your media coverage. Demonstrate how the men covering stories on GBV are practising solidarity with women, girls and gender diverse people who experience violence, holding perpetrators accountable, and identifying the patriarchal structures in which GBV is rooted.
- Men's voices are essential in the conversation on GBV. Use your platforms to demonstrate how men can call each other into the dialogue, rather than shaming, while holding each other and themselves accountable. Be mindful that your inclusion of men's voices in stories of MVAW does not take space and importance away from the voices of women and girls, but rather compliments and reinforces them.
 - Ensure that your sources for men's voices (including men's organizations) are vetted, committed to the eradication of GBV, and align with your values.

Relationship Building

- Build reciprocal and sustainable relationships with the organizations, individuals, and communities you hope to lean on when covering GBV. To initiate these relationships, make your intentions and values clear, and communicate how the story you are writing will ultimately work to prevent or end GBV.
- Be respectful of the time and efforts of GBV advocates/organizations. Often, GBV advocates are asked to comment on or interview for a news story with very little time to prepare a meaningful statement. Give as much notice and lead time as you can. If this is not possible, explain why.
- If you do end up using a quote or statement from a GBV advocate/organization, follow up with a link to the published article/report and be prepared to make any requested changes.
- Invest time in building asset lists of different organizations, expert voices, and useful resources. Ensure this list caters to different communities, regions, and types of GBV, and is updated frequently. See [Impacts section](#) for more on sharing resources.



Language

The theme of *Language* addresses the importance of terminology, the subjectivity of 'neutral' language, and demonstrates how language can determine and drive the conversation around GBV. The words journalists use play a vital role in how meaning is conveyed both implicitly and explicitly, and influence how a GBV news story is understood by the reader.





Language

Language to Address Survivors/Victims

- Write about survivors with an empowering, respectful narrative. Do not use trivializing, dismissive, demeaning, or victim-blaming language or tones to describe victims, survivors, or their communities
- **Victim vs. Survivor:** Many people who have experienced GBV prefer the term survivor, although in some cases, the word victim will be more appropriate (i.e., in a case of femicide, where the woman has not survived). Ask the subjects of your story how they would like to be referred to (survivor, victim, their name, etc.)
- Maintain the words and context of a survivor, their family, and/or an expert. Be mindful of, and acknowledge, impacts to context when specific words or excerpts are used or omitted.
- Avoid using language that calls into question the integrity or honesty of the survivor.
 - As different media guidelines suggest (femifesto + collaborators, Journalists Against Violence Against Women, etc.), avoid using the term 'alleged' when legally possible. See our [Works Cited](#) for more supporting research.
 - Avoid the word 'claim'. For example, *'The survivor claimed that he harassed her at work on four separate occasions.'*
 - Instead, use phrases like: *'The survivor said/shared/reported that...'* or, *'We heard from the survivor/victim's family, and they said/shared/reported that ...'* or, *'He was said to have been...'*
- Avoid using harsh or insensitive language when discussing survivors/victims of GBV. Stories relating to victims and fatalities of GBV, especially those involving children, must be handled with compassion and care.
 - Ex: Human beings should not be described as 'dead' or 'dead bodies'. Instead, say that the 'recovered', 'found to be deceased', 'without signs of life', 'not breathing', etc.
- Do not fetishize or 'otherize' survivors - this only works to perpetuate GBV myths and paints the picture that GBV is rare. More than 44% of women and girls in Canada have experienced at least one form of GBV in their lifetime. There are a lot of us!
- Do not reduce survivors to their perceived social value—positive or negative. When you reduce a person to their physical descriptions, familial relationships, community, or profession, you can indirectly take away from their humanity. Where relevant, include these details. However, remember to add as much context and nuance as possible.
 - Ex: 'Mother of two.' Not all women are mothers, but they are still worthy of a healthy, long life without violence. We want to stress that losing a mother to femicide is certainly not something to be overlooked or ignored in a GBV story, but it's also important to find a way to humanize and place value on women who are not mothers.
 - Ex: 'Sex worker': By reducing an individual to a profession that is stigmatized and associated with higher risks, the implication is that GBV is a given risk within this profession, and thus justified or 'less of a big deal'. More context is needed.

Transformative GBV articles are subject-centred and honour the wishes of the person whose story is being told.

- Ex: The term 'elderly' is often associated with less perceived social value due to the intersections of sexism and ageism. It also works to diminish and/or erase older women and their experiences with GBV. When covering GBV against a senior citizen, do not refer to them as 'elderly' or 'senior'. If their age is a relevant factor, use the term 'older woman' or 'older person.'
- **Alignment with the Canadian Association of Journalists Ethical Guidelines:**
'We do not refer to a person's race, colour, religion, sexual orientation, gender self-identification or physical ability unless it is pertinent to the story.'
- **Alignment with the Canadian Association of Journalists Ethical Guidelines:**
'We avoid stereotypes of race, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, geography, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance or social status. And we take particular care in crime stories.'
- Use words that highlight the agency and/or resilience of survivors and avoid words that imply a lack of agency or that detract from the perpetrator's accountability. Do not use patronizing or paternalistic language.
 - Ex: When writing about violence against a woman living with a disability, write in a way that does not place her disability at the centre of the story or in a way that disempowers her.
 - Ex: The solution to GBV is not 'protecting women'—it's challenging patriarchy, systemic racism, and other forms of oppression, and holding perpetrators accountable. **If women were not the targets of so much violence, they would not require protection.**

Triumphant Survivors

Consider showing, when possible and appropriate, survivors in a powerful and triumphant light. Show survivors moving forward, living their lives, finding joy, accomplishing goals. Yes, the trauma of GBV is real, but that is not all there is to the life of a survivor. Painting survivors of Gender-Based Violence in a strong and positive light in your journalism can be empowering and support survivors on their healing journeys. Doing this will also combat false narratives of GBV that tell us only frail, fragile and broken women experience violence, when we know that this is not the case.

- If you are unsure about how to use correct terminology surrounding specific communities or cultures involved in a GBV story, reach out to an expert in a community organization and ask.
- Use the correct names and pronouns for any person you are writing about or quoting. Do not assume names or pronouns. If you are reporting on or interviewing a member of the a 2SLGBTQ+ community, ask the individual how they would like to be identified in the report.
 - **NOTE:** Just because a person's name and/or pronouns are found elsewhere (i.e., documentation, social media) does not mean those should be used in media. It may be unsafe for 2SLGBTQ+ individuals to be referred to using certain pronouns or names publicly, and individuals should be given the power to decide for themselves. **Again, if you are unsure, just ask!**

Victim-Blaming Language

• Survivor Behaviours:

Do not use language that focuses on the behaviour of survivors—this is victim-blaming and can have harmful impacts. Even when emphasizing behaviours of survivors that society deems 'good' or 'correct,' you can perpetuate victim-blaming myths. There is no 'perfect GBV victim' and many women and girls do not fit the patriarchal narrative of what a perfect victim looks like (i.e., fragile, scared, quiet, shaken up, broken, etc.).

- Ex: Labelling certain behaviours as a 'mistake' or implying a lack of judgement, emphasizing the survivor's level of resistance where unnecessary, or including irrelevant details such as clothing or actions before/after the incident of GBV.

• Location, Location, Location:

Do not describe environmental factors or locations in ways that may be interpreted as 'reasons' for the violence (i.e., 'dark playground, empty bar, deserted road, frat party house, etc.'). This is victim-blaming and fails to put the onus on the perpetrator. **Women should be able to exist in any location without experiencing violence.**

- **Avoid Overemphasizing Self-Protective Measures:** Do not focus on police reminders to the community to 'lock doors and windows', 'be vigilant', or 'stay alert'. Placing responsibility on women to not be 'victimized' by men's violence inadvertently blames them for the violence (or even death), they experience at the hands of someone else and detracts from the roots causes of Male Violence Against Women.

