

A BETTER FUTURE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN CANADA

REIMAGINE PLAYBOOK

SYSTEMIC RACISM
MENTAL HEALTH
EDUCATION
CLIMATE CHANGE
DEMOCRACY
INDIGENOUS SOVEREIGNTY

UNICEF Canada extends our gratitude to:

The young people who participated in the Stay In to Speak Out Sessions, and contributed to writing this Playbook.

Our National Child Day partners:

Assembly of Seven Generations, Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada, Equitas, First Nations Child and Family Caring Society, International Institute for Child Rights and Development, and The Students Commission of Canada



Special thanks to:

Climate Strike Canada, Justice for Children and Youth, Overlap Associates, and YMCA Canada.

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TD Securities Inc.
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Anonymous

UNICEF Canada recognizes that our work takes place on Indigenous territories across Turtle Island and pledges to work in reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples. UNICEF Canada's national office is situated on the ancestral, traditional territory of many nations including the Huron-Wendat, Petun, Seneca and, most recently, the Mississaugas of the New Credit. This territory is part of the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement for all people to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes. This territory is also covered by the Upper Canada Treaties. It is home to diverse First Nations, Metis and Inuit Peoples today, and we are grateful to live and work on this territory.

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ABOUT THIS PLAYBOOK

This playbook represents the work of over 100 young advocates who came together in the autumn of 2020 to discuss six topics of importance to them in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The playbook was formally released at the Take Back the Future: Youth Activism Summit on November 20, 2020, in recognition of National Child Day and World Children's Day.

Each session statement summarizes a youth-led discussion on that particular topic, as understood and written by the youth themselves. Each section includes recommendations from the youth for decision-makers, adult allies, and other young people on how we can support them in their advocacy. Please read and share them widely to amplify youth voices and experiences, and help reimagine a better future for young people in Canada.

The Indigenous Sovereignty Session Statement represents just a summary of the full report entitled, *Land Back: Indigenous Youth Leading the Way in Indigenous Sovereignty*, produced by young people, in collaboration with the Assembly of Seven Generations and the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society. The full report is included as an appendix to the digital version of this playbook.

 [VIEW DIGITAL VERSION AT ONEYOUTHCANADA.CA](https://oneyouthcanada.ca)

SPOTLIGHT: U-REPORT CANADA



U-Report is a polling platform developed by UNICEF for youth ages 13 to 24. It is a unique way to get a quick, real-time pulse check of young people's views about issues they care about; to understand how different groups of youth are affected by decisions, policies, services and events; and to involve youth in decisions that affect them. There are more than 600 U-Reporters in Canada, and they reside in every province and territory.

Visit www.ureportcanada.ca for more information and to sign up for U-Report Canada.

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**YOUTH
RISE UP**

**YOUTH
RISE UP**

**RE
FORCE**

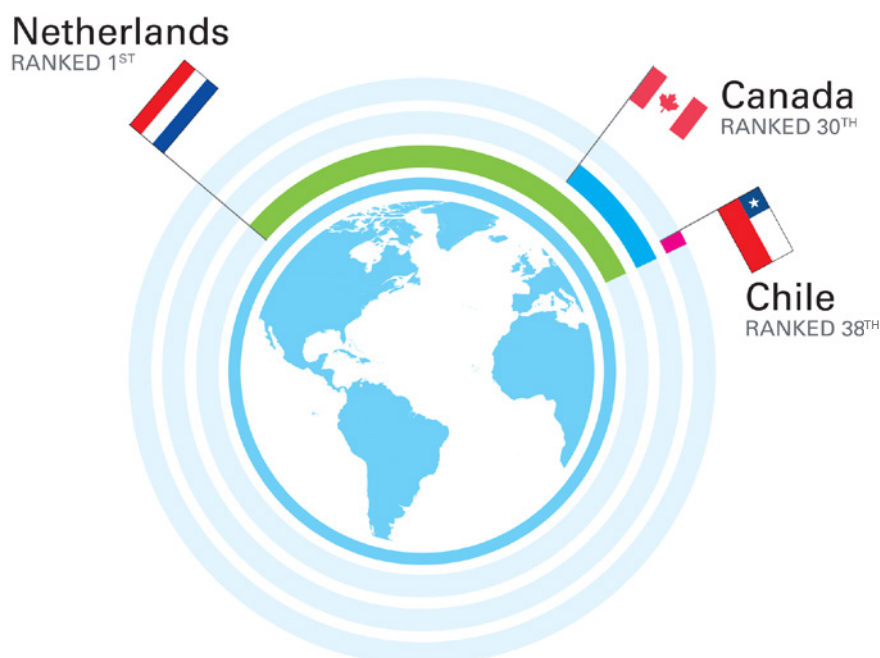
**RE
PLANET
OS ON US**

TO WORK

A MESSAGE FROM THE YOUTH ADVOCATES

Under section 7 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, those who reside in Canada have the “...right to life, liberty and security...and the right not to be deprived thereof...” In reality, many youth in Canada are feeling insecure in a nation that continues to neglect their mental and physical health. According to **UNICEF’s Report Card 16**, Canada ranks 30th amongst 38 wealthy nations in overall child and youth well-being. Report Card 16 ranks Canada 31st in youth mental well-being, 30th in physical well-being, and 18th in education and skills development. Canada’s lacklustre ranking is not an anomaly caused by the SARS-Cov-2 (COVID-19) pandemic. The data presents the state of children and youth just before the outbreak of COVID-19 and reflects Canada’s decade of decline from 12th to 30th in UNICEF’s rankings.

This downward trend cannot be ignored, especially during a pandemic which has only heightened concerns around child and youth well-being. Polling from **U-Report Canada** during the COVID-19 pandemic shows that 30% of youth feel stressed and anxious, 17% are missing school, and 27% are missing work. These statistics are the voices of youth and they must be heard. These statistics will not have an impact if adult allies do not stand up with the youth of Canada and pressure policymakers to produce tangible action that meets the rights and needs of adolescents in Canada. Adult allies must work hand-in-hand with youth to address the many issues in Canada’s response to youth well-being.



SYSTEMIC RACISM

HOSTED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH EQUITAS



Session Statement

What young people tell us about the impacts of systemic racism on the lives of children and youth in Canada:

Racial tensions exist in our society, although often they are ignored. In recent months, several events have made headlines and raised an outcry among us. We are hearing more and more about systemic racism. In a UNICEF Canada-led discussion, young people from across Canada shared their views and experiences on systemic racism and its impact on the lives of children and youth.

Youth expressed how racialized minorities are subjected to discriminatory treatment and unequal access to resources and opportunities. They are too often the targets of prejudiced behaviours and attitudes at school that makes them feel vulnerable and dehumanized, further heightened by the dismissing of racial-fueled incidents and attacks. It was also added that racial and ethnic minorities have less access to mental health services (due to stigma), and less access to healthy and affordable food.

The effects of “invisible racism,” the constant microaggressions, impact their identity and how they perceive themselves. In addition, the impact of the educational system which lacks inclusive learning materials, instills colonialist and white supremacy ideas that are taught to young Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) children and youth. These materials invoke a sense of minimization of their identity and makes them feel unheard and pressured to conform to a norm. They feel the weight of not only representing their whole culture but all minorities to avoid being generalized because they are a minority. Moreover, the over-policing and overrepresentation of BIPOC in the justice system puts a heavy, invisible pressure over BIPOC youth as they try their best to navigate through a world and a system that is made against them. These disparities have powerful significance for BIPOC youth as they strongly stay resilient in their everyday lives.

How does systemic racism impact lives of children and youth in Canada?

- Systemic racism = disadvantage for BIPOC youth where they experience socio-economic, financial and emotional and/or mental barriers where their access to resources and opportunities (jobs) are limited compared to non-BIPOC kids and youth who have more privilege
- Mistreatment, dehumanization and harassment of BIPOC in schools
- White-washing (subtly and sometimes not even subtle promotion and the instillation of white supremacy and colonialist mentalities) of educational material taught to young people, which minimizes their identity, makes them feel unheard, conform to the “norm” and make young people feel underrepresented and able to authentically be themselves. Impacting their identity and how they perceive themselves thus causing internalized racism (having a repeated cycle)
- Unequal or even biased and prejudiced treatment in classrooms (from elementary to institutions) along with non-diverse school resources that resonates with them.
- Experiencing microaggressions and “normalized” racist experiences
- Evidence of direct line between high school and prison for minorities=puts pressure on adolescents
- Being a person who us young and BIPOC also means having pressure to be a “good representative” of one’s ethnic identity and culture in order to avoid being generalized because they are a minority
- Reduces children and youth into just statistical numbers not real human lives
- BIPOC children and youth having to address issues that were not focused on from past generations (intergenerational trauma, climate change, systemic racism itself and more)
- Less access to healthy and affordable foods for everyday life
- Young BIPOC teens and children feeling a sense of hopelessness when change is not happening thus feeling apathy and not feeling like anyone cares about them when they are not reached out to engage and be a part of change and the community

How can Canadians take action to improve this area of young people’s lives?

YOUNG PEOPLE

- Take time for self-reflection and self-improvement. We all have biases, but only through continuously identifying your prejudices and their impacts can you enact change.
- Amplify BIPOC voices rather than speaking over them. Additionally, remember that BIPOC do not have an obligation to educate you about racism.
- Use your voice to create change. Move beyond reposting on Instagram by attending marches and protests, contacting your government officials, and being part of the social justice movements around you.
- Call out racist behaviour in your community. Inform those acting in these ways of why their behaviour is problematic, their behaviour’s impact on oppressed communities, and educate them so that they want to change.
- Keep the momentum going. While it is easy to stop caring about systemic racism after the movement is no longer “trendy,” BIPOC will continue to suffer unless there is tangible progress.

ADULT ALLIES

- It is important for authority figures, specifically teachers, to learn how to handle situations regarding race properly so they do not go ignored and children do not feel their voice is unheard.
- Do not tolerate racist phrases and words within the school system and issue appropriate consequences for those who do partake in this awful behaviour.
- Allow youth an opportunity to voice their opinions in a way that leads to real change. Provide meaningful platforms for youth to utilize to express their views.
- Empathize with youth and help amplify their concerns and spread awareness.
- Provide a safe space for children and youth to ask for help when they are racial targeted
- Create clubs and groups within schools for youth to share their stories and present ideas for change.
- Give time within class to speak about systemic racism so students are well educated and can ask questions.

DECISION-MAKERS

- Propose bills and enforce educational laws that make anti-racism training mandatory for teachers and faculty across each province. In addition, make anti-oppression courses a part of provincial and territorial curriculum compulsory for students to learn and understand how systemic racism functions and how it threatens the everyday life of BIPOC individuals.
- Effectively defund the police and law enforcement by relocating funds to other important sectors that help BIPOC individuals such as mental health services, educational materials for marginalized communities and other government agencies funded by taxes and local municipality.
- Proactively put the needs of people first and understand the importance of intersectionality when discussing issues stemming from or a part of systemic racism.
- Actively fight for the standardization of mandatory courses or programs regarding anti-oppression and anti-racism in schools and institutions across all provinces and territories.
- Include counsel from Elders and Indigenous communities when having an initiative or doing anything that concerns them.
- Proactively understand and learn more about the quality of schooling (especially on reserves) and diligently work to ensure that all reserves have a high-level quality of education and learning materials and/or supplies.
- Decision-makers should be self-aware and hold themselves and their colleagues accountable for their actions and words while maintaining transparency with the public.
- Address food insecurity, policing in schools and access to good affordable healthcare without racialized stigma and trauma and/or racist incidents associated when seeking professional medical help from hospitals. These issues are prevalent for BIPOC individuals; we need decision-makers to understand and implement laws, acts and programs that address these needs.
- Create initiatives that encourage and represent diverse voices in the government, specifically the House of Commons. This could be achieved through a select number of seats being allocated to Indigenous Peoples and other minorities or a specific government department dedicated to systemic racism.

"LEAD BY EXAMPLE THROUGH ENCOURAGING FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE FIGHT AGAINST SYSTEMIC RACISM AND BY CONDEMNING CASES WHEN THEY DO OCCUR."

—Youth Participant

- Making a conscientious decision to recognize the privilege or struggles that others face when they are brought to attention and using it to better understand and improve Canada, and its systemic problems.
- Provide funding towards the restructuring of society to allow all people, regardless of race, equal opportunities to succeed. This could be through numerous ways, including developing programs that teach about systemic racism from a young age or through allocating greater funding to reduce wealth inequality.
- Holding those who fail to support all people's rights accountable no matter who they are and how much power they hold.



88%

of U-Reporters polled said racism is a problem in Canada, with over half reporting they have experienced or witnessed it.

MENTAL HEALTH

HOSTED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR CHILD RIGHTS AND DEVELOPMENT



Session Statement

What young people tell us about how their education is being impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic:

We talk often about how the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the lives of all Canadians; however we do not talk enough about the impact it is having on the mental health of our nation's youth.

In a UNICEF Canada-led discussion, young people from across Canada shared their personal experiences on how the pandemic has changed their mental health.

Youth said that early in the pandemic, the lockdown gave them a “pause button” on their busy lives, which allowed for more free time. However, it was not long until the isolation started to take a toll on their mental well-being. Despite the current age of social media, the lack of communication and in-person interactions affected relationships. One young person said they felt “disconnected in a connected world.” Physical interactions cannot be replaced with online communication. Returning to the in-person school environment helped with mental well-being with increased

direct connections with peers. However, some youth still feel anxiety as cases rise and school resources for mental health remain low. Many youth feel alone as they do not know who to turn to, especially with absences or long wait times to talk to school counsellors. Youth in Canada are aware of the stigma around mental health, many are afraid to speak out. One youth said, “You do not want to be one of those people.” Many youth have developed unhealthy coping mechanisms during COVID-19, which only brought temporary relief, such as dark comedy and substance abuse.

At home, many feel powerless, restricted, and overwhelmed, which increases their worries about the future. Interestingly, our session, which allowed young people to connect about mental health, had an immediate positive effect as it enabled youth to speak out. One youth shared, “I’m not alone, [this is a] breath of fresh air... [I] didn’t have anyone to talk to.”

How can Canadians take action to improve this area of young people's lives?

YOUNG PEOPLE

During the Stay in to Speak Out Mental Health Session, young people discussed common experiences and feelings regarding their mental health and the pandemic. The themes that emerged from this conversation are:

- Due to COVID-19, more youth need mental health services. As a result of the current structure of services, waitlists are extra long leading to care that is rushed and impersonal, leaving youth feeling dismissed and isolated.
- Schools lack an understanding of the importance of their role in the mental wellness of their students. By emphasizing only the academic aspect of school, there is a lack of understanding of the connection between students' mental wellness and their academic success.
- Youth feel that their feelings and mental wellness are dismissed and not validated by adults. There is a lack of adult understanding related to youth experience and their stress. Young people have stress too.

What young people can do:

- Be open to talking about your own experiences, if comfortable doing so, which provides the opportunity to form connections with like-minded youth.
- Provide non-judgmental, caring, supportive environments to those in need.
- Write to your political representatives: MPPs, MLAs, Premiers, MPs, the Prime Minister etc. and advocate for the changes you want to see in your communities.
- Get involved in programs that can help provide youth with the support they may require: OneYouth Canada, UNICEF Canada, Wood's Homes, etc.
- Donate to programs that can help provide youth with the support they may require, if possible. Any amount can make a difference. Many non-profits depend on the financial support of citizens.
- Educate yourself on what is happening around you and the issues you're advocating on.

ADULT ALLIES

Adults play a crucial role in the lives of young people. To better support youth, adult allies need to be more aware of the resources youth have access to and take an active role in connecting young people to the resources they need. More specifically, adult allies need to:

- Frequently interact with youth and make a conscious effort to be available to have conversations about mental health. Within the school system, teachers should provide time for their students, aside from academic-related supports, to create a more welcoming environment that builds positive relationships with youth.
- Provide a safe space for youth to talk about their mental health struggles. In turn, adults need to model a healthy example around mental wellness, aiding in removing the stigma around mental well-being at any age. They have to remind other adults that mental health does not exclusively affect youth, but it is an issue that affects everyone of all ages.

"ADULTS NEED TO PLAY A KEY ROLE IN NORMALIZING MENTAL HEALTH STRUGGLES AS THIS IS SOMETHING EVERYONE GOES THROUGH REGARDLESS OF AGE, GENDER, CULTURE, SEXUAL ORIENTATION."

–Youth Participant



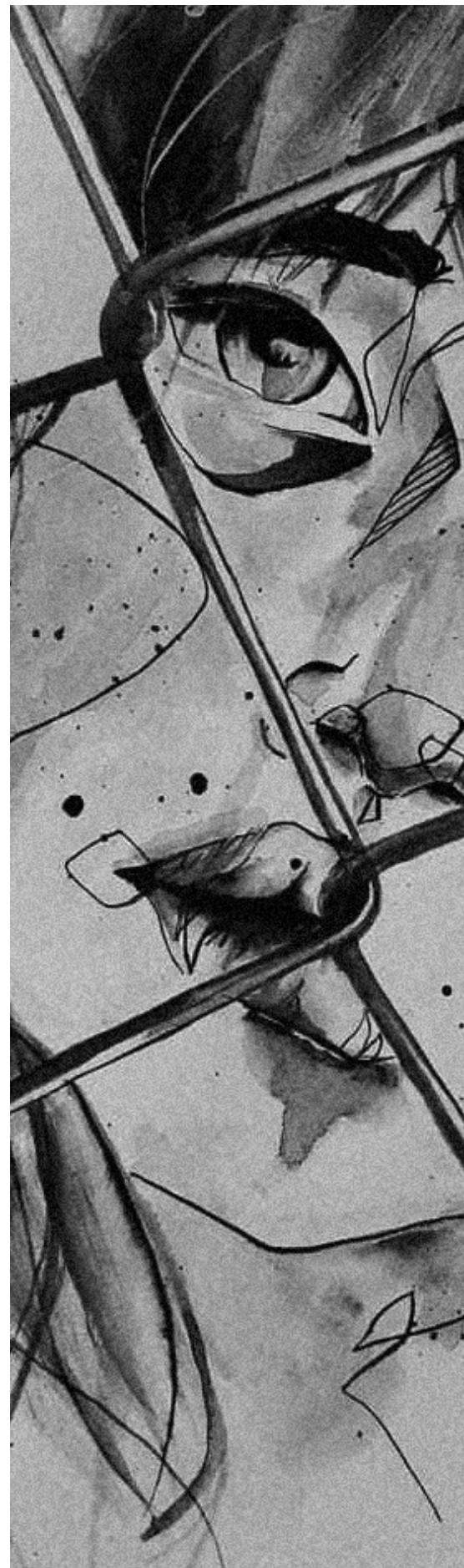
76%

Over three quarters of U-Reporters polled have experienced increased stress/anxiety due to the pandemic, and a majority (69%) said their mental health has been negatively affected.

DECISION-MAKERS

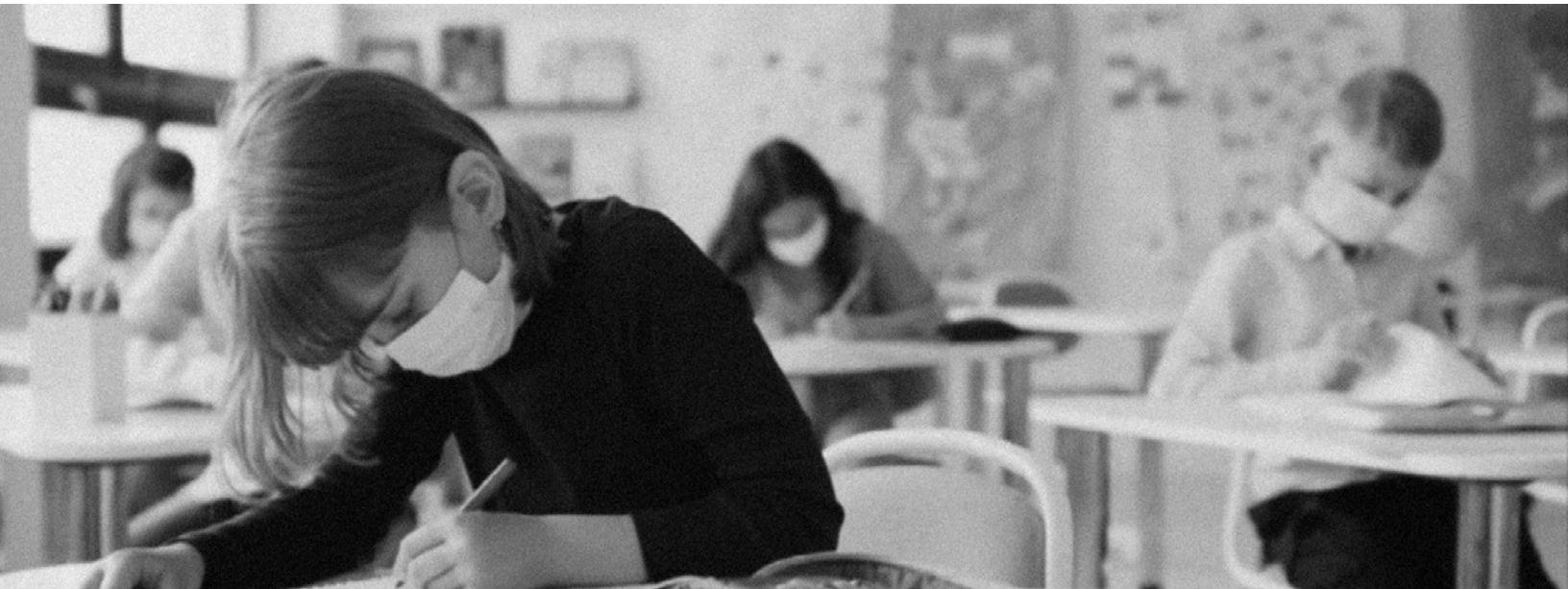
Decision-makers have more work to do. Many initiatives have been put in place and funded across the nation to support the impact of the pandemic, however there are gaps in awareness, access, and supportive systems for diverse youth.

- As per the UNCRC Article 17, young people have the right to access information and materials from a diversity of national and international sources. Policymakers need to start using youth-friendly platforms to share resources and supports to young people.
- Provide easier access to diverse support networks and better training on the different types of young people who may seek help. We should have more diverse-designated counsellors to reflect the Canadian population and our need for each population group. Ex. An LGBTQ+ Counsellor, a POC Counsellor, etc.
- Allocate funds to provide equity of resources to communities in need. Specific communities need extra resources. Ex. Typically, people who are lower income are surrounded by a toxic culture and barriers to find mental health resources they can afford so the only resource they have are counsellors within our school systems. People who are of colour also tend to be more surrounded by false stereotypes that mental health is just simply not a “real” thing, it is something that you can just “snap out of,” which they feel pressure to accept in order to fit in. By providing proper resources, we can help these young people thrive into well-grown and mature adults.
- Allocate more funding for mental health professionals who are community and youth-orientated. Offer referrals for youth to those who understand youth culture instead of those who serve the general public.
- Invest in mandatory mental health training within all of our school systems (elementary school, middle school, high school and university). Training like mental health first aid, crisis intervention and/or suicide prevention can go a long way.
- Start introducing mental health within our curriculum. We learn about sex education. Drug and alcohol abuse. Why not mental health? If we learn about it early on within our school curriculum, it can help break and end the stigma. It will help us understand if we or someone we know are struggling and how to cope with it all.
- Research how COVID-19 has impacted the mental health of youth in Canada and use that research to support youth.
- Acknowledge that mental health is a significant issue and be transparent about how and where we are heading to improve the mental health of Canadians.
- Allocate more funding towards raising awareness about mental health initiatives that have already been funded and implemented.
- Communicate intentionally with young people, reach them where they are, like through Instagram, and communicate in youth-friendly language.



EDUCATION

HOSTED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE STUDENTS COMMISSION OF CANADA



Session Statement

What young people tell us about how their education is being impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic:

When there are discussions on how COVID-19 has affected students, are the perspectives really presented to us through a student's experience? Due to the pandemic, there are drastic changes to our lives. For months, there was no school at all. Since re-openings across Canada, one of the biggest changes is switching to online school. For students suddenly having to change their entire learning environment and way of participating, it puts a great deal of stress on them to adjust. Remote learning limits us from having social interactions, which is an essential experience that gets us through challenges at school. Having small talks when an assignment is hard or asking the teacher for clarification right away makes a huge difference in our confidence.

The struggle we are all having to face is adapting to the change in the learning environment. Being at home makes us more prone to distractions and having to face the challenges of self-discipline. However, there are positives to remote learning. We are becoming better self-regulated learners, which is preparing us for the next stage in our education. We are also given a chance to hone our soft skills (communication, character or personality traits, attitudes, and social/emotional intelligence), which will prepare us when we enter into the work environment.

But, school is not only about academics and we are also being deprived of extracurricular activities, such as joining a sports team, volunteering, or clubs. These opportunities help us de-stress and contribute to our development, and physical and mental health. For many of us, COVID-19 took away our once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to be young. For those transitioning to a new academic environment, we missed out on graduation, which is not only a right of passage but also closure to a pivotal chapter of our lives.

Identity plays a role in our education system as well and living in different locations influences our quality of education. In certain areas, remote learning is not possible due to financial constraints or lack of resources such as access to reliable internet connections and electronic devices. This is the reality for many families who have no choice but to send their children to school in-person and for many students who have to work in order to afford school. Another challenge in our education system is systemic racism. The impact of COVID-19 highlights the inequality that still exists today.

The government is not aware or does not consider active student voices. Our opinions are not taken into account before a decision is made on our education. At a time like this, where the expectation is to be able to adjust to an abrupt change in environment, which not only affects our education but also impacts our identity, we must be heard.

How can Canadians take action to improve this area of young people's lives?

There is no question that the education system in Canada has its flaws, and as Canadian citizens it is our responsibility to try to address these issues in our system.

For young people action happens through activism. Youths need to stay informed on the issue, spread that awareness, and sign petitions. For truly dedicated young people organizing together whether that be for creating a report, a protest or any other type of activism is the most direct path towards action.

For adult allies, it's important to amplify youth voices instead of talking over them. Adults have a lot of useful experience that youths do not have, but education issues most directly affect youths so it's important for adults to not only speak their own mind, but to help give youths a platform of their own.

For decision makers, it's time to listen, and to act. Canada's methods of teaching are antiquated, It's time that we try to optimize our education instead of relying on what is easiest. Further research needs to be done on education. Youth voices will be an important part of this. The government has established many youth led advisory councils for purposes such as this, but student voice is still not valued nearly as much as it should. Be open minded to youth ideas, treat them as equals, and actually listen to them. Education is arguably the most important infrastructure in our government, we should always be striving to improve it.

YOUNG PEOPLE

- Demand changes you want to see in our education system such as increased mental health services, lesson plans devoted to life skills like how to do taxes, prioritize learning about Indigenous history and more. We can break the barriers against youth ageism in our system by rallying together.
- Encourage youth to utilize online tools such as petitions and social media whether they want to start a campaign or to help spread awareness about an existing one.
- Get involved with UNICEF Canada U-Report to participate in the decisions that occur in this country. This participation and advocacy will help reaffirm your rights.
- Write letters to influential members of your community, whether that be Members of Provincial or Federal Parliament, city councillors, or other influencers, this is an opportunity to have people in power notice your concerns about the education system.
- Stay informed and educated about policies and changes that are happening in your education system.
- Organize together. It may seem like youth are alone in their advocacy, but by organizing together either through already established organizations or forming their own, youth can amplify each other's voices.

ADULT ALLIES

- Young voices are often disregarded due to ageism, it is important that adult allies listen to youth with the same respect that they would give to adults.
- Give youth a platform to express themselves such as through surveys, events or other ways to include youth voice in decision on their education.

"BEING YOUNG IN CANADA CAN BE TOUGH, IT IS THE DUTY OF ADULT ALLIES TO BE A SUPPORT SYSTEM FOR YOUTH TO LOOK TO IN THEIR TIMES OF NEED BY OFFERING AN EAR AND LISTENING WITHOUT JUDGEMENT."

–Youth Participant

- Advocate for youth who may not be able to advocate for themselves.
- As mentioned above, a key concern for youth is the inability to have their voices in conversations that determine what they learn, how they learn, and what forms of expressions work best for them in the educational system. To counteract this issue, adult allies can consider establishing youth councils that allow for community driven youth to represent their age groups feelings at an official level.

DECISION-MAKERS

- Be open-minded to student ideas, and to adding more student voices into the decision-making process.
- Many educational institutes have student advisory committees, but their recommendations are often ignored. It is important to treat students as equals not dismissed as lesser.
- As decision-makers it is more important than ever before to try to view educational decisions in an unbiased manner, if we do not properly view both sides we will inevitably overlook key details.
- Implement new ideas in the curriculum that adhere to the needs for the future success of students such as new methods of education that teach financial literacy and mental health. By teaching financial literacy we can help students become more prepared for the job market/future. Provide more opportunities for more work experience-related programs for students after graduation.
- Education is invaluable towards Canada's future and yet we know very little about it as a science. A greater focus on educational research would ensure that we are properly investing into our future.
- Establish focus groups that work to improve rural and indigenous communities that lack the proper infrastructure for education to thrive.
- Empowering student voice through committees and organizations is a fantastic step, and the next step should be incorporating regular students into decision-making. For education to be more democratic, decision-makers must talk to and poll students who are not typically directly engaged in student advocacy alongside those who are. If a student's voice is coming solely from a fraction of a percentage of our students, then the vast majority of our students are not having their voices and perspectives heard.
- Once a youth council is established, and if it is established at a level of government, adult allies must pledge to work with youth on creating and reviewing of concern rules/procedures to ensure youth voices are being considered during the process of making new regulations.
- Be transparent to youth about changes related to education policies.



Almost two-thirds of U-Reporters feel that they are not getting the information and support they need on COVID-19 from their schools.



CLIMATE CHANGE

HOSTED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH CLIMATE STRIKE CANADA



Session Statement

What young people tell us about how climate change is being impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic:

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, environmentalism was at the forefront of Canada's political discourse. However, since the pandemic, the looming threat of climate change has been put on the back burner in favour of discussions about the pandemic. For youth in Canada, there is no bigger issue than climate change, but with the pandemic, our activism is limited. Moreover, the pandemic has introduced more pollution and waste in the form of single-use masks, gloves and other disposable items. Public transit has also seen a sharp decrease in its usage with people driving themselves to physically distance from others. While these are all important steps to minimizing the spread of COVID-19, more consideration must be placed on impacts to the environment. Considering the UN projections for our planet's future, we must act now, and we must act strongly.

It is important for Canada to acknowledge that the world should not go back to 'normal' after a vaccine has been developed. Young people need to collaborate and create a new normal through which specific guidelines that reflect environmental change are followed. There are multiple enemies that young people face when trying to establish change, many of them include big corporations and influential politicians, but none compare to the biggest enemy there is - time itself! The world is running of time and resources continuing the way that it is going. It is crucial for everyone to lead their lives with the climate crisis at the forefront.

How can Canadians take action to improve this area of young people's lives?

YOUNG PEOPLE

- Utilize public transport to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, which causes climate change by trapping heat. A car/private vehicle is one of the largest contributors to households' carbon footprint.
- Choose environmentally-friendly options when ordering food from food delivery services, such as not requesting single-use plastics such as plastic forks, spoons, bags.
- Understand that climate change has been a problem for a while and we cannot forget that it still is a problem, whether we are living through a pandemic or not.
- Limit the use of single-use plastics by using reusable items, including bags at grocery stores, cups and straws at restaurants and even masks.
- For youth 18 and older, please vote with climate change in mind. It is important to make individual contributions to protecting our planet, but the system is still broken. Research and elect leaders that will start making change in the system.

"JOIN YOUTH-LED MOVEMENTS TO HELP GROW THE CAUSE WITHIN YOUR COMMUNITY OR ON A NATIONAL LEVEL."

—Youth Participant

- Even when the pandemic is over, or a vaccine is available, things cannot go back to normal. The climate crisis needs to be at the forefront of conversations. For climate change to be spoken about, it needs to be 'trending.' Raise awareness of the climate crisis through the use of social platforms to spread the conversation.
- Research and sign petitions that are trying to create change.
- Lead or participate in school clubs and groups and broaden the climate change discussion.

55%

of youth polled don't think that Canada will reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050 with current policies. 81% think all federal political parties should work together to address the climate crisis.



ADULT ALLIES

- Actively listen to young adults about what they believe to be the most pressing issues of climate change.
- Be open minded to unorthodox solutions that young people suggest as their solutions may be beneficial.
- Crowdfund or help raise money for climate change efforts by young people to implement their own projects in their own communities.
- Support young people in their own projects, encourage them to keep pursuing it, and give feedback whenever possible to help them achieve their goals in climate change.
- Encourage other adults to join in support of young people's aspirations and projects to stop climate change.

DECISION-MAKERS

- Listen to the perspectives of activists, experts, youth, BIPOC individuals and LGBTQ+ people, and shape policy around their perspectives.
- Take action around climate change that deals with the roots of the problem and effectively reduces carbon emissions and pollution. Decisions-makers need to go beyond talking about creating change and start actively implementing policies that will protect the future of our planet.
- Listen to Indigenous Peoples and learn from them. They have knowledge and practices which can help our planet heal and are already protecting Turtle Island in many ways.
- Increase restrictions and incentives for major corporations to encourage them to take steps to be more environmentally-conscious.
- Invest in and support companies, organizations and initiatives that are environmentally-conscious and working to stop climate change or mitigate its impacts. This includes supporting businesses that are developing environmentally-friendly products, funding climate initiatives and funding/developing public transit options which are efficient and cheap.
- Create systemic changes and develop new policies so that the cost of saving the planet is placed on the shoulders of those who can afford it - in particular, increasing the taxes of the wealthiest individuals in our country.
- Make changes that have physical and practical impacts by divesting from fossil fuel companies, investing in green energy, and banning single-use plastics.

DEMOCRACY

HOSTED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH JUSTICE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH



Session Statement

What young people tell us about how they are experiencing democracy:

Democracy is a vital value for Canadian youth. The democratic principles of equality, freedom and respect for human rights were highlighted during a UNICEF Canada session where young people from across Canada shared their ideas and opinions.

Young people raised the importance of the right to vote and that the voices of all Canadians are heard, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. As they are directly impacted by the decisions that affect their lives, young people would like to participate in discussions on youth, environmental protection, minority rights, education, immigration, electoral reform, intergenerational equity, health, finance, the justice system, international relations and Research and Experimental Development.

They would also like our government and adults allies to become better advocates in subjects of importance to youth such as the climate crisis, social justice (Indigenous people, minorities, LGBTQIA +), services to veterans, gender parity/equality, the decriminalization of prostitution, reduction of poverty and redistribution of wealth, prevention of suicide, fight against racism—visible and invisible (microaggressions), physical and mental health. For young people, it is imperative to reform our justice and electoral systems as well as the police.

How can Canadians take action to improve this area of young people's lives?

YOUNG PEOPLE

- Participate in movements, protests and walk-outs to communicate your perspectives and support the causes you believe in.
- Write to, email and call your government representatives demanding change and expressing your perspective.
- Work with, listen to and support other youth to communicate collective visions and perspectives on important issues in our society.
- Educate your peers about democracy and the importance of lowering the voting age.

ADULT ALLIES

- Actively pay attention to youth's concerns and regard petitions/online campaigns as serious efforts made by and for youth as an important priority
- Adult allies must not dismiss innovative ideas and concerns brought by youth and take it seriously as they would their fellow adult peers.
- Understand and relearn how voting impacts long-term issues and how marginalized communities benefit from voice/vote amplification.
- Support youth-led movements and protests because without a vote, they are our way of communicating our perspectives and being involved in democracy.
- Aid and provide helpful resources to carry the voices of youth.
- Empower young people who are not engaged to vote and make use of the voice that they already have.
- Listen to young people with an open mind and communicate with them in youth-friendly language.

"RECONSIDER OR UNLEARN PREJUDICE AND BIASED VIEWS THAT ADOLESCENTS ARE EASILY PERSUADABLE."

—Youth Participant

- Read, listen and take notes of young activists that are fighting for good every day.
- Fight for young people to have a greater say in our democracy by lowering the voting age to 16.

DECISION-MAKERS

- All federal parties have championed lowering the voting age through legislation or party platforms demonstrating unanimous support; table a Bill to lower the voting age.
- Decision-makers must end "performative activism" and improve decisions that affect future generations and making space for reformation of the system when necessary.
- Remember that politicians are supposed to work for the people. They represent our values and should work to ensure that our concerns do not remain unheard or brushed aside but acted on with consideration and integrity. Young people are constituents too.
- Decision-makers must talk to people who are not engaged or informed, or do not have or denied enough access or resources to valuable information. Every voice matters like one drop of water making an ocean complete.
- Reform the education system (for example, in the form of curriculum changes and additional programs or funding for grassroots initiatives) to be inclusive, have a wider range and scope of history extending past more than colonialist perspectives and celebrating the diversity of people in Canada.
- Focus on overlooked communities and their issues (water infrastructure for Indigenous reserves) and actively meet their needs by working on projects in collaboration with communities involved (which also extends to Canada's role in the path of Reconciliation). Also, investing in resources for water infrastructure and good quality education (through supplies and teachers).



8 OF 10

youth polled think lowering the voting age would force politicians to better address issues that impact young people.

INDIGENOUS SOVEREIGNTY

HOSTED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ASSEMBLY OF SEVEN GENERATIONS
AND THE FIRST NATIONS CHILD AND FAMILY CARING SOCIETY



About this Session

Assembly of Seven Generations (A7G) is an Indigenous-owned and youth-led, non-profit organization focused on cultural support and empowerment programs/policies for Indigenous youth while being led by traditional knowledge and Elder guidance. A7G played a unique role in advising on, developing and hosting the Stay In to Speak Out session on Indigenous Sovereignty, which brought together Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth from across Canada who organize within or are interested in the Land Back movement to discuss their experiences and calls to action. The session connected Indigenous youth leaders who are leading sovereignty movements in their territories to discuss needs and goals. Together, we developed a report entitled, *Land Back: Indigenous Youth Leading the Way in Indigenous Sovereignty*. This report provides an opportunity for all Canadians to have a holistic understanding of the foundation and current actions that encompass some Land Back movements. The following statement provides a small understanding of what was discussed during the session. This is an opportunity to read the report in its entirety and meaningfully participate in the Calls to Action.

Session Statement

What young people tell us about what Indigenous Sovereignty means to them, and how they are practicing/asserting their Indigenous Sovereignty:

Imagining a “better” future beyond the COVID-19 pandemic is challenging for Indigenous youth when we have been fighting for generations to be treated fairly. In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) released their Final Report and 94 Calls to Action to inspire a transformation in the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada. Five years later, only ten of the Calls to Action are considered “complete,” and many more remain on the shelf. Human rights abuses and serious inequities experienced by First Nations children, youth, families, and communities are both historical and ongoing. In 2016, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (the Tribunal) found that the Canadian government is racially discriminating against 165,000 First Nations children and their families by providing flawed and inequitable child welfare services and failing to implement Jordan’s Principle to ensure equitable access to government services. In its order, the Tribunal found that “similar to the Residential Schools era, today, the fate and future of many First Nations children is still being determined by the government.” In 2019, the Tribunal found that Canada continues its “willful and reckless” discrimination in ways that unnecessarily

separates First Nations children from their families and contributes to the deaths of some First Nations children.

The COVID-19 pandemic only exacerbates these chronic and well-documented human rights abuses. So, when Indigenous youth are asked to imagine a “better” future beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, we argue that the solutions to the harms and discrimination we face already exist. Canada has simply chosen not to act. This failure to act has led to Indigenous youth leading, organizing and supporting Land Back movements that support a return of Indigenous guardianship of our lands and waters. As the Indigenous youth articulated in this session, our well-being is inextricably linked with our inherent land rights and Indigenous sovereignty being respected. This is what it means for Canada to reconcile with us.

Indigenous youth made it clear that all Canadians need to understand Indigenous sovereignties as intrinsically linked to the past in ways that still deeply affect our families and communities today. As such, Canadians must understand historical events in ways that link to contemporary and ongoing colonization and injustices experienced today. It is only by understanding the past in ways that link to the present that Canadians can fully understand why and how Indigenous communities are asserting their sovereignty.



97%

of U-Reporters polled said they have a role to play in Reconciliation and 100% said the government has a role to play.

How can Canadians take action to improve this area of young people's lives?

INDIGENOUS YOUTH LEAD

A common belief among many Indigenous peoples is that children and youth are the closest to the Creator, bringing an untinted and untampered perspective to decision-making. The dreams, strength, and resilience of Indigenous youth cannot be overlooked. The decisions we make today will affect us in seven generations, and the youth of today have a right to be involved in decision-making that will undoubtedly affect not only them but their descendants as well.

COMMUNITIES SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES

The definition of an Indigenous community must expand beyond band councils, and other governing bodies that youth participants indicated are too closely infiltrated by colonial policies and mandates. Grassroots communities must be amplified, especially those led through ceremony, women and girls, Two-Spirit and LGBTQ+ youth, and those operating through unpaid labour. It is important to support communities in having complete autonomy over their lands, bodies and families. Those who have not been involved in the hard labour of community-building must step back and give space for those who have.

SHOW UP

Showing up to marches and actions, signing petitions and sharing words of support and encouragement go a long way. There are many ways Canadians can show up for Indigenous rights, and youth participants encourage all Indigenous peoples and Canadians to continue being active and loud on issues of injustice. Some more examples of how everyone can show up are: educating your family, sharing stories from the frontlines, organizing non-violent direct actions and marches, organizing fundraisers, writing letters of support, signing petitions, calling your local government officials, and boycotting harmful and racist companies and businesses.

PUT YOUR MONEY WHERE YOUR MOUTH IS

Leverage your privileges to support Indigenous communities. If you have the financial means to support Indigenous sovereignty, then do. Be conscious about where and who you are buying from. Support Indigenous calls to boycott certain companies who are invested in harm towards Indigenous peoples or who are making

money off of cultural appropriation. For example, many restaurants have shown solidarity with the Mi'kmaq by refusing to sell lobster not caught by Mi'kmaq people. Everyone can contribute in ways that uplift Indigenous youth and communities..

BE ACTIVE IN DISMANTLING OPPRESSIVE SYSTEMS

Both Indigenous peoples and Canadians must stand up to the injustices that Indigenous peoples are facing. We all have a responsibility, both as caring people and as treaty people, to protect the rights of Indigenous peoples. Examples include supporting culturally-based equity for Indigenous families so that all Indigenous peoples have a fair opportunity to raise our children at home and in our communities. If you are not active in dismantling oppression, you are enabling oppression to operate..

LEARN ABOUT LAND DEFENDERS AND GRASSROOTS INDIGENOUS GROUPS AND SUPPORT THEIR CALLS TO ACTION

Below is a list of some of the land defender movements mentioned in the full report but there are many others that need your support:

- Tiny House Warriors: www.tinyhousewarriors.com
- Nimkii Aazhibikong Eshkiniigjig: www.facebook.com/nimkiiyouthcollective
- Mi'kmaw Fishing Rights: www.mikmaqrights.com/negotiations/working-groups/fisheries
- Algonquin Moose Moratorium: www.facebook.com/groups/372217760398748
- Gidem't'en Yintah Access: www.yintahaccess.com/take-action-1
- Protect the Arctic Refuge: www.protectthearctic.org
- 1492 Land Back Lane: www.facebook.com/1492LandBackLane
- Assembly of Seven Generations (A7G): www.a7g.ca
- First Nations Family and Caring Society: www.fncaringsociety.com/what-you-can-do
- Metis Settlements General Council: www.msgc.ca
- Indigenous Climate Action (ICA): www.indigenousclimateaction.com

An urgent call to action from Tiny House Warriors:

The Warriors call on Indigenous people and non-Indigenous people to support their fight for sovereign recognition. Right now, Tiny House Warriors, Kanahus, Mayuk, and Snutetkwe Manuel are facing a range of charges for their land defence and are looking for your support.

For more information:

www.tinyhousewarriors.com/2020/05/the-tmx-pipeline-will-never-be-built
www.transmountain.com/project-overview

DEVELOP A NETWORK OF LAND DEFENDERS

It is important to form and maintain relationships between people with the common goal of protecting the lands and waters through Indigenous sovereignty. It is essential that we share skills about best practices and safety while organizing. We must focus on uplifting each other and amplifying each other's voices. The more empowered and amplified voices, the more warriors will be defending the sacred.

SUPPORT REVITALIZATION

Be aware of the urgency of revitalization and the fact that Indigenous peoples may lose cultural practices and languages if nothing is done. Both Indigenous peoples and Canadians should be involved in the revitalization of Indigenous cultures because everyone has something to learn. Our languages and cultures are coded with a deep respect for creation. Learn the Indigenous language of the land you live on and support language revitalization projects. If you are Canadian and living on Turtle Island, you benefit every day from the land and waters, and you benefit from the colonization of our people. It is time you gave back.

INCLUDE NORTHERN VOICES

With the geographical separation of communities in the northern regions, both between one another and to government centres, northern voices are often left out of the conversation. When we do not listen and act inclusive, we lose mass sources of knowledge and wisdom. For Indigenous sovereignty to successfully sweep across Canada, conversations must be inclusive of all voices. It is not good enough to simply invite northern individuals and communities to the table; we must also take the proactive step of bringing the table to them.

DON'T WAIT

Be aware of the repercussions of not living in balance with the land. Every day you don't act to support Indigenous sovereignty is damaging the land and waters. We all need to be the guardians of creation, and that day will come sooner if we all take that step to make a change.

TO READ THE FULL **LAND BACK: INDIGENOUS YOUTH LEADING THE WAY IN INDIGENOUS SOVEREIGNTY REPORT**, [CLICK HERE](#) 

A MESSAGE FROM THE PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

We are honoured to hear and learn from the young people who participated in the Stay In to Speak Out sessions, and we're happy to let this playbook speak for itself. Each session statement brings unique insight, and a remarkable understanding of the interconnectedness across all six issues. National Child Day, like every day, should be an opportunity to stop and listen to the young people in our lives. We continue to be amazed at the depth of their insights, empathy and ability to create significant change.

As adult allies, we have an opportunity to uplift and support young people's advocacy in meaningful ways. The youth made it clear in their session statements that they hold us to a high standard to support them and continue to do better. We are proud to come together to support a platform for these young people to be heard, and we commit to carry their voices and experiences forward.

Respectfully,



Owen Charters
President and CEO
Boys and Girls Clubs
of Canada



Odette McCarthy
Executive Director
Equitas Center for International
Human Rights Education



Cindy Blackstock
Executive Director
First Nations Child & Family
Caring Society of Canada



Vanessa Currie
Executive Director
International Institute
for Child Rights and
Development



Sharif Mahdy
Executive Director
The Students Commission
of Canada, Centre of Excellence
for Youth Engagement



David Morley
President and CEO
UNICEF Canada

About UNICEF Canada's One Youth

From 30th to 1st place, UNICEF Canada's OneYouth is working to make Canada the best place in the world to grow up. As the global UN agency for kids, UNICEF has worked to improve conditions for every child around the world for more than 70 years, and has saved more children's lives than any other humanitarian organization. UNICEF Canada's OneYouth brings that work to Canada by building the new gold standard for measuring child well-being, and working with young people to develop innovative solutions to the challenges they face. We are calling on Canadians to take action and do better for children and youth.



UNICEF is supported entirely by voluntary donations.

For more information about UNICEF Canada's OneYouth, please visit www.oneyouthcanada.ca

For updates, follow us on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.



APPENDIX: **LAND BACK: INDIGENOUS YOUTH LEADING THE WAY IN INDIGENOUS SOVEREIGNTY**



Indigenous Sovereignty

LAND BACK:

**Indigenous Youth Leading the Way
in Indigenous Sovereignty**



Land Back: Indigenous Youth Leading the Way in Indigenous Sovereignty

Written by: Gabrielle Fayant, Sam Wong, Julianna Grant and Ganaabouté Gagné from the Assembly of Seven Generations (A7G) & Brittany Mathews from the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society

Edited by: Brittany Mathews

Designed by: UNICEF Canada

Special thanks to: Victoria Marchand from the Algonquin Moose Moratorium, Kakeka Thundersky, Taryn Bobiwash and Quinn Mewasige from Nimkii Aazhibikong Eshkiniijig (Youth Collective), Nigit'stil Norbert from Connect North, Blake Desjarlais from the Metis Settlements General Council, and all youth who participated in the October 13, 2020, Stay In to Speak Out Session on Indigenous Sovereignty, hosted by Assembly Seven Generations, the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society and UNICEF Canada. Your contributions provided the content and guidance to write this report.

Introduction

The journey of the Land Back: Indigenous Youth Leading the Way in Indigenous Sovereignty report started in early August 2020 when UNICEF Canada partnered with the First Nations Child & Family Caring Society (the Caring Society) and the Assembly of Seven Generations (A7G) to host a virtual “Stay In to Speak Out” session in support of November 20th National Child Day. The three of us were identified as youth advisors to lead the session, Sam Wong, a Metis youth with roots in Calahoo, Alberta, Julianna Grant, an Algonquin and Ojibway youth from Nipissing First Nation, and Gabaabouté Gagne, a youth from the Cree Nation of Chisasibi. All three of us live on unceded Algonquin territory in the city, currently known as Ottawa. UNICEF Canada’s original approach was to focus the session on the theme of reconciliation and imagining a “better” future beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. However, along with many Indigenous youth across Canada, we have identified a sense of hopelessness regarding Canada’s implementation of reconciliation.

In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) released their Final Report and 94 Calls to Action to inspire a transformation in the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada. Five years later, only ten of the Calls to Action are considered “complete,” and many more remain on the shelf.¹ Human rights abuses and serious inequities experienced by First Nations children, youth, families, and communities are both historical and ongoing. In 2016, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (the Tribunal) found that the Canadian government is racially discriminating against 165,000 First Nations children and their families by providing flawed and inequitable child welfare services and failing to implement Jordan’s Principle to ensure equitable access to government services. In its order, the Tribunal found that “similar to the Residential Schools era, today, the fate and future of many First Nations children is still being determined by the government.”² In 2019, the Tribunal found that Canada continues its “willful and reckless” discrimination in ways that unnecessarily

¹ CBC. (2018). *Beyond 94: Truth and Reconciliation in Canada*. <https://newsinteractives.cbc.ca/longform-single/beyond-94>

² Canadian Human Rights Tribunal. 2016 CHRT 2. <https://decisions.chrt-tcdp.gc.ca/chrt-tcdp/decisions/en/item/127700/index.do>

separates First Nations children from their families and contributes to the deaths of some First Nations children.³

The COVID-19 pandemic only exasperates these chronic and well-documented human rights abuses. So, when we are asked to imagine a “better” future beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, we argue that the solutions to the harms and discrimination we face already exist. Canada has simply chosen not to act. This failure to act has led to Indigenous youth leading, organizing and supporting Land Back movements that support a return of Indigenous guardianship of our lands and waters. As the Indigenous youth articulated in this session, our wellbeing is inextricably linked with our land rights and Indigenous sovereignty being respected. This is what it means for Canada to reconcile with us.

Given the diversity of youth-led Land Back organizing that is happening across Canada, we re-centred the “Stay In to Speak Out” session on Indigenous sovereignties. UNICEF Canada offered a unique platform from which to bring together Indigenous youth leading these movements in their territories to discuss their needs and goals. The session also brought together Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth from across Canada who organize within or are interested in the Land Back movement. The youth leaders we connected with who are leading these sovereignty movements in their territories include:

- Victoria Marchand, Algonquin youth organizing with the Algonquin Moose Moratorium
- Kakeka Thundersky, Frontline urban youth from Treaty 1 territory (Winnipeg, MB)
- Taryn Bobiwash and Quinn Mewasige, Nimkii Aazhibikong Eshkiniijig (Youth Collective)
- Nigit'stil Norbert, Connect North, Director
- Blake Desjarlais, Fishing Lake Metis Settlement

³ Canadian Human Rights Tribunal. 2019 CHRT 39. <https://decisions.chrt-tcdp.gc.ca/chrt-tcdp/decisions/en/item/453537/index.do>

The following report outlines the key topics that we discussed during the session. All the youth participants identified that Canadians need to understand Indigenous sovereignties as intrinsically linked to the past. It is only by fully understanding historical events with an understanding that, for Indigenous peoples and communities, the ramifications of these events are not historical, can Canadians begin to understand Indigenous sovereignties and the Land Back movement. As such, this report begins with a brief timeline of events to help readers better understand the contemporary Land Back movement and the current struggles that many Indigenous children and youth experience. Following the timeline, this report outlines key topics discussed by session participants, including contemporary colonization and ongoing injustices, how communities are asserting their sovereignty and calls to action on how Canadians can support.

Background

History of Canada and Colonialism

At just over 150 years old, Canada is a new country. Canada has built and continues to build colonial laws and governments on top of Indigenous lands and territories. Moral and legal justifications, like terra nullius and the Doctrine of Discovery, paved the way for European colonization and invasion of Turtle Island, currently referred to as North America, and set up over 500 years of Roman Catholic Church authority over these lands.

Indigenous peoples have lived in the northern part of Turtle Island for over 14,000 years. There are creation stories and languages that have lived in this part of the world older than the Bible and many European countries. When the European newcomers arrived, they depended on Indigenous peoples for their survival and to access the resources the lands and waters offered. However, to gain access to resources, these newcomers had to make alliances, treaties and agreements with the original inhabitants. This follows a long tradition in most Indigenous nations of treaty-making. Most, if not all, of the original treaties and intentions that newcomers made with Indigenous peoples have been broken and dishonoured.

A Timeline of Unhonoured Treaties and Broken Promises

Many Indigenous young people expressed that they often encounter Settler Canadians with little to no understanding of treaties and how they form Canada's foundation. It is this ignorance that often forms the basis of tensions between Indigenous peoples and Settler Canadians. One essential way to diminish these tensions is to show Canada's long history of treaty-making in conjunction with the ways that Canada has chosen not to honour those treaties. These critical milestones in history link to Canada's current state of broken relationships with Indigenous peoples.

Below is a timeline outlining treaties and laws, including when they were made, when they were broken or dishonoured and how broken relationships have continued to harm Indigenous peoples.

- **1701-1760 - Treaties of Peace and Neutrality**
 - **1701** - The Great Peace of Montreal is a treaty between the French, Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe
 - **1760** - Treaty of Swegatchy
 - **1760** - Treaty established between the Huron-Wendat and the British

- **1725-1779** - Peace and Friendship Treaties signed with Mi'kmaw, Maliseet and the British.
- **1763** - The Royal Proclamation set out guidelines for European settlement of Indigenous territories in North America. It states that Indigenous title to the land exists and must be respected. It further states that all land would be considered Indigenous land until ceded by treaty. Despite the Royal Proclamation forming the foundation of the Canadian Constitution, Canadian know very little about this defining document.
- **1764-1862** - Upper Canada Land Surrenders - a series of land surrenders, termed "agreements," in southwestern Ontario, which were forced upon Indigenous nations due to settler encroachment. The British Crown employed questionable tactics, and Indigenous nations maintain that they did not consent to the land surrenders. This constitutes one of the first and largest breaches of the Royal Proclamation.
- **1784** - Haldimand Proclamation - land granted to Haudenosaunee in compensation for their alliance with British forces during the American Revolution.
- **1850** - Robinson-Superior and Robinson-Huron Treaties - two separate but interconnected treaties between the Anishinaabeg of the Upper Great Lakes and the British.
- **1850-1854** - Douglas Treaties - treaties signed between British colonists and fourteen First Nations on Vancouver Island.
- **1867** - Constitution Act of 1867 - Canada is formed
- **1868** - Rupert's Land Act - Canada purchased a vast expanse of land (the entire Hudson Bay drainage system) from the Hudson's Bay Company without the consent nor inclusion of Indigenous peoples within the land. Purchased for \$1.5 million, it is the largest real estate transaction (by land area) in Canada's history. This moment in history began the displacement and relocation of many Indigenous communities and nations.
- **1870** - Red River Resistance - First Nations and Metis peoples in the Red River communities resisted the encroachment of British settlers by defending the destruction of their homelands and the massacre of millions of buffalo.
- **1871-1921** - Numbered Treaties - a series of eleven treaties made between the British Crown and First Nations. Many First Nations used the treaties as a

survival tactic due to mass starvation and the destruction of traditional economies. Indigenous peoples are thought of as less than human and economic development for settlers is more important than Indigenous lives. Many Indigenous peoples die by force and starvation during this era.

- **1873** - Canada established the North-West Mounted Police (NWMP) to implement colonial law in Canada's newly acquired lands in the West. The NWMP later became the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The NWMP was designed to keep order in the North West, control the Indigenous populations, and facilitate the transfer of Indigenous territory to the Canadian government.
- **1876** - The Indian Act - a race-based piece of legislation that Canada unilaterally passed to consolidate and coordinate Canada's relationships to First Nations peoples. Moving away from a treaty-based relationship to a paternalistic relationship, the Act controls the political, economic and social fate of First Nations peoples.
- **1876-1996** - Indian Residential School system - Indigenous children were removed from their families and placed in schools far from their homes for the purpose of assimilation. Many children experienced abuse and the schools were poorly constructed and managed, leading to the deaths of many children. The Indian Residential School system was operated alongside Day Schools and Industrial Schools that were also created to assimilate Indigenous children. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada found that the Indian Residential School system amounted to cultural genocide.
- **1885-1924** - Scrip Commissions - a series of commissions set up to extinguish Metis title to land in Canada's West. Instead of allowing Metis to enter into treaty in honour of collective land rights, Canada forced individual Metis to surrender their land rights in exchange for individual parcels of land or money. The result was the systematic loss of Metis land with Metis being left just 1 percent of land scrip in Saskatchewan while speculators and main banks in Canada ended up with 90 percent of money scrip.⁴

⁴ Muzyka, K. (2019, April 25). *What's Métis scrip? North America's 'largest land swindle,' says Indigenous lawyer.* CBC.

- **1885** - Northwest Resistance - Metis and First Nations peoples defended their sovereignty by resisting increasing British encroachment in areas of Alberta and Saskatchewan.
- **1900-1960** - Road Allowance Era - Following the resistances and systematic loss of lands due to the scrip system, many Metis (Halfbreeds) were left extremely impoverished and landless. Many Metis formed communities on Crown lands, lands they once safeguarded, leaving them vulnerable to further violence.
- **1923** - Williams Treaty treaty between seven First Nations in southern and central Ontario and British Canada. The treaties turned into land surrenders, with many First Nations not consenting to the surrenders. Much of the land in the upper Ottawa River and Muskoka regions were not surrendered and the territories remain unceded.
- **1938** - Metis Population Betterment Act - An Act established in the Alberta Legislature created a committee of Metis and government officials to allocate lands to the Metis. This followed decades of political activism among displaced and landless Metis in Alberta, and eventually, twelve settlements were set aside for the Metis. The Alberta government later rescinded four of those settlements. The remaining eight Metis settlements form the only constitutionally protected Metis land base in Canada.
- **1960-present day** - Child Welfare System - The systematic removal of Indigenous children through the child welfare system was also linked to the Indian Residential School system. In 1967, George Caldwell prepared a report for the Department of Indian Affairs finding that 80 percent of residential school students were placed in the schools for reasons related to the “welfare needs” of the family. The report found that there was no evidence of preventative or rehabilitative services operating to support the family. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission found that the ongoing removal of children into the child welfare system is a legacy of the residential school system.
- **1973** - Calder et al. v. Attorney-General of British Columbia - although the lower courts ruled against Nisga’a, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that Indigenous title to the land pre-dated the Royal Proclamation of 1763.
- **1982** - Constitution Act of 1982 - the Canadian Constitution was amended to achieve full independence of Canada. Although the Canadian government did not initially plan to include Aboriginal rights extensively within the constitution, significant political activism among Indigenous leaders led to the inclusion of

Section 35. This section recognizes and affirms the existing Aboriginal and treaty rights of First Nations, Metis and Inuit. While Section 35 is a great victory, the acknowledgement of Indigenous governance and law is still not honoured.

- **1989** - Metis Settlement Accord - A framework for land and self-governance adopted by the Federation of Metis Settlements, now known as the Metis Settlements General Council.
- **1999** - Marshall Decision - The Supreme Court recognized and affirmed the Mi'kmaw and Maliseet treaty right to hunt, fish, and gather in keeping with the Peace and Friendship Treaties. The court added that Mi'kmaw and Maliseet persons could exercise their right in pursuit of a "moderate livelihood."
- **2016** - Daniel's Decision - The Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the federal government has a fiduciary duty to Metis and Non-Status First Nations.
- **2016** - 2016 CHRT 16 - The Canadian Human Rights Tribunal finds that Canada is racially discriminating against 165,000 First Nations children and their families by providing flawed and inequitable child welfare services and failing to implement Jordan's Principle to ensure equitable access to government services.
- **2018** - Algonquin communities begin to draw attention to the decline in the moose population within the unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabeg and ask the Quebec government to place a moratorium on moose sport hunting. Moose is a source of food, clothing and wellbeing for Algonquin people.
- **2018** - TransMountain Pipeline purchased - The Canadian government, under the leadership of the Liberal party, purchased the TransMountain pipeline and related infrastructure for \$4.5 billion. The approved expansion of the pipeline goes through the unceded territory of the Secwepemc people. Land and water defenders of the Secwepemc people continue to assert their sovereign jurisdiction over their territory through Tiny House Warriors, who have set up camps preventing the TransMountain expansion from proceeding. The proposed pipeline expansion will transport 890,000 barrels of crude oil per day and is a major threat to the lands and waters it traverses and the global climate. Furthermore, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls found that worker camps, also called "man camps," composed of

hundreds of transient pipeline workers, pose a serious danger to Indigenous women, girls and Two-Spirit peoples.⁵

- **2020** - Housing developers continue building within the Haldimand tract without the proper and informed consent of the Haudenosaunee in Six Nations.
- **2020** - Mi'kmaw begin using their affirmed treaty right to harvest lobster. Settler fishers and companies begin attacking Mi'kmaw fishers and burning down cars and buildings in retaliation. Many settlers feel that Mi'kmaw fishers do not have the right to harvest out of the fishing season.⁶

“The treaties between Canada and us don’t say that we own nothing and Canada owns everything; in fact, they imply the opposite: Canada gets to be Canada by meeting its treaty obligations. That is, you get to be here, at our good grace and our good will, not the other way around”

- Lee Maracle

Contemporary Colonization and Ongoing Injustices:

Despite centuries of legislation, laws, and agreements, Canadian rule seems only to benefit a specific group of people, which does not include Indigenous peoples. The Canadian government will often ignore the very laws it has created, even when Indigenous peoples use those colonial laws and the judicial system to safeguard their rights and seek justice. This continued disregard for Indigenous rights, recognized and affirmed through treaties, means that Indigenous peoples and communities continue to face injustices and violence. Understanding Canada’s full history, including the injustices Indigenous peoples have experienced, allows us to better understand the contemporary colonization, injustices, and violence that Indigenous peoples face today.

⁵ Edwards, Kyle. (2019, June 3). *MMIWG’s findings on ‘man camps’ are a good place for the government to get started*. Maclean’s. <https://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/mmiwgs-findings-on-man-camps-are-a-good-place-for-government-to-get-started/>

⁶ Googoo, Maureen. (2020, October 14). *Angry mob trap Mi'kmaw fishermen at a lobster pound in southwestern Nova Scotia*. The Coast. <https://www.thecoast.ca/halifax/angry-mob-trap-mikmaw-fishermen-at-a-lobster-pound-in-southwestern-nova-scotia/Content?oid=25000954>

Not only have Canadians forgotten and been purposely misled from the original intentions and agreements their ancestors made with Indigenous peoples, but Canadians have also participated in the cultural and race-based genocide of Indigenous peoples through systemic racism. Any genocide is genocide, and Indigenous peoples have been severely harmed and abused by systemic racist policies and structures within Canadian society.⁷ Systemic racism kills and has killed Indigenous peoples through police brutality, the health care system, the child welfare system, the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirit Peoples, and an array of mental health crises that Indigenous communities bear the burden to address.

The Legacy of Injustice

Very early into its colonial project, Canada began asserting its domination in the lands and waters, as well as Indigenous families and communities. One way Canada ensured its authority was to systematically remove Indigenous peoples from the lands and waters they had safeguarded for over 14,000 years and in complete disregard of the treaties that affirmed Indigenous rights to their land. For example, starting in the late-19th century on the plains, Canada enacted a policy of forced starvation meant to induce First Nations compliance into the reservation system. Canada also enacted the systemic removal of Indigenous children from their families and communities throughout the country. Indigenous children and youth have always been a target for colonial violence as Canada determined that the best way to assimilate Indigenous peoples into the Canadian colonial state was through the removal of children from loving families and communities into colonial institutions. The Indian Residential School system is one such institution. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) found that the Indian Residential School system was an integral part of Canada's policy of cultural genocide. As the TRC points out in its summary, if every Indigenous person were assimilated into the wider settler Canadian society, there would be no treaties and no Indigenous rights, and the Canadian government would have gained control over Indigenous lands and waters.⁸

⁷ The Truth and Reconciliation Commission found that the Indian Residential School system was an integral part of Canada's policy of cultural genocide. The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls found that the settler colonial violence experienced by Indigenous peoples, especially Indigenous women, girls and Two-Spirit peoples, amounts to race-based genocide.

⁸ The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*.

Despite the last residential school closing in 1996 and the issuing of an official apology for the Indian Residential School system by then-Prime Minister Stephen Harper in 2008, Indigenous children continue to be removed from their homes and families. The TRC identified the ongoing overrepresentation of Indigenous children and youth within the child welfare system as a legacy of the residential school system.⁹ From the mid-19th century to the present, it is clear that Indigenous children and youth continue to be the target of systematic removal from their traditional stewardship of their lands and waters, from their families and communities, and from their cultures, languages and ways of living. This ongoing removal indicates a continued disregard for treaties, the foundation of Canada, and disregard for Indigenous rights. It also profoundly affects Indigenous children and youth who experience severe mental illnesses, high suicide rates and addictions. The TRC clearly links the systemic removal of Indigenous children, be it through the residential school system or its legacy in the child welfare system, to these dire wellbeing indicators.¹⁰ In other words, the wellbeing crisis that Indigenous children and youth continue to experience is the result of historical and ongoing colonization. It is not an Indigenous issue.

Education, Media and Research

Ongoing settler Canadian ignorance of treaties and abdication of responsibilities is, in large part, fueled and aided by Canadian media and the education system. Several generations of Canadians have been taught that Indigenous peoples are “savages,” “dirty,” and violent. As youth participants indicated, this kind of discrimination is still prevalent. Canadians are not taught about how their ancestors arrived in North America, nor are they taught about the treaties or agreements made so that they can live on these lands. Any attempt to correct the education system becomes the burden of Indigenous peoples to carry instead of any accountability from the education system itself. TRC Call to Action 62 calls on all levels of governments, in consultation with Survivors and Indigenous peoples, “to make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties and Indigenous peoples’ historical and contemporary contributions to Canada, a mandatory education requirement for Kindergarten to Grade 12 students.”¹¹

⁹ The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). *Canada’s Residential Schools: The Legacy*.

¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹ The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). *Calls to Action*.

Despite this call, provinces and territories have not made this curriculum mandatory and have not applied it extensively in schools.

In the media, Indigenous peoples are often labelled as troublemakers, or worse, terrorists. Indeed, these media labels and tropes are rooted in old stereotypes of Indigenous peoples rather than reality.¹² This is often due to the media failing to grasp the deep roots of colonization that led to a particularly newsworthy moment, like the Mi'kmaw fisheries or Tiny House Warriors. As many participants indicated, the media often fails to understand nor consider how or why Indigenous peoples are organizing and how it is rooted deeply in history. This creates the idea that this organizing is an “Indigenous issue” when, in reality, it is an issue that is the responsibility of all Canadians. These are not Indigenous issues; they are colonization issues. As many youth participants indicated, one of the impacts of colonization is that Canadian society grows less concerned and compassionate towards the living world, including lands and waters. This makes it challenging for Indigenous youth to exercise their sovereignties and traditional guardianship of their lands and waters.

Youth participants also discussed how the research often frames conversations about Indigenous peoples within a victim-based approach rather than a solutions-based approach. Time and resources are spent time and time again to identify the issues in Indigenous communities, centring on pain and harms rather than uplifting communities.¹³ These studies create and further the negative stereotypes carried by settlers and often become internalized by Indigenous peoples themselves. These stereotypes keep Indigenous peoples suppressed and in a state of dependency, rather than asserting inherent given rights of self-determination.

Terrorism and Violence Towards Indigenous Peoples

The most recent example of terrorism and violence by Canadians towards Indigenous peoples is the tense situation in Mi'kmagi territory. The Mi'kmaw Nation are asserting their inherent rights to fish lobster and feed their families in their home territory of

¹² The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). *Canada's Residential Schools: Reconciliation*.

¹³ Indigenous Youth Voices & First Nations Child & Family Caring Society. (2019). *Indigenous Youth Voices: A Way Forward in Conducting Research With and by Indigenous Youth*. First Nations Child & Family Caring Society.
https://fncaringsociety.com/sites/default/files/indigenous_youth_voices_a_way_forward_in_conducting_research_with_and_by_indigenous_youth_0.pdf

Mi'kmagi. The right for Mi'kmaw people to fish in Mi'kmagi has been recognized and affirmed in the Peace and Friendship Treaties of 1760-61, then was further protected under Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution in 1982. Most recently, this right was affirmed in the Marshall Decision of 1999. In the past, there have been many acts of violence from settler commercial fishers towards Mi'kmaw fishers who have been exercising their rights. Most recently, in Nova Scotia, Mi'kmaw fishers who have been exercising their right to fish lobster for a moderate livelihood have been terrorized by settler fishers who have long been opposed to Mi'kmaw "special rights."

It is clear that these settler fishers do not understand that their right to fish is affirmed by the very treaty they are opposing. As stipulated in the treaty, the Mi'kmaw agreed to share their resources with settler peoples, not the other way around. In response to the Mi'kmaw's willingness to share, a Mi'kmaw boat and van have been burned, Mi'kmaw boats have been chased and rammed at sea, lobster traps have been cut and destroyed, Sipekne'katik First Nation Chief Mike Sack was assaulted, and two Mi'kmaw men were threatened by a mob at their lobster pound if they did not forfeit their catch. Once the two men did forfeit their catch, the lobsters were destroyed by settler fishers with chemicals. This act completely invalidates the argument that Mi'kmaw lobster fishing is a threat to conservation. In fact, Mi'kmaw fishers only fish 350 traps per day, whereas settler fishers are fishing over 350,000 traps per day.¹⁴ This makes it clear that this confrontation is not over conservation, but arguably to maintain a white-only monopoly on all Mi'kmaw lands and resources. NDP leader Jagmeet Singh and Senator Murray Sinclair have condemned these acts of violence towards the Mi'kmaw as terrorism while Minister of Indigenous Services Canada Mark Miller condemned the violence.¹⁵

Canada Refusing to Implement Their Own Laws

Ironically, