

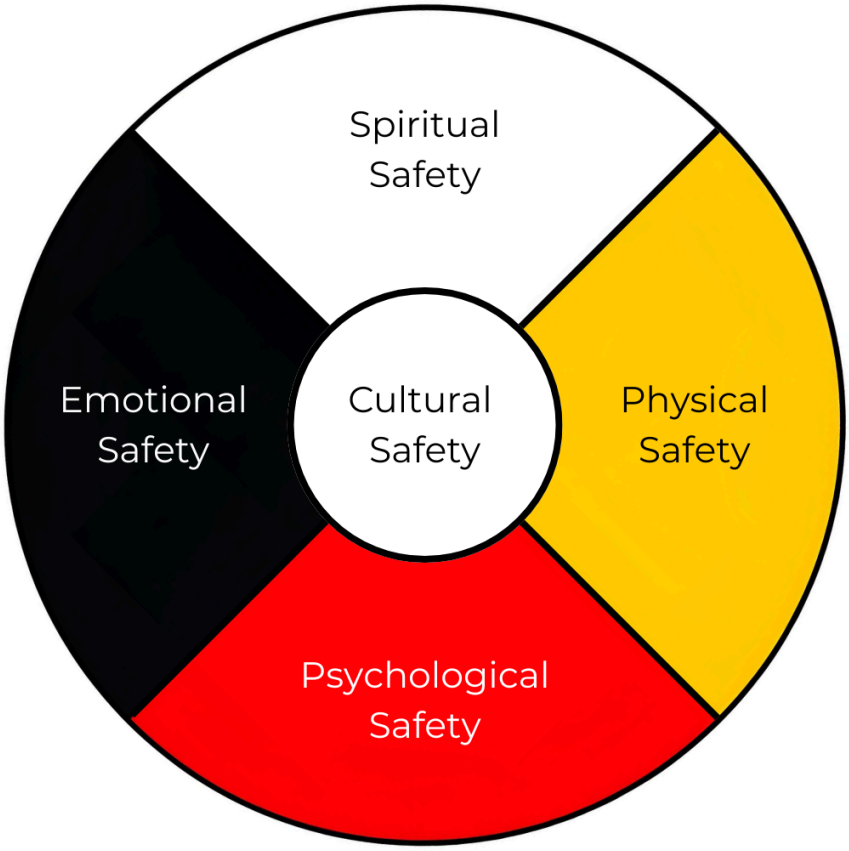
Keepers of the Circle

Indigenous Women in Skilled Trades
A Keepers of the Circle Initiative

Resources for Apprentices

in Ontario

This resource booklet was developed by Keepers of the Circle to support Indigenous women and gender diverse people in the Canadian skilled trades. This booklet will outline basic information you should know before you enter a workplace/job site and it will also outline things that you should look out for on a job site and in your workplace. You will find resources that you can use to assess the safety of your workplace based on the Medicine Wheel teachings with Spiritual Safety, Physical Safety, Psychological Safety, and Emotional Safety all supporting Cultural Safety in the workplace.



Workplace Checklist

Nº	ACTIVITIES	☑
1	If you are in a union have you looked through your Collective Agreement?	☐
2	Do you know who your union rep is? Do you know who is on the Joint Health and Safety Committee?	☐
3	Has your employer provided information and instruction on the contents of their workplace violence policy?	☐
4	Has your employer provided information on the contents of their workplace harassment policy?	☐
5	Has your employer posted written copies of the workplace violence and harassment policies in a conspicuous workplace location? This applies to workplaces where six or more people are employed.	☐
6	Has your employer reviewed at least annually, or as needed, the workplace violence and harassment policies?	☐
7	Has your employer assessed, and as needed reassessed, the risk factors for workplace violence?	☐
8	Has the employer advised the Joint Health and Safety rep (or workers where there is no JHSC or rep) of the workplace violence risk factor assessment results and provided a copy in writing?	☐
9	Have you been instructed on how you can report any incidents that occur on site? Including incidents of sexual harassment and violence?	☐
10	Are you aware of how your employer will investigate and address incidents or complaints of workplace violence?	☐
11	Are you aware of how your employer will investigate and address incidents or complaints of workplace harassment?	☐
12	Do you know how to summon immediate assistance when workplace violence occurs or is likely to occur?	☐
13	Do you have access to clean and accessible gender appropriate bathrooms?	☐

Document Everything!