• Substance Use & Addictions:

Do not highlight whether a survivor/victim has used substances or has an addiction. It is irrelevant to them experiencing violence. Bringing up alcohol/drug use or addiction creates bias and places blame on the victim, insinuating they 'deserved' the violence. **Women and gender diverse people deserve to live free from violence whether they have used a substance or not.**

• Staying With or Returning to an Abusive Partner:

Do not place blame on survivors in your reporting (even indirectly) for not leaving an abusive partner or for returning to one. This implies that survivors are responsible for the violence they face, and fails to recognize the cycle of abuse, the power of coercive control, and the many risks women face when leaving abusive partners (harm to children, femicide, etc.) as well as other reasons why women cannot leave.

Know that survivors have been known to send the police away, even when they are the ones who called 911. The reasons for this are complex and connected to the cycles of violence, coercive control, and fear of repercussions.

'Why doesn't she just leave?'

If your journalism is asking this question, whether directly or indirectly, then a change must be made. Instead, the article should emphasize why she COULDN'T leave, and share knowledge on Intimate Partner Violence and coercive control in a way that will prevent it.

Criminalization of Women Who Report Violence or Experience Violence

- While it is true that women are capable of committing violence, it's important to note that in instances of Intimate Partner, women often commit violence in self-defence, or to protect themselves and/or their children from further harm.
- Women sometimes find themselves facing criminal charges when calling the police to report Intimate Partner Violence. Indigenous, racialized, and newcomer/migrant women are especially at risk of criminalization when reporting violence to police.
- As we have seen on the frontlines of Male Violence Against Women, there is a common and disturbing pattern of violent men calling the police before the woman does to escape being charged or to criminalize her and jeopardize her future (a tactic of [coercive control](#)).

Language to Address Perpetrators

- Do not make the perpetrators of GBV invisible in your reports. Use words that hold known perpetrators accountable.
- Instead of using passive language when describing violence, use active language that calls attention to the actions of the perpetrator. Without an explicit perpetrator, society can continue to ignore the faceless, passive issue of GBV, which is a national emergency. When perpetrators are placed at the centre of the problem, we can continue to push for the eradication of GBV. We acknowledge the limitations on journalists' language, but we encourage them to apply this recommendation within the legal constraints they are working within.
 - Ex: Instead of *'Woman stabbed on TTC'*, say *'Man arrested after woman stabbed on TTC'*.
 - Ex: Use Male Violence Against Women when appropriate, as opposed to Violence Against Women, which is non-specific.
 - Ex: Abandon the term 'women's violence'—it is vague and implies women are at fault for the violence they experience at the hands of men.
- Avoid using sympathetic language to describe GBV perpetrators or their actions. Quotes describing perpetrators as 'a great father' or 'a loving guy,' or describing them in relation to previous successes such as 'a decorated hero' or a 'gifted professor' insinuates disbelief that he could be violent.
- When writing about perpetrators, do not use sensational labels such as 'monster,' 'madman' or 'maniac' to describe them. Creating misleading narratives distracts from justice for survivors and paints a false picture of GBV perpetrators all being mentally ill or unstable. See [Frameworks section](#) for more on mental health.
- Avoid nicknames for perpetrators that focus on graphic details. For example, the 'Sudbury Mall Stabber' (fictional example). In this example, the perpetrator is not named, the survivor or victim identity is erased, and the nickname dramatizes the violence and emphasizes graphic details, which draws the attention away from the larger societal issue. **Besides, a mall is not being stabbed—a woman is.**

Language That Minimizes and Sanitizes Gender-Based Violence

- Terms like 'domestic dispute', 'domestic incident', and 'spat' minimize the abuse suffered by victims of Intimate Partner Violence, and implies that the violence is a minor, private matter, rather than a larger societal issue with often deadly consequences. Intimate Partner Violence is a term that more accurately calls out the violence experienced by survivors, and ties single incidents to a larger pattern of violence against women at the hands of intimate partners. **Intimate Partner Violence and a regular, run-of-the-mill disagreement between a couple are two very different things.**
- Avoid terms like 'random', 'odd', 'shocking', 'unpreventable', and 'unpredictable' when describing GBV. Instead, use words that highlight the social, preventable, and often very predictable nature of GBV.
 - While a police brief may characterize an incident as 'random,' echoing this language in news stories may erase larger patterns of violence against women, girls, and marginalized communities. It also dismisses the plethora of academic GBV research on warning signs and red flags.
 - Male Violence Against Women is not 'out of the ordinary' or 'shocking'. In fact, it is so widespread that 1 in 3 women globally have experienced it. Painting MVAW as out of the ordinary actually works to uphold the environments in which it happens. For example, phrases like *'Enraged Ex-Husband Shocks Community with Sudden Violent Attack'* or *'Police Chief Says Wave of Drink Spiking Utterly Unpreventable'*.

- Avoid police quotes like *'No further risk to public safety'* that are made after arresting a GBV perpetrator. Women are always at risk of male violence, and statements like these only work to glorify police efforts and fail to recognize the systemic, ever-present risk of violence for women and gender diverse people.
- For children who witness violence or witness the killing of their mother (femicide), do not use the phrase 'children were unharmed' to describe that they were not physically attacked. This erases the deep, intense, and lifelong psychological and emotional effects of witnessing violence, as well as the profound effects of losing a parent.
- Ensure that your language doesn't minimize or sanitize violence that occurs within an intimate relationship. Often, men who commit violence against women benefit from something Professor Myrna Dawson has called the 'intimacy discount,' wherein their crimes are seen as less severe because they have an intimate relationship with the victim/survivor.
- Refrain from only using acronyms for types of GBV after introducing them. For example, after introducing Female Genital Mutilation and Cutting, Intimate Partner Violence, or Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women & Girls, avoid using IPV, FGM/C or MMIWG for the entire article. Using acronyms is acceptable and sometimes necessary, but be mindful that overusing acronyms can sanitize the violence and render it faceless and vague, which ultimately desensitizes audiences.
- Be specific in your language to describe the type of violence that is being detailed in the story (i.e., Intimate Partner Violence, Female Genital Mutilation and Cutting, femicide, rape, etc.). Don't settle for the general label of GBV or VAW, when more specific definitions are available.
 - Ex: When reporting on sexual assault, do not use minimizing terms like 'sexual touching' or 'inappropriate touching' or 'non-consensual sex.' Instead, label the actions as what they are (harassment, abuse, assault, or rape, depending on what is appropriate).
 - Ex: 'Sex with a minor' is child rape - describe it as such.
 - Ex: When discussing a youth involved, terms like 'underage woman' change the perception of the victim or survivor and sanitize the violence. A woman cannot be 'underage'—she is either an adult or a child/youth.
 - Ex: Use the term 'elder abuse' to bring visibility to the prevalence of violence against older victims.
 - Ex: Use the term Intimate Partner Violence over Domestic Violence, where possible. There is nothing 'domestic' about violence and although this term is still widely used, it is outdated and works to sanitize or legitimize the violence.



Reporting on Femicide

- Femicide is the killing of a woman or girl because of their sex or gender, mostly by men, who are driven by misogyny and a need to maintain power and control over their victims. It is deeply connected to gender inequality, patriarchy and colonialism, and entrenched beliefs of the roles of women and men. (Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice & Accountability, 2023; Aura Freedom International, 2023)
- Use the word **femicide** in your reporting where possible, even though Canada has not officially recognized the term as of 2023. We recommend referencing the [Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability](#) for an overview of femicide and for stats on femicide in Canada. For stats on femicide in Ontario specifically, we recommend [OAITH's](#) monthly and annual femicide reports.
- If there is hesitation to use the term femicide due to unknown facts and other barriers, we recommend using the term 'suspected femicide' when possible and quoting GBV sector experts in the story to provide additional context and information on what femicide is and what it truly looks like in Canada. Attributing the categorization of femicide to a GBV expert/advocate as opposed to centering police voices is one way to work around reporting restrictions and other barriers.
- Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls are not only cases of femicide, but a continuation of the genocide of Indigenous peoples in Canada. See the [Indigenous](#) section for more information.
- Avoid framing femicide as the result of someone 'snapping.' This erases the longer trajectory of violence (which is not always physical) that often leads up to femicide. It also obscures other drivers of femicide and MMIWG2S like misogyny and systemic racism and focuses instead on mental health. See [Explaining Away Gender-Based Violence](#) for more information.
 - Femicide is rarely an isolated incident; rather, these killings are often the result of targeted, chronic, and/or escalating violence against women and girls by men, whether in the context of intimacy or perpetrated by men with histories of committing violence against women and girls more generally.
 - Femicides, especially when perpetrated by male partners, are often portrayed as 'crimes of passion'; however, these killings are as likely, or more likely, to be pre-planned than other types of killings. **Femicide is one of the most preventable forms of murder.**
- Connect Intimate Partner Violence and Family Violence to femicide, where possible. While women and girls can be and are killed by strangers, they actually face the greatest danger in their own homes and are more likely to be killed by men that they know well (intimate partners, husbands, fathers, brothers, sons, etc.)
 - Do not insinuate that leaving a violent situation would solve everything. Instead, focus on providing facts and information from trusted GBV sources, as well as safety planning and counselling resources. With Intimate Partner Violence, one of the most dangerous times for a woman and her children is actually *after* leaving. To maintain control and '*show them who's boss*', some abusers will kill their ex-partners. In extreme cases, abusers will kill their own children (filicide) to punish Mom for leaving, and as a way to continue abusing their ex-partners through their children. These murders are deliberate and calculated, as the abuser knows there is no greater pain for a mother. See more in guideline below.



Call it Femicide!

- Connect Family Court/Police/Child Welfare negligence and Amber Alerts to femicide and filicide when possible and appropriate. If this is not immediately possible because evidence is still being collected, write follow-up stories and features at a later time that draw connections between men who abduct and/or harm their children as a way to continue abusing their partner/ex-partner *through* their children and through government systems. Wanting to inflict the most pain and maintain power and control, abusers will often use their own children as pawns. In some cases, they will go as far as to murder them.
 - We recommend researching Keira's Law, founded by her Jennifer Kagan in honour of her daughter Keira, who was murdered by her father in this way when she was just four years old. Multiple children are killed in the context of Intimate Partner Violence every single year in Canada.
- 'Murder-Suicides' are often cases of femicide and Male Violence Against Women. For example, a man may kill his wife (femicide), children (filicide) and then himself (suicide) because of a recent separation or as a way to punish his partner for filing for divorce and/or child custody. However, the attention in media articles is often given to the graphic and tragic nature of the 'murder-suicide' (the crime) rather than the true nature of femicide and the most extreme manifestations of Male Violence Against Women that occur far too often in Canada.
- For cases of femicide by firearm, include stats on how gun ownership increases the risk of femicide. This information exists and different studies have been done.
- For cases of mass shootings/killings, seek out GBV advocates and GBV sector experts to connect the dots between misogyny, white supremacy, Male Violence Against Women, mass killings/mass femicide. There is research out there and it must be highlighted in order to prevent further violence and dispel GBV myths.
- While names like 'Toronto Van Attack' and 'Montreal Massacre' are easy to use and remember, they sanitize and minimize what really happened. It wasn't a van or a city that was targeted and killed in those cases—they were women. In most cases of mass femicide, the main driver is misogyny and this should be highlighted.
- Do not provide stats and info on femicide in relation to how many women are killed in comparison to men, but rather the ways in which they are killed, and the power dynamics involved.
 - Femicide is a form of murder that underscores the 'how' and 'why' women and girls are killed because of their sex or gender – which is distinct from how men and boys are killed, although both are killed primarily by men.
 - Femicide is also deeply connected to Intimate Partner Violence and Family Violence (although it can also happen at the hands of strangers). In contrast, when men are murdered, international research shows is rarely connected to maintaining power and control in an intimate or familial relationship. It is also rarely connected to the hatred of men.
 - Femicide advocacy is about calling attention to all of this. It is not about saying that the deaths of women matter more - but that they actually MATTER.



The Power (and Responsibility) of a Headline

It's a fast and busy world. Many people only have time to read the headlines before making up their minds about a news story. Indeed, headlines hold a lot of power and are arguably the most important part of a media article. But of course, *'with great power comes great responsibility'*. An irresponsibly written headline can actually contribute to the environments that make violence against women and girls possible. We believe it is a journalist's responsibility to ensure that the headlines they write about GBV stories go beyond sensational clickbait, and instead paint accurate pictures of GBV and those who experience it. A responsibly written headline can change harmful perceptions of GBV and work toward a better understanding of it—and ultimately—toward its eradication in our communities.

General Language Tips

Use Human Rights–based language. GBV in all its forms is a violation of the human rights of women, girls, and gender diverse people—treat it as such.



- Use language that reflects the wide scope of the problem. Male Violence Against Women is a national emergency—our words should reflect this, not detract from it.
 - Ex: 'pandemic', 'national emergency', 'human rights abuse', 'widespread issue', etc.
- Do not use sensationalizing language. Attention-grabbing words and fear-mongering pseudonyms dehumanize survivors, diminish the severity of the trauma inflicted by the perpetrator, and spread dangerous myths about GBV. See [Frameworks section](#) for more on sensationalization.
- Do not perpetuate sexism or uphold rigid gender norms through your reporting on GBV. Depictions of hyper-masculinity and hyper-femininity can contribute to increased rates of GBV/VAW. Language can either reinforce or challenge harmful stereotypes about GBV.
 - Ex: Depicting women as sexually submissive and subservient to men fuels the harmful ideology that 'women should be sexually available at a man's discretion' and therefore justifies something like marital rape.
- Do not perpetuate racist stereotypes or other oppressive ideas about marginalized groups (i.e., Black, Indigenous and people of colour, migrants/refugees/newcomers, 2SLGBTQ+ groups, folks living with disabilities, Muslim communities, and other religious groups, etc.). See [The Importance of Intersectionality under the Frameworks section](#) for more information.
- Name and write stories about all forms of GBV that go beyond the physical type. This includes, but is not limited to: emotional, psychological, financial, coercive control, medical GBV, colonial GBV, and more. Include information on how these forms can be just as harmful and damaging, while remaining 'invisible' to outsiders.

Frameworks

The theme of *Frameworks* questions whether media representations are placing incidents of GBV within a wider social context of gender inequality, patriarchy, systemic racism, colonialism, ableism, homophobia, and other forces of oppression, or framing GBV as singular, private incidents that are not reflective of a global human rights issue. How journalists frame GBV has important impacts on social discourse around GBV. **Framing GBV properly can actually work toward ending it.**



Frameworks

A Note On Neutrality

- Recognize that the nature of GBV reporting is inherently not neutral. Every aspect of reporting can create bias, such as familiarity/comfort with topic, educational background, intersectional location, lived experience or lack thereof, language choice, etc.

Ask yourself: Why is it acceptable to be neutral in stories of Male Violence Against Women, but not in stories of other human rights abuses?

- ‘Framing’ happens when telling a story, whether consciously or not. Writing with a ‘neutral’ framework often favours those who have historically benefitted from the systems in place.
- Providing context does not mean biased or opinion-based writing—it means providing facts that help contextualize GBV stories, especially when little is known about a situation.
- Relying solely on police voices, police press releases, and police data is not neutral. Centering police sources presents a one-sided representation of any given issue.

It’s not random!



Episodic Framing

- Avoid episodic framing of GBV news stories. Episodic frameworks reduce GBV to a series of disconnected episodes and erase its systemic and structural nature. Episodic frameworks lead to individualistic responses, while social frameworks lead to a sense of collective responsibility. **Hint: If your story places blame on individuals, communities, environments, illnesses, or cultures rather than addressing systemic GBV, that is a sign that your story uses an episodic framework.**
- Place GBV within the framework of:
 - A social, systemic problem
 - A widespread human rights abuse rooted in gender inequity
 - A national emergency
 - A frequent and prevalent form of oppression found in all societies
 - See [Language section](#) for more on episodic framing.
- **The Frequency of GBV:** Seek out GBV stories and write about GBV more frequently to paint an accurate picture of it and how it affects our communities. Reporting on GBV more frequently will allow all of us to recognize it as a national emergency. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, articles on COVID-19 were widespread, detailing preventative measures, vaccine access, and more, leading to increased public awareness. This has NEVER been the case for the pandemic of Male Violence Against Women, but we know now that it is possible for the media to mobilize and address pandemics in a systematic, frequent, and organized way.
- When editing, question what the audience will take away from the article. Will it be a list of ‘How they can prevent violence through individual actions’, or will it be a list of, ‘Reasons why they are unlikely to be impacted by the violence mentioned in the article.’ If the latter is the case, consider reframing the violence.

Framing Survivors and Their Communities

- Demonstrate care, integrity, and respect in your framing by writing in solidarity with GBV victims and survivors. This kind of framing takes time and intentionality. Begin articles in a way that demonstrates respect and compassion for the survivor/victim, their families, and communities, and centre their perspectives.
- When choosing the angle and narrative of your GBV story, consider the audience you are sharing this news with—especially the family/community of the survivors/victims in the story. **Have empathy and compassion by considering how you would feel if you or your loved one was the subject.**
 - Ex: Consider that loved ones may be informed about the violence through media or may be gaining information via media.
 - Ex: Include a paragraph that gives context to the humanity of the victim or survivors life. For example, write about their passions, hobbies, community influence, etc.
 - Ex: Include ‘takeaways’ from survivors and/or their families (i.e., highlight how their family wants the victim to be remembered).
- Avoid framing and painting survivors as weak, scared, fragile, etc. This only works to solidify the narrow, patriarchal view of MVAW victims and perpetuate GBV myths. See [Language section](#) for more on this topic.

Sensationalized Framing

- Write from an elevated ethical standard of writing that goes beyond sensationalism and ‘tragedy porn.’ The quick hook/quick response is not only simple and lazy, but misleading and damaging.
- Reframe your articles according to the responsibility to inform, not the desire to sell.
- Don’t focus on graphic or unnecessarily violent details of GBV stories to increase media attention. Your story is not an opportunity to fear-monger and spread myths about GBV. See [Language section](#) for further recommendations.
 - Ex: Don’t use attention-grabbing, clickbait headlines that minimize the survivor’s experience, erase the context, and ignore the severity of GBV.
 - Don’t spread myths about ‘stranger danger,’ or sensationalize Gender-Based Violence when committed by an unknown perpetrator. GBV is most often perpetrated by individuals known to the survivor/victim.
 - Do not limit your Intimate Partner Violence reporting to only the most horrific, violent, tragic, or high-profile cases. This erases the pandemic of IPV and the many, often invisible, forms of coercive control that are used by abusers to slowly break their victims down, piece by piece.

Not For Your Entertainment – Celebrity GBV Cases in the Media

- These guidelines apply to all GBV cases—including ones involving celebrities. It can be hard to see our childhood ‘heroes’ or favourite actors called out as abusers, but we know that men from all walks of life (including successful and charismatic men) can and do perpetrate GBV.
- Do not treat GBV cases involving celebrities as isolated celebrity ‘sagas’ or ‘he said/she said’ soap operas. Celebrity GBV coverage is not an opportunity to gain followers or clicks.
- Irresponsible celebrity GBV coverage only works to uphold the patriarchal environments where GBV/VAW thrive.

The Importance of Intersectionality

- Recognize how Gender-Based Violence is a result of extreme inequities that intersect with different identities and provide information on how these identities face differing forms of violence.
- Who are the 'worthy' victims of GBV? What types of women does society deem 'more worthy' of empathy, compassion, care, and access to justice? How is your journalism framing women who not only experience violence as women, but as Black women, Indigenous women, those living with disabilities, Muslim women, etc.? Are they being blamed for the violence that they are at no fault in experiencing?
- Find ways to inform your readers that while women from all walks of life can and do experience violence, systemic oppressions make certain women especially at risk—**this will also support your writing to be anti-racist and avoid stereotypes.**
 - Ex: In cases of violence against gender and sexually diverse people, place the violence within the larger context of violence towards 2SLGBTQ+ communities and heteropatriarchy and how they are tied to rigid gender norms. For more resources and information, please refer to [The Enchante' Network](#).
 - Ex: In cases of violence against Black women, you can point out the deadly intersections of misogyny and anti-Black racism (Misogynoir). For more information on violence against racialized women, girls, and gender diverse people, refer to *Colour of Violence: Race, Gender & Anti-Violence Services* by [Battered Women's Support Services](#) (2022).
 - Ex: According to the most recent statistics from Statistics Canada, when hate crimes occur against Indigenous and Muslim populations, they're more likely to be female victims. For more resources and information on GBV against Muslim women, please refer to the [Canadian Council of Muslim Women](#).
 - Ex: In cases of violence against women/girls living with disabilities, place violence within the context of a wider range of abuse faced by these women, the increased vulnerabilities and targeting of women/girls with disabilities, as well as the systemic lack of accessible services for the diverse range of disabilities that exist. For more information, refer to [DAWN Canada's Fact Sheet on Women with Disabilities and Violence](#) (2014).
 - Ex: In cases of violence against migrant/newcomer/refugee women emphasize the increased risk of GBV and HT that these women face due to intersecting identities and forms of discrimination, as well as lack of access to safe migration routes. UN Women's 2021 report, *From evidence to action: Tackling gender-based violence against migrant women and girls* (UN Women, 2021).
 - Ex: When covering stories of GBV against criminalized women, provide the context that criminalized women are highly likely to have experienced abuse prior to criminalization, and face a heightened risk of abuse once institutionalized (Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies, 2014).
 - Ex: Emphasize the compounding factors of stigma and criminalization in stories of GBV against sex workers. Ensure that your writing does not normalize or justify the increased risk of GBV faced by sex workers. For more information, refer to the *Pace Media Tool Kit for Sex Workers, Journalists, and Allies* (2022).
 - Ex: Provide context for why some victims/survivors do not leave a violent situation. For example, low-income women may be financially dependent on their abuser, or unable to support children on a single income. This context can vastly change readers' perspectives of victims of GBV and increase understanding of the varying factors that affect women's decisions to leave or stay (Canadian Women's Foundation, 2022).
 - Ex: When reporting on GBV in rural areas, provide important context that violence against rural women is 75% higher than for women in urban areas. This is due to a myriad of factors such as physical isolation, barriers to services and lack of privacy in close-knit, isolated communities, among others. (VAW Learning Network, 2021).
 - Ex: When reporting on violence against older women, avoid generalizations and stereotypes that frame older people as innately frail or vulnerable, while emphasizing the lack of social support for victims of GBV who are older, or have a disability. For more resources and information on GBV against older women, please refer to the [Canadian Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse](#).

Explaining Away Gender-Based Violence

- **Explaining Away GBV with Mental Health:** Abandon the mental health framing of Gender-Based Violence. GBV is not a mental health or substance use issue—do not reduce it to one. While mental health can be a factor in GBV, reducing perpetrators' motivations to mental health problems perpetuates harmful stereotypes about mental health and denies the systemic nature of the many forms of Gender-Based Violence.
- **Explaining Away GBV with Alcohol:** Don't imply, explicitly or implicitly, that alcohol or other substances are a justification or the cause of GBV. By assigning the blame of GBV to alcohol, you are taking away from the accountability of the perpetrator. By justifying the GBV due to alcohol, you are perpetuating harmful victim-blaming narratives. Moreover, many people who use alcohol do not use violence.
- **Explaining Away GBV with Culture:** Don't frame forms of GBV as cultural issues in certain communities, or justify GBV as a cultural norm, a 'tradition,' a practice of 'honour,' or an acceptable part of any religion.
 - Ex: Do not excuse Child, Early and Forced Marriage as a 'cultural norm/practice' or rationalize it in cultural differences. Child marriage is internationally recognized as a human rights abuse and form of GBV, just as forced marriage is recognized as a form of human trafficking and GBV. Name them as such and leave culture out of it.
 - Ex: Experts recommend highlighting Female Genital Mutilation and Cutting (FGM/C) as a form of violence against women and girls, and not as a cultural or religious practice which cannot be challenged.
 - Ex: Do not demonize the communities in which FGM/C occurs. Instead, focus on how the act is rooted in patriarchy, the oppression of women, and misogyny.
- **Explaining Away GBV with International Framing:** Don't frame forms of GBV as external issues—especially when these forms occur in Canada and affect Canadian women.
 - Ex: *'More Girls Subject to Traditional Female Genital Cutting Practices in Refugee Communities.'* Instead, stress that GBV happens all over the world, including Canada, in all its forms.
 - Ex: Call attention to the ongoing practice of FGM/C occurring within Canada and North America—it is both a domestic and an international injustice
 - Ex: Locate Child, Early and Forced Marriage as an ongoing form of gender oppression and GBV within Canada and Western countries—not an international issue.

'Mental health issues are often cited in media articles to justify Male Violence Against Women; however, many women also struggle with their mental health, but we're not murdering men at the rates that they are murdering us. There are also men who struggle with their mental health but are not violent. It goes much deeper.'

Marissa Kokkoros, Executive Director, Aura Freedom

Providing Facts

- Provide statistics when writing about GBV. There is a vast amount of research on GBV in Canada and globally—use it to contextualize your story and demonstrate the patterns and intersectional nature of GBV. Ensure that you are explaining the meaning of the statistics you provide, rather than leaving them up for interpretation.
 - Provide information on the frequency and prevalence of GBV in Canada.
 - Provide information on the many forms of GBV both in Canada and globally, as well as the many environments in which they happen (i.e., IPV, MMIWG2S, femicide, coercive control, sexual exploitation, child marriage, wartime sexual violence, and more).

- Provide information on the ways marginalized women and girls experience Gender-Based Violence (i.e., BIPOC women, migrant/refugee women, rural women, women with disabilities, older women, etc.). Where relevant, highlight the lack of representation of marginalized communities in national and global statistics, and the potential impact of this lack of representation. For example, when reporting on violence against older women, highlight that older women have not been included in global GBV research studies beyond age 49 or that older women are not properly represented in [Canada's National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence](#).
- Provide information on the effects of GBV on survivors, their children, their families, and their communities.
- Provide stats and info on the effects of GBV on wider society and its impact on us all.
- Acknowledge that GBV is severely under-reported both to police, and within the Canadian media. Fear of reporting, fear of further abuse, financial control, victim blaming, police brutality, racism, and sexism are all factors that dissuade survivors from coming forward. For these reasons and more, under-reporting to police means that their GBV stats are not accurate. It is integral to make these factors clear to address them and eradicate GBV.
- Rather than simply omitting biases reported by police or legal systems, contextualize them by highlighting statistics that may contend with or contradict them. Instead, stress that GBV happens all over the world, including Canada, in all its forms.
 - Ex: If police report that an act of GBV is 'random,' or that they are unsure if the victims were specifically targeted, provide context to supplement this information. This can be done by highlighting how many survivors/victims shared their identity (i.e., '*A majority of the survivors/victims were Indigenous women*').
- Include calls to action for policymakers in your stories that support the needs and experiences of women, girls, and gender diverse people experiencing violence in your/their communities.
- Carefully consider what related articles are linked in the margins or at the bottom of your piece. Are you including related articles that can provide additional information, or are they working against the story?

Follow-Up

- Write follow-up stories and update stories to take your work and transformative journalism deeper. This can be done by featuring stories that follow GBV/VAW survivors and their families over a period of time, and how the violence impacts the different aspects of not only their lives, but the communities around them.
- Consider Special Investigations and Special Features on different forms of Gender-Based Violence that examines them in deeper and more meaningful ways. This, over time, will help to frame GBV in a way that inspires action and change.



Impacts

The theme of *Impacts* relates to how GBV in the media impacts survivors, their communities, and society as a whole. GBV media stories also impact public discourse and perceptions of GBV—which ultimately either work to end Gender-Based Violence or exacerbate it.





Impacts

The Impacts of Media on GBV Discourse

- Explicitly acknowledge the power of the media to influence public perception and social discourse around GBV, and to impact the survivor, their communities and general societal understanding of GBV based on what is included in news coverage of GBV.
- Directly and explicitly challenge misinformation and dangerous fearmongering around GBV and feminism.
 - Ex: When quoting someone directly who is spreading myths about GBV or those who work against it, follow their quote with correct statistics and information.

The Importance of Trauma-Informed Reporting

- Prepare for interviews and reporting on GBV with trauma-informed training and research. Educate yourself about trauma, trauma responses and how trauma can affect people's brains, judgement, and memory (we recommend *Trauma survivors and the media: A qualitative analysis* by Tamara Cherry) (Miller, 2022; Pickup Communications, n.d.).
 - Consider how trauma will affect your interview/story, and your role and responsibility in navigating these effects and telling someone's story.
 - You do not need to know the exact details of a person's GBV trauma history to show care and compassion for them in your writing, or to demonstrate an understanding of their experience
 - Educate yourself on how reporting on traumatic events may affect you and prepare for how you will practise self-care in your reporting (we recommend *Self-Care Tips for Journalists* from The Journalist's Resource).
- Double-down on informed consent and provide ample opportunity to revisit consent and boundaries throughout the interview/reporting process. Informed consent is always a priority for journalists. However, in trauma-informed reporting it is crucial to explain every detail of consent in depth and emphasize that this consent can be revoked or adjusted at any time. Failing to do so may lead to the interviewees feeling a lack of control, to further harm and the re-traumatization of someone who has trusted you with their story (Miller, 2022; Pickup Communications, n.d.; Wilder, 2021).
 - Before the interview, if possible, obtain consent for interview questions ahead of time. Do not assume people are familiar with media-related terminology (i.e., 'off the record'). Provide an in-depth explanation of what interviewees are consenting to.
 - After the interview, obtain consent for use of quotes, pictures, other interviewees, and language (i.e., 'victim vs. survivor'). Clarify to what extent this consent can be revoked or adjusted.
- Prioritize the safety, wellbeing, and autonomy of survivors sharing their stories. Wherever possible, explain what the interviewee can expect from the interview and allow the interviewee to choose what is most comfortable for them (interview location, interview questions, interview length, etc.) Predictability and a sense of safety are essential for survivors sharing their trauma (Miller, 2022; Pickup Communications, n.d.; Wilder, 2021).
- Avoid questions that ask a survivor to relive their trauma or call into question their emotional/trauma responses to traumatic events. Ask yourself if questions about details of trauma are necessary for your story, or if they contribute to a sensationalist framing of someone's traumatic experience (Miller, 2022; Pickup Communications, n.d.; Wilder, 2021).

- Collaborate with interviewees, experts, and community members to demonstrate your commitment to trauma-informed journalism. If necessary, work with an intermediary from an expert organization to communicate with survivors. When writing your story, get as much input as possible from interviewees/survivors, GBV experts and community members on your report (Miller, 2022; Pickup Communications, n.d.; Wilder, 2021). What is the goal of this story, and how can you achieve this goal in collaboration with the interviewee and their community?
 - See [Voices section](#) for the importance of relationship building between journalists and expert organizations.
- Follow-up with interviewees to provide updates on their story and its publication, and to check in on the aftermath of the interview. Emotional responses can vary after sharing one’s trauma, and it is vital that survivors have access to the right support—ensure that they do. Offer the opportunity for the survivor to share their progress and provide a follow-up after the interview. Inform the survivor of any changes or updates to the story, when it will be published, and any other information relevant to the story (Miller, 2022; Pickup Communications, n.d.; Wilder, 2021).
- For more on trauma-informed journalism, please refer to the work of Tamara Cherry/PickUp Communications, The Journalist’s Resource, and Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma.

The Impacts of Media on Survivors and Their Families/Communities

- Acknowledge potentially traumatizing/re-traumatizing content of your GBV media reporting. Best practice would be to include this at the beginning of an article or post. Offer resources to support readers impacted by GBV coverage. See [Sharing Resources](#) below for more information.
- Understand how shocking it might be for a survivor to see their story portrayed in a certain light, or to see an image used that they were not aware was being used or in a way that they were not prepared for.
- Draw attention to the impacts of GBV on survivors and their families. Use statistics, testimonials, and other research to support and demonstrate the magnitude of these impacts.
 - **Alignment with the Canadian Association of Journalists Ethical Guidelines:**
‘Defending the public’s interest includes promoting the free flow of information, exposing crime or wrongdoing, protecting public health and safety, and preventing the public from being misled’.
- Connect instances of GBV to the impacts it has on families, such as the likelihood of children being placed in the child welfare system, especially in cases with marginalized and racialized mothers. Acknowledge how these impacts can influence further cycles of violence and trauma.
- Do not downplay or contrast impacts of different types of GBV or suggest some forms of violence are more serious than others.
 - Ex: Do not write that the individual was ‘otherwise unharmed’ or ‘left with no physical injuries.’ Contextualize the long-term impacts, whether financial, physical, mental, or emotional on victims and survivors.
- Avoid the narrative that once someone has ‘survived’ violence, their lives are suddenly better. Contextualize the long-term impacts of violence on one’s mental, physical, spiritual, and financial health – along with the strength, resilience, and potential for thriving.

Connecting the Dots: The Wider Impact of Male Violence Against Women

The impact of Male Violence Against Women and girls is immense, not only on survivors and their families, but on society as a whole. This can be statistically proven through available Canadian data that demonstrate the connection between Male Violence Against Women and many of the issues our communities are currently facing (homelessness, food instability, poverty, mental health crises, addiction, economic hardship, and more).

And yet, it's still rare to find a piece of journalism that 'connects the dots.' It's rare to read a news article that is able to show readers how MVAW is everyone's issue and affects us all—even if it doesn't impact us directly. One simple way to do this is to share statistics (from current, reputable sources) on the effects of MVAW on society at large. Connecting the dots of the societal impacts of GBV/VAW can show readers that when we work to end GBV/VAW, we are working to see our communities—and country—thrive. Now *that*, is transformative.

Sharing Resources

- Do your homework on your resources. Are they aligned with your organization's values? Are they accessible to people with disabilities? Do they have a good reputation? Are they representative of a diverse group of communities across Canada?
- When resources are being provided to audiences, be clear regarding the availability of resources (i.e., 24-hour crisis line vs. walk-in support available at specific days/times). Ensure resources provided are not exclusively ones that have wait times or eligibility barriers.
- Be aware that many GBV resources and services change frequently due to precarious funding in the GBV/women's sector, so ensure that your helpline lists are relevant, active, and working.
- Don't settle for a general, nationwide crisis helpline. Include resources that are geared to specific communities affected by specific issues.
- Provide different informational resources (not just helplines), such as opportunities for further education on GBV.
- Provide resources on how men and boys can join the fight against GBV.
- Provide a link to these guidelines or other media guidelines in your articles to raise awareness of and share access to this resource with the public and other media professionals.

Imagery and Photos

- Images should demonstrate a general respect for survivors.
 - Respect the family's wishes around imagery provided (i.e., survivors and/or their families may request that images of the survivor and perpetrator are not included side-by-side in media reports).
 - If images of children are included, consent for use of images must be received and clearly demonstrated.
 - Include a sentence that indicates how survivor photos were received and who approved the use of photos.
- Avoid using images that purposely depict perpetrators as scary 'monsters' or extraordinary. By painting the picture that only 'madmen' or 'maniacs' perpetuate violence, you sensationalize GBV and perpetuate the myth that 'ordinary' men don't commit GBV, which is not the case.
- In stories on Intimate Partner Violence, refrain from using pictures from a wedding or a 'happy' time in a couple's life that romanticizes their relationship.

- Avoid overly violent or graphic images depicting people experiencing actual violence - even stock photos.
- Avoid showcasing images that depict physical violence (i.e., a graphic photo of a bruised woman), as this limits the definition of abuse to physical, and may also deter the audience from reading.
- Consider how the images you are using to represent stories about GBV may be perpetuating stereotypes about perpetrators, survivors/victims, and marginalized communities.
- Do not use mugshots as images for survivors/victims as it automatically criminalizes them, places their credibility in doubt, and justifies the violence they experience. We see this often in cases of racialized or marginalized women who experience violence.
- Do not use imagery that victimizes survivors—especially for communities that already conjure social perceptions of helplessness like women and girls with disabilities or older women.
 - Ex: When using imagery in a report of violence against older victims, refrain from using ageist cliches like clasped wrinkled hands, or lone figures in a wheelchair or using a cane.

Interviewing Survivors and their Families

- Ensure that you have obtained ongoing, informed consent from all survivors and their families before publishing a story, and that this consent can be retracted at any time. Ensure they have been warned of the possible consequences, risks, and impacts of their statements and are able to make informed decisions on speaking with the media.
- Create and enforce a procedure for appropriate and sufficient support for interviewers and interviewees.
- Follow best practices for ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the interviewee—even if this means taking down a story.
 - **Alignment with the Canadian Association of Journalists Ethical Guidelines:** *'We do not manipulate people who are thrust into the spotlight because they are victims of crime or are associated with a tragedy. Nor do we do voyeuristic stories about them. When we contact them, we are sensitive to their situations, and report only information in which the public has a legitimate interest.'*



When asking to interview a survivor of Gender-Based Violence, do not assume that a GBV sector worker is NOT a survivor - many of us are.



- Often, in cases of Intimate Partner Violence, a survivor will retract their story at the direction and under the coercion of their partner. Retracting their story can be a way for the survivor to avoid further harm coming to them/their children, so their requests must be respected. However, it does not necessarily mean that the violence didn't happen.
- When reaching out to sources, ensure that they are positively involved in the survivor's life (i.e., good friends vs. friends of the perpetrator, chosen family vs. family, etc.).
 - Ex: Many queer-identifying individuals may no longer be accepted or recognized by their biological family or may not communicate with their biological family. In these cases, reach out to people vetted by the survivor.

Reporting on Human/Sex Trafficking

The guidelines offered in this section are specific to reporting on human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation, also known as sex trafficking. They are to be engaged in relationship with all other guidelines in this document to provide additional guidance for transformative journalism in human trafficking contexts.



Reporting on Human/Sex Trafficking

- Sex trafficking is a highly nuanced, complex form of GBV. Before you publish a story, seek out survivors, subject experts and community organizations that specialize in human trafficking prevention or those who support survivors, for their insights.
- Sex trafficking is a highly sensationalized form of GBV. Hollywood has portrayed a crime that involves kidnapping, drugging, physical restraints, and crossing international borders, when most domestic sex trafficking cases in Canada look nothing like that. It's important to know that many survivors do not identify with that framing of sex trafficking, and therefore will be more reluctant to reach out for help if that is the dominant narrative in the media. Ensure your human trafficking stories do not contribute to sensational narratives and sex trafficking myths.
 - Ex: Contextualize human trafficking as an intersectional human rights abuse that thrives in situations of inequity and/or unequal power (Aura Freedom, 2023).
 - Ex: Avoid using imagery with chains and shackles. Most human trafficking survivors are not physically chained or restrained, but the psychological manipulation, coercive control, and other tactics employed by traffickers create a situation of confinement, submission, and obedience which is maintained for survival.
 - Ex: In most sex trafficking cases, the trafficker will be someone the survivor knows or is connected to in some way (intimate partner, friend, family member, trusted adult, etc.). Abduction by strangers is rare.
 - Ex: Dispel the myth that sex trafficking is something that only occurs internationally. Instead, share facts and expert statements that highlight the prevalence of domestic sex trafficking in Canada and how it disproportionately affects marginalized women, girls, and youth (Indigenous, racialized, 2SLGBTQ+, living with a disability, youth in foster care, newcomer/migrant youth, etc.).
 - Ex: Recognize the need for human/sex trafficking information to be shared and reported on outside of sensational or individual events. Avoid the messaging that the only newsworthy stories of those experiencing sex trafficking are when a victim is murdered, a trafficker is caught, or something else sensational happens.
 - ◆ Ex: Report on the rates and trends of human/sex trafficking rather than just on individual occurrences.
 - ◆ Ex: Report on the nature of sex trafficking, its root causes, and those targeted with support from community organizations, survivors, and other experts outside of the criminal justice system.
- Human trafficking survivors will not go to the police for a number of reasons, including fear of criminalization, distrust of police, fear of repercussions for themselves and/or family members, and more. Recognize that police reports on human trafficking and other statistics are a fragment of the prevalence and reality of human trafficking in Canada.
 - Individuals such as police, crown attorneys or others in the criminal justice system should not be the primary voices on Human Trafficking. Look to survivors, survivor-serving community organizations, and anti-human trafficking advocates as the expert voices in your writing.

- Avoid overly focusing on human trafficking as a ‘crime’ in your story or article. This lens only further harms survivors who are often forced and coerced to commit crimes while being exploited (i.e., carrying drugs and arms for their trafficker, committing theft, recruiting others, etc.), and are often criminalized as opposed to being supported.
- Do not oversimplify human trafficking.
 - Recognize that women and others identified as ‘recruiters’ or ‘traffickers’ are often coerced and trafficked themselves. Source out local anti-human trafficking advocates and experts to contextualize your reporting.
 - Avoid the narrative that once a survivor has exited a human trafficking situation, they are suddenly ‘free’ and ‘joyous.’ Very often, if not always, survivors experience intense negative emotions immediately after exiting their trafficking situation, as well as long-term impacts such as psychological, emotional, physical, sexual, and financial health concerns. This is also why ‘rescue’ narratives are so harmful (see below).
- Avoid the term ‘rescue’ or ‘save’ when describing a survivor exiting a human trafficking situation..
 - These terms work to glorify police, rather than focusing on the exploitative nature of human trafficking and its long-term effects on survivors.
 - These terms erase the root causes of human trafficking and the marginalized communities that have been historically targeted due to unmet needs caused by systemic oppression.
 - Often, survivors are not ‘rescued’ or ‘saved’ at all, and many survivors do not identify with those terms.
- Avoid including the images of exploited persons alongside their traffickers, as it insinuates that they worked together or that there was consent.
- Abandon harmful terms such as ‘sex slave’ that are sensational and disrespectful. Instead, use the term ‘human trafficking survivor,’ ‘sex trafficking survivor,’ or another term that the survivor prefers.
- Do not use the term ‘child prostitute,’ which is horribly insensitive and tone-deaf. Children cannot consent to sex or sex work, therefore the terms to be used are ‘child trafficking,’ ‘child exploitation,’ and/or ‘child rape,’ depending on context.
- Survivors who were trafficked and exploited did not ‘work’ in the sex trade. The term ‘work’ implies that they were in control or that they consented to being trafficked.
- Acknowledge the difference between sex trafficking and sex work by consenting adults. Sex trafficking is not an example of ‘sex work’ or the ‘sex industry’ and conflating these terms only works to erase the coercive control, force and violence utilized by traffickers to maintain control of their victims. It also works to erase the agency of adult sex workers who are not being trafficked.
- Do not ‘otherize’ human/sex trafficking survivors. They are human beings who were exploited through an abuse of power. They are also in charge of their own lives and can go on to thrive after exploitation. It’s important to highlight that whenever possible.



Violence Against Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQ+ Peoples

The guidelines offered in this section are specific to reporting on GBV within Indigenous communities. They are to be engaged in relationship with the guidelines above to provide additional guidance for transformative journalism in Indigenous contexts.



Violence Against Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQ+ Peoples

Enacting Calls for Action

- Journalists reporting on violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQ+ people must be informed on the ongoing genocide and how different Indigenous communities want to see justice. Journalists should also call attention to the wider issues of MMIWG2S and the ongoing colonial genocide of Indigenous peoples to advance public awareness and support efforts to end Indigenous experiences of GBV.
- Journalists reporting on Indigenous GBV must read the [*Final Report and Recommendations of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*](#), and the [*Final Report and Recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission*](#) (TRC). They must also follow the Calls to Action from these reports that direct media professionals towards engaging with Indigenous communities in supportive, transformative ways. See the 'Media and Reconciliation' section of the Final Report of the TRC's Calls to Action (2015, p 9), as well as the 'Media and Social Influencers' section of the Final Report of the National Inquiry (p 16).
- Include some facts about the context that Indigenous GBV is occurring within to highlight that violence against Indigenous women and girls contributes to the genocide of Indigenous peoples. This includes recognizing MMIWG2S as genocide, and one of the most frequent, ongoing human rights violations. In addition, the over-representation of GBV in Indigenous communities is a direct result of intergenerational trauma caused by ongoing colonialism through the former residential school system, and the current criminal justice system, healthcare system, and child welfare system; all which influences the genocide of MMIWG2S.
- Structural and systemic violence as a result of colonialism is specifically gendered, as Indigenous women are more overrepresented in the criminal justice system than men, face forced sterilization in the healthcare system, and are blamed for experiencing violence that can lead to children being placed in the child welfare system. These kinds of ongoing colonial violence against Indigenous women are gender-based and should be reported on as violence against Indigenous women.
- When engaging real life examples to highlight systemic injustices, ensure that attention is given to humanizing the people within the story in a respectful way rather than using the person or the situation as a tool to make your point. Include information about their personal interests, or contributions to their family/community to humanize them.

Prior to colonial contact, many Indigenous communities were matriarchal, meaning women were positioned as community and family leaders. Today, many Indigenous peoples consider women as sacred givers of life, and guardians of culture, knowledge, spirituality, and generational futurity and wellness. The ongoing colonial genocide against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQ+ people's attempts to erase Indigenous peoples altogether by eliminating the source of culture and community: women, girls, and 2SLGBTQ+ people. Coverage of MMIWG2S should include this fact to address the framework upholding the ongoing genocide against Indigenous people.

Being Trauma-Informed and Survivor-Centred

- Journalists reporting on GBV against Indigenous women, and violence against Indigenous communities in general, must undergo trauma-informed, violence-informed, and intercultural competency training in order to be educated on the contexts and experiences of the people they are writing about. If a journalist is not informed, they should not be writing about violence against Indigenous women—the risk of contributing to additional violence is too high.
 - Ex: Managers and editors should hire informed and trained reporters. (i.e., knowledge on Indigenous issues should be considered a requirement or asset).
- Journalists should avoid leading with sensationalist narratives around GBV in Indigenous communities because they reinforce harmful stereotypes that influence a lack of sympathy and compassion for those involved.
 - Ex: It is damaging to centre your story around a 'suspected use of substances,' especially without including facts that show how colonialism and racism are often at the root of those suspicions. This also works to 'explain away' the violence, as opposed to framing it within larger social contexts.
 - Ex: The term 'high-risk lifestyle' is often reserved for Indigenous women or girls who are murdered, attacked, sex trafficked, etc., as a way to blame them for the violence they experience, and deflect blame from perpetrators and colonial systems. These terms contribute to harmful narratives about Indigenous communities and do nothing to prevent future violence against Indigenous women.
- When identifying an Indigenous community or person affected by GBV in the media, only name Indigeneity, the community, and those involved with permission. Indigenous communities and peoples should decide if and how they are identified in terms of gender, location, nation, etc.
- Name and include accurate culturally specific, gender-specific, and location-specific resources for Indigenous communities within media to ensure trauma-informed and transformative reporting practices. Double check to ensure they are accurate before including them.

Centering Relationality and Responsibility

- Journalists and media professionals should be mindful of who is reporting on GBV against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQ+ people. Staff who are trained to work with or have experience in relationship building with Indigenous communities should be prioritized.
- Indigenous journalists are a great resource, although they should not be over-relied upon to cover these stories so as not to burden them and respect their proximity to the story. Remember that they cannot speak for all Indigenous peoples and show appreciation for what they teach you.
- Journalists reporting on Indigenous stories must make a proactive effort to build a relationship with Indigenous survivors, peoples, communities, and organizations they want to work with. Reporters should be intentional about the way they honour the time and energy of Indigenous survivors and communities as collaborators and should be reciprocal in their relationship with Indigenous peoples and their communities.
 - Honouring Indigenous protocols for reciprocity is an important part of building respectful relationships and can be done in many different ways. For instance, if a journalist is receiving information, they can reciprocate by giving a platform to Indigenous voices in a good way. Following up with communities in empowering ways by inquiring about how you can further support their stories also helps to build and maintain good relationships. Providing a gift or offering is also a common practice of reciprocity to show appreciation for knowledge sharing within Indigenous cultures. While Western systems and structures may view gifting as 'bribery,' for Indigenous cultures it is viewed as a sign of recognition and respect for the knowledge exchange. To practise gifting requires that media corporations move through a shift in cultural understanding and meet Indigenous communities within their contexts. While this will take time to achieve, some newsrooms have begun discussing how to honour gifting protocols in their work.
- Media outlets and journalists must ensure to provide an inclusive environment that is safe for diverse Indigenous people, their stories, and their experiences. Create a safe space for setting boundaries and by asking people what they need; allow them to share their stories on their own terms and without judgement.

- When looking for quotes and information about a story, do not reach out to the community when they are immediately mourning. Give communities, families, victims, and survivors space to respectfully grieve by first contacting GBV experts and community organizations that you have built relationships with. This might mean that your deadline cannot be met, and that is okay.
- Treat Indigenous women, communities, organizations, and their expertise with the same amount of credit and respect that is given to police. Journalists should wait to receive a public statement. Indigenous communities and families will make statements when they are ready.
- Look to examples from Indigenous news sources such as the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN) for healthy and productive examples of Violence Against Women in the media. There are great methods and examples already being employed by Indigenous journalists that are at your fingertips if you take the time to look.

Accurately Gathering and Reporting Data

- Be aware that police may include 'suspected' information in their reports about Indigenous GBV survivors to lessen sympathy. This may include reporting they 'suspect' an Indigenous woman was intoxicated, has an addiction, is involved in sex work, or has participated in other 'controversial' activities. Articles should explain that police include this information as a result of racist stereotypes and systemic racism that criminalizes and stereotypes Indigenous peoples.
 - Journalists can balance police quotes about 'suspected' information with statistics, quotes from experts, or information from family and community members if they are available.
- Include only necessary and relevant information in your stories—context is certainly relevant. Facts are relevant.
- Provide accurate resources and active helplines in your stories.
 - Ex: Stories about residential school survivors should include residential school hotlines and resources in the given area. Stories about GBV should include culturally and geographically specific resources.
- When looking for comments and statements about a given person's story, be sure to contact those who are relevant and engaged with the specific community which the person is from.
 - Ex: Indigenous women's organizations in Toronto should be contacted for an expert opinion when the Indigenous person is from Toronto. Indigenous women's organizations in Toronto should not be asked to comment on Indigenous peoples or communities in Thunder Bay. No two Indigenous communities are the same.
 - Ex: If the story surrounds violence against a member of the 2SLGBTQ+ community, journalists should include information about the specific contexts in which that violence is influenced. Experts within 2SLGBTQ+ community should be contacted to ensure accurate framing for these stories, as their experiences are unique in their intersectionality and different from other Indigenous women.
- Search for community-based databases to find information about a given community's history, ceremonies, protocols, laws, land, spirituality. Many Indigenous Nations also have websites including information about the community, as well as contacts for the Nation and its administration.
- Utilize Indigenous resources and community-based statistics and resources to support stories with more accurate information than what is recorded by StatsCan. Journalists can find many grassroots organizations online with community-based databases for MMIWG2S that are more accurate and more accountable to humanizing survivors and victims.
- Do not imply that Indigenous GBV is out of the ordinary because Indigenous women face the highest rates of violence in Canada. Instead, write with nuance to highlight the frequency of violence against Indigenous women, while also ensuring you do not present it as a normal feature of life for Indigenous peoples—violence should not be normalized in any community. Identify that high rates of violence against Indigenous women are both influenced by, and are increasing as a result of, colonialism.
- **When your articles do not reflect these recommendations, whether intentionally or unintentionally, you are contributing to the ongoing genocide of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQ+ people. ***



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