Language and Terminology - Why Language Matters

*Please note that this is a living document and may be updated - please refer to the live version of this document.

Preferred Term(s)	Term(s) Previously Used	Rationale
“Survivor”	“Victim”	Survivor is a strength-based term, whereas victim is used when violence was lethal, indicating lost life.
“Experiencing abuse”	“Abused”	Recognizes the survivor is more than just her experiences of abuse.
“Aggressor” “Those who cause harm”	“Perpetrator” “Abuser” “Offender”	Perpetrator and offender are criminal justice sector framings of violence, whereas the binary term of ‘abuser’ does not recognize the complexity of experiences across the lifespan. Many who use violence have also experienced violence.
“They/Them” “They/She”	“Her/She”	Recognizing and respecting an individual’s choice and preferred language is best suited.

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“Former Partner”	“Ex Partner”	Recognizes the fluidity of relationships.
“Violence Against Older Women”	“Elder Abuse”	Recognizes the agency of older women, and the significance of the term ‘Elder” within Indigenous communities.
“Gender-Based Violence (GBV)”	“Domestic Violence”	Ensures a broad scope which includes relationship types beyond former or current partner (family, neighbour, coworker, etc.).
“Gender-Based Violence (GBV) agency”	“Shelter” “Residential program”	GBV services for survivors are often not understood within their full scope which includes non-shelter based services. “Residential” terminology may be associated with past colonial trauma, i.e. Residential Schools.
“Killed by”	“Murdered By”	Encompasses any instance of a person's death caused by another, regardless of intent or legal culpability.

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“Sex Work”	“Prostitution”	Removes historical stigma generally associated with sex work.
“Femicide”	"Domestic Homicide”	Brings attention to the gendered nature of the killing and removes it from the home. Femicides can occur in a variety of different relationships.
“Died by Suicide” “Killed themselves”	“Committed Suicide”	Removes the criminality of the act.
“Mental Health” “Mental Wellness”	“Mental Illness”	Acknowledges mental health is a spectrum that encompasses a range of mental health conditions that affect mood, behaviour and cognitive abilities.

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“Low Income”	“Impoverished” “Poor”	Offer a more respectful and less stigmatizing way to describe individuals or families with limited financial resources and directs attention to the economic factors contributing to financial hardship.
“Non-consensual distribution of explicit/intimate images” “Technology Facilitated Violence (TFV)”	“Revenge Porn”	Terminology like “revenge” may inadvertently place blame or responsibility on victims and fails to recognize the criminality of this offence or that these images may have also been obtained without consent.
“Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM)”	“Child Porn”	Children can not legally consent to sex therefore any images/videos of children are evidence of child sexual abuse.
“Person living with a disability”	“Disabled/handicapped”	A form of people-first language that centers the individual's abilities and how they intersect with their environment and lived experiences.