

Childhood sexual abuse among Indigenous people

SUMMARY SHEET

JULY 2026

Sexual abuse among minors, referring to children as defined by law, is an issue experienced in many Indigenous communities. Numerous studies show that Indigenous people, girls in particular, are disproportionately represented among the victims.

A **sexual assault** is:

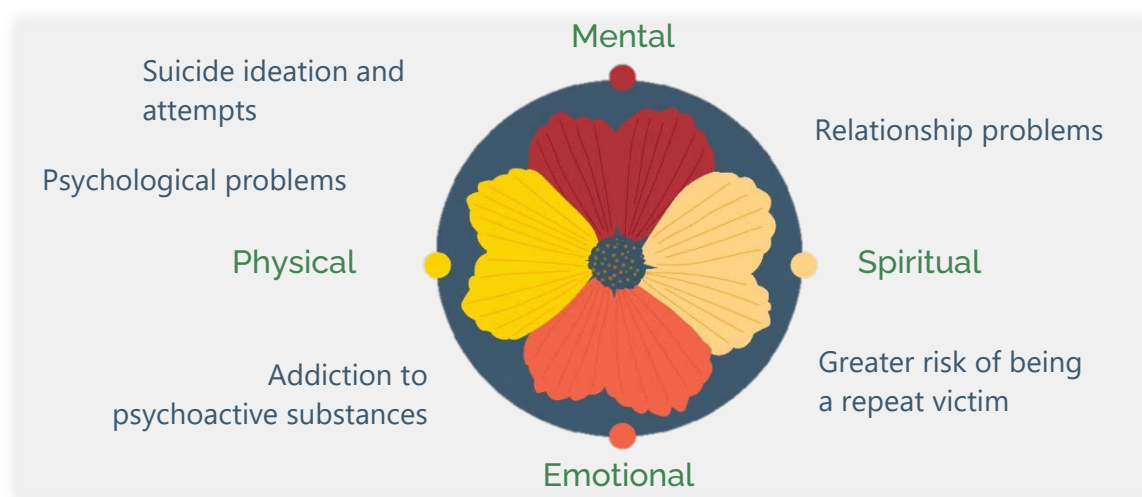
- Any act of a sexual nature, with or without physical contact
- Any act committed without the consent of the person concerned or when the consent is not legally valid, as is the case with children
- Any act involving an abuse of power, force, constraint, manipulation, blackmail or threats

What are the potential impacts on health?

Many Indigenous people view health as holistic and based on different pillars such as a relationship with the land, language and social relationships within the family. This can be illustrated by the image of a flower whose petals represent four facets of health (see below).

Sexual abuse can impact more than one of these facets. It can also have repercussions on the community's wellbeing by affecting those close to the victim.

POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF SEXUAL ABUSE ON HEALTH



Risk factors for experiencing sexual abuse

Violence is the result of a complex interaction among different factors. In Indigenous contexts, many of those factors are rooted in a collective history of discrimination and exclusion, as well as the subsequent repercussions. Family and community factors include:

- The social and geographic isolation of some communities, together with overcrowded housing
- Having a family member who attended a residential school
- Having been placed in foster care
- The use of psychoactive substances within the family

Courses of action

Sexual abuse can be prevented by **coordinated comprehensive actions** that aim to strengthen protective factors (+) and reduce risk factors (-). Such actions complement those designed for the early detection of victims.



Implementing the necessary **actions** requires partnerships built on trust, reciprocity and respect for the diversity of situations faced by individuals, families and communities.

		Factors
	Environments: Reduce social inequalities in health  Measures that support education, employability, income and access to daycare services	(-) Low family income (-) Violence in the family
	Families: Improve parenting experiences  Parenting support programs	(+) Family support
	Children: Encourage the development of healthy, equal and respectful relationships  Age-and context-appropriate sex education activities addressing issues such as consent	(-) Relationship problems

The information presented here is drawn from:

Fournier, C., Lafrenaye-Dugas, A.-J. and Gagné, D. (2026). [*Agressions sexuelles chez les personnes mineures autochtones : survol de la problématique*](#)