Why should you document workplace incidents?

There are many reasons why keeping a record of workplace incidents is important.
These include:

- Having a written record of an incident that is dated will benefit you if you are a victim or accused of violence or harassment in the workplace. This can be presented as evidence when you are asked to share more about the incident.
- Documenting an incident at the time it occurs can also help you process the event and maintain clarity around what happened. Over time our memories can shift and change, especially if there are conflicting opinions about what actually took place. Having a written record of your experience, thoughts, and feelings can be very helpful in your own journey of processing the event.

How to document workplace incidents:

Figure out a method of documenting events that works for you.

Some examples are:

- Keeping a document on your computer where you write down all incidents and have it saved in a safe place.
- Keep a journal specifically for workplace incidents and be diligent about documenting things and keeping it in a safe place.
- Email yourself or someone trusted when incidents happen.

When you document an incident make sure you include

WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE and **WITNESSES.**



Information on Workplace Harassment

What is workplace harassment?

Ontario's Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) defines workplace harassment as "engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct against a worker in a workplace that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome." This definition is intended to cover all 15 prohibited grounds for discrimination and harassment under Ontario's Human Rights Code.

Common harassing activities and behaviours can involve incidents or patterns of behaviour intended to humiliate, degrade, threaten, intimidate and/or offend the victim(s) including:

- Rumour spreading

- Mobbing
- Excluding individuals from work related activities
- Reviewing work unfairly or trivial fault-finding
- Belittling behaviour or comments
- Removing freedoms while adding responsibilities
- Dividing tasks unfairly, hindering work, expecting disproportionate results, or playing favourites
- Setting unreasonable job requirements or duties
- Unreasonable blocking applications for training, promotion or leave
- Doling out unfair blame, recrimination or discipline – especially in front of others



Workers can be more vulnerable to harassment if they are working alone, at night and/or in an isolated location or at a mobile workplace.

The impact of workplace harassment

Workplace harassment and related stress can cause psychological and physical harm.

Psychological impacts include:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Post-traumatic stress disorder
- Sleep disturbances
- Work-related suicide
- Chronic stress (which is associated with musculoskeletal disorders and coronary heart disease)

Workplace harassment not only hurts the affected victims and their families but it can ripple through an entire organization causing increased conflict, absenteeism and staff turnover. Left unchecked, harassment can create a toxic work environment. Studies find that those who witness workplace bullying are also more likely to report more stress and mental health issues.

What is the law in Ontario?

Since 2010, Ontario health and safety law requires employers to protect workers

against workplace violence and harassment by developing policies and programs and providing information and instruction on the content of those programs to workers.

Employers must also assess the workplace for the risk of violence and report the results to the Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC), health and safety representative or workers where there is no representative.

Since 2016, expanded employer duties on workplace harassment include:

- Developing and maintaining a written program to implement the harassment policy in consultation with the JHSC or representative
- Setting up procedures and measures for workers to report incidents to someone other than their supervisor or employer, if those persons are the alleged harasser
- Establishing how information obtained during harassment investigations may be disclosed
- Ensuring investigations are appropriate to the circumstances
- Communicating, in writing, the results of a harassment investigation to the worker and alleged harasser (if they are an employee)
- Reviewing, at least annually, the harassment program.

Information on Workplace Violence

What is workplace violence?

Violence is the act or attempt to cause injury or abuse. This can include physical or psychological abuse.

Workplace violence includes a wide range of actions such as:

- Physical attacks or assaults
- Threatening behaviour
- Verbal or written threats or abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Stalking

- Harassment
- Bullying

Work-related violence is not restricted to the traditional workplace. Violence can occur at business-related functions or social events, conferences, out of office meetings or the home of a client or a worker.

- For example, a threatening phone call or email at home from a client or co-worker can be looked upon as workplace violence.
- Social media also offers another opportunity for harassment and threatening intrusion.

In all forms, workplace violence is an occupational safety and health hazard. It is a significant problem faced by workers in all types of work settings.

Who commits workplace violence?

Workplace violence can be committed by **ANYONE** –a supervisor/employer, co-worker, client, customer, former employee, or complete stranger.

Further still, current or former intimate partners of workers can also harm or threaten the safety of an individual or others at the workplace (this falls under domestic violence).

Who is at risk and why?

Women face risk of violence while on the job, primarily because many work in high-risk occupations. Women are also at risk because of discrimination-based violence. Similar excess risk is faced by Indigenous people, 2SLGBTQIA workers, visible minorities, and workers with disabilities.

There is also a clear link between stress and workplace violence. Increasing job demands, decreasing workforces, and other stressors can lead to explosive or oppressive workplace environments. Social hardship and personal stress can also cause members of the public to abuse workers providing services.

Other factors that increase the risk of violence at work can include:

- Working with people who may be under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- Working alone and/or in isolation

- Working at night or early morning
- Working in community-based settings such as private homes, clinics, and schools
- Working during stressful times (i.e. holiday season or end of the month)
- Working in a mobile work environment

What are the health and other impacts?

Bruises, cuts, and broken bones are common outcomes of workplace violence.

Victims of workplace violence can suffer both physical and psychological trauma. Including:

- Anxiety
- Sleep disorders
- Depression
- Post-traumatic stress
- General stress

Workers and others who witness physical assaults or threatening behaviour may suffer similar psychological effects.

Many workers who suffer from or witness violence have difficulty returning to work, which may lead to them being penalized for absenteeism or diminished job performance.

Commonly, victims isolate themselves from family, friends, and community. The resulting strain can cause marital crisis or other family problems.

What is the law in Ontario?

Employers have significant obligations relating to workplace violence. In general, the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) requires them to “take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances for the protection of a worker.”

OHSA outlines specific employer duties relating to workplace violence including:

- Preparing workplace violence policies and reviewing them as often as is necessary, but at least annually
- Writing and posting policies in the workplace where six or more workers are

regularly employed.
- Assessing the workplace for risk of violence and informing the Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC), health and safety representative or workers of the outcome

Employers are also required to develop and maintain programs to implement the workplace violence policies. The workplace violence program must include measures and procedures:

- To control the risks identified in the assessment
- For summoning immediate assistance when workplace violence occurs or is likely to occur
- For workers to report incidents
- To establish how the employer will investigate and deal with incidents or complaints of workplace violence

OHSA also requires employers to provide appropriate information and instruction to workers on the contents of the workplace violence policies and programs. This information and instruction should prepare workers so they:

- Know how to summon immediate assistance
- Know how to report incidents or workplace violence to the employer or supervisor
- Know how the employer will investigate and deal with incidents, threats, or complaints
- Know, understand and be able to carry out the measures and procedures that are in place to protect them from workplace violence
- Are able to carry out any other procedures that are part of the program

Supervisors may need additional information or instruction, especially if they are going to follow up on reported incidents or complaints or workplace violence.



Right to Refuse Work

A worker has the right to refuse work if they believe they are in danger from workplace violence (s. 43, OHSA). However, a worker **does not** have the right to refuse work if they believe they are experiencing workplace harassment.

JHSCs and health and safety representatives have the same powers and duties

related to workplace violence and harassment as they do for other occupational hazards. They must identify potential sources of violence and recommend control measures.

Is workplace violence considered a criminal act?

The Criminal Code of Canada deals with violent acts, threats, and behaviours, including violence that occurs at work or in the course of employment. The police should be contacted in these instances.

Information about domestic violence and the workplace

What is domestic violence?

Domestic violence is an ongoing pattern of abusive or coercive behaviours used by the abuser to establish power and control over their partner. It is not just physical hitting, slapping, or threatening to hurt. It is also emotional, sexual, psychological intimidation, verbal abuse, and using electronic devices to harass and control.



Early Warning Signs of Domestic Violence

Possible 'red flags' are if your partner:

- Wants to move into the relationship too quickly.
- Wants to know where you are all the time.
- Expects you to be with them all the time.
- Doesn't want you to visit your friends or family.
- Gets upset or angry when you socialize without them.
- Disrespects women by saying things like, "all women are sluts."
- Puts down his ex-partners by calling them "crazy," "whores," or "bitches."
- Makes you feel guilty for being successful.
- Gets upset if you don't text or call them back right away.
- Makes you believe that any request is too much.
- Blames everyone but themselves for their actions.

- Has poor communication skills and is unwilling to talk about serious issues.
- Angers easily then apologizes quickly, and this behaviour keeps happening.
- Showers you with compliments and gifts then abruptly stops.
- Treats other women badly or sexualizes them by making inappropriate comments.
- Makes racist remarks toward Indigenous peoples, or people of colour.

You deserve to be treated with respect. Never settle for anything less.

If your partner exhibits many of these “red flag” behaviours, you should consider talking to someone you trust before involving yourself further in the relationship.

Stay connected with a good support system and be sure to participate in healthy self-care practices to avoid getting involved with a partner who is abusive.





How is the workplace affected?

Domestic violence affects thousands of working people every day. It impacts the ability of workers to provide and care for themselves and their families. It also impacts the workplace through decreased productivity, increased health care costs,

absenteeism, and employee turnover.

Workers who are the abusers/perpetrators may illegally use company equipment (e.g. phone, fax, email) and company time to stalk, harass, or threaten their victim. Most importantly their violence can compromise the safety of their co-workers.

As the perceived danger increases for one worker, the level of distraction and fear for coworkers also increases. Coworkers may:

- Have to fill in for absent or non-productive workers
- Feel resentful of victimized workers needing time off
- Try to “protect” coworkers from unwanted phone calls, visits, etc.
- Be completely unaware of how to intervene, often feeling helpless and distracted from their work
- Fear for their own safety

What is the law?

Domestic violence is against the law. This includes the following:

- Repeatedly following from place to place, the other person or anyone known to them
- Repeatedly communicating with, either directly or indirectly, the other person or anyone known to them
- Watching the dwelling/house, or place where the other person, or anyone known to them resides, works, carriers on business or happens to be
- Engaging in threatening conduct directed at the other person or any member of their family

What can employers do?

Domestic violence policy and procedures should be developed in consultation with the Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC), or health and safety representative.

Employers should implement an individual safety plan for all established domestic violence situations in the workplace and work with the victimized worker to determine what additional measures are needed.

The employer should consult with internal security or local law enforcement and assess the overall workplace violence policies and procedures for the protection

they afford.

What can coworkers do?

There are several things a coworker can do to help a colleague who is the victim of domestic violence. These include the following:

- If you suspect a coworker is suffering abuse, do not directly confront them since it is important for an individual to self-disclose for their own safety and wellbeing
- Express concern and a willingness to listen and be supportive if needed
- Offer support by listening and assisting. When an individual is ready they will confide.
- If you witness an incident at work, contact your employer, supervisor, and the police department immediately so appropriate steps can be taken. Make sure that the incident is documented.
- Be open-minded and try to keep your personal feelings and opinions to yourself
- Don't blame either the worker or their partner and tell the worker abuse is not their fault
- Provide information not advice
- Do your best to ensure confidentiality



What should you do if you're a victim of workplace violence, workplace harassment, or are being affected by domestic violence?

- Contact Keepers of the Circle. We have access to information and resources that might help you through this challenging situation.
- Go through your reporting chain at work.
  - Find out what your options for reporting are. If you're options for reporting do not feel safe we can assist you in deciding what a different reporting option might be.
  - Ontario employers are required by law to develop measures for reporting as part of the workplace violence prevention program along with training to ensure workers understand them.
- Document the incident or threat. This needs to include descriptive information such as **WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN**, and **WITNESSES.**
  - Share this information with the JHSC or your worker health and safety representative. Depending on the circumstances they may also be shared with police and the Ministry. It may also be appropriate to file a grievance under a collective agreement, a Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) report/claim, or a complaint with the Human Rights Commission.



How do I file a human rights complaint?

If you are experiencing discrimination from an employer or a union representative you might be able to make a human rights claim. You can make your claim with the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario (HRTO).

Scan the QR Code for the HRTO website.

If you believe that your sitatuion requires a human rights complaint here are some resources that might be valuable:

Steps to Justice: How do I make a claim to the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario?

Human Rights Legal Support Centre (HRLSC)

5 Things to Know Before Filing a Human Rights Application in Ontario



What to do if you experience a workplace injury?

If you experience an injury on your worksite you can be eligible for claiming benefits once you report. The following documents are from Workplace Safety & Insurance Board (WSIB). You will need to report an injury through WSIB to claim benefits.



Scan QR Code for WSIB website

Mental Health Supports

After experiencing workplace violence and harassment many people struggle to process the events and experience impacts on their mental health as a result of the incidents. If you have experienced workplace violence and harassment and are stuggling to move forward please know that you are not alone. We have compiled some resources for you that are culturally relevant and can hopefully provide you with a starting place on your journey moving forward.

Therapy

Finding a therapist that is a good match for you is often a process of trial and error.

If you don’t click with the first person you speak with that is okay! There are several options for therapy. You could find a local therapist who you can speak to in person or you can find a therapist that can support you virtually.

- Noojimo Health is an Indigenous-owned organization that provides culturally safe and timely virtual mental health services, delivered by an Indigenous care provider for Indigenous people. Noojimo Health bills directly to NIHB for eligible clients!

Scan QR Code for Noojimo Health

Help Lines

If you are in crisis and need immediate help it is a good idea to call a help line. Here are two help lines that are culturally relevant and can offer you immediate mental health supports:

- Hope for Wellness: The Hope for Wellness Help Line is available 24/7 for Indigenous people across Canada. You will be able to chat with someone on the phone or chat online.
    - This service is offered in English and French and, upon request, telephone counselling is also available in Cree, Ojibway, and Inuktitut



Scan QR Code for Hope for Wellness

- Talk4Healing: This call line is run for Indigenous women by Indigenous women. Whether it's just by providing someone who listens and cares, or more direct support to help in potentially dangerous situations, Talk4Healing is here to get you started. Beendigen's Talk4Healing Helpline offers help, support, and resources 24/7 through talk, text, and chat.
  - This service is available in the following languages:
    - Oji-Cree
    - Potawatomi
    - Micmac
    - Black Foot
    - Anishinaabe
    - Moose Cree
    - Swampy Cree
    - English
    - Cree
    - Algonquin
    - Inuktitut
    - Mohawk
    - Oneida
    - Odawa

Scan QR Code for Talk4Healing











Setting Healthy Workplace Boundaries

Setting healthy boundaries at work and around work will support your mental well-being. Setting healthy boundaries includes prioritizing self-care and and establishing a functional work-life balance. We can break down these boundaries into three broader categories of: work boundaries, working relationship boundaries, and self-care boundaries.

Work Boundaries

Work boundaries define the limits of what is required of you in your role. Setting these boundaries will ensure clarity about your duties and responsibilities.

Examples of setting healthy work boundaries:

- Situation: Your supervisor has asked you to do a task you have never done before and you do not feel comfortable performing.

  Boundary: You communicate clearly and professionally that you have not done the task before and do not feel comfortable performing it by yourself. You offer a solution that someone with more experience can help you carry out the task.

- Situation: On your job site no one takes a break for lunch. There is an unspoken expectation that you should not take your breaks and that you should work through them instead.

  Boundary: Find out what breaks you are legally entitled to and communicate clearly when you are taking your break and when they can expect you back. You do not take more time off than you are entitled to and when you go on your break you communicate that respectfully to your team.



- Take all assigned breaks to avoid burnout rather than working through them.
- Use your break time to refresh.
- If you prefer to have your breaks alone, communicate that to your coworkers so that they don't interrupt your quiet time.

- Situation: Your coworkers take longer breaks than what you are legally entitled to. You feel uncomfortable taking such long breaks because you know that your employer would not appreciate that behaviour.

  Boundary: You monitor your own break schedule and head back to work when your break is done. Maybe this means that you do not spend your entire break with your coworkers and you remove yourself from their company in order to follow your own values of having good work ethic.



Working Relationship Boundaries

This type of boundary will define the limits of what you will accept in terms of respectful and safe interactions with others.

Examples of healthy working relationship boundaries:

- Situation: Some of your coworkers will speak poorly about your other coworkers. They want you to participate in the conversations but you feel uncomfortable doing so. The conversations are workplace gossip and feel malicious.

  Boundary: You can choose not to participate in conversations about coworkers when they are not around. You communicate this choice when those topics come up.

- Situation: Your coworker likes to discuss personal topics at work that you are not comfortable with (i.e. relationships, family dynamics, etc.). It feels like they are prying into your personal life and it makes you feel anxious.

  Boundary: Be clear about what conversations you are comfortable having and which you prefer to avoid. Remember that instead of feeling pressured to share when

others are talking about something you feel uncomfortable with, you can:

- just listen
- say you have nothing to add to the conversation
- talk about the topic from an objective rather than personal perspective
- excuse yourself to do something else



If you notice a pattern that certain coworkers bring up topics that make you uncomfortable you can think about topics that you do like to discuss, so you can steer the conversations towards something that is more comfortable for you.

The intent is to have interesting conversation starters on hand that you can use to pivot from conversations that make you uncomfortable.

- Situation: There is a coworker that makes you feel uncomfortable but has not done anything inappropriate towards you. They have asked to follow you on social media and you are uncomfortable with this.

  Boundary: If you are able to, set the the boundary that you do not allow coworkers to have access to your social media. This is a good practice of work-life balance. However, if you have other coworkers on social media you can set a boundary with this coworker by saying that you do not feel comfortable connecting with coworkers outside of work on social media unless there is a pre-existing friendship. Remember that you are not required to be friends with your coworkers.

- Situation: You have a coworker who always greets you with a hug. You feel uncomfortable with this even though you know they mean no harm.

  Boundary: You might say to your coworker the next time they go in to hug you that you have been reflecting on your physical boundaries at work and would feel more comfortable not hugging moving forward.

Self-care Boundaries

A self-care boundary will define what you require to stay mentally, emotionally, and physically healthy. These boundaries will expand past the job site.

Examples of healthy self-care boundaries:

- Situation: You are in a stressful season at work and everyone seems to be staying later and working more outside of their set hours. You find that doing this is having an impact on your stress levels and your mental health is being impacted.

  Boundary: Outside of your work hours you implement a self-care routine that allows you to disconnect from work and the stress that comes with it. You make an effort to only focus on work during work hours and you communicate to your coworkers that you are not available outside of work.

- Situation: You have a group chat with your coworkers that you enjoy being in. However, recently you have noticed that the group chat notifications outside of work hours make it hard for you to relax and disengage from your “work mode.”

  Boundary: You can mute the chat when you are not working in order to wind down and relax. You could also communicate that while you enjoy being in the group you won’t be able to answer outside of work hours.



Financial Literacy

What is financial literacy?

Financial literacy is the knowledge, skills, and confidence to manage money responsibly and make informed financial decisions. This involves understanding core concepts such as budgeting, saving, debt, and investing. Then using that knowledge to plan for life goals and manage finances effectively.

Resources to help gain financial literacy:

As you navigate your career in the skilled trades it's important to prioritize building your confidence with how you handle your finances.

- ***Braiding Mind, Body, and Spirit*** by Prosper Canada is a financial wellness bundle created by and for Indigenous individuals and communities. Developed with Indigenous teachings, community voices, and practical tools to support individuals, families, and communities, especially those receiving settlement payments, in making confident, values-based financial decisions.
    - This resource is geared specifically towards those receiving settlement payments however, the advice and tools that are offered can apply to any type of income you are receiving.

Scan QR Code for *Braiding Mind, Body, and Spirit* by Prosper Canada.


Keepers of the Circle
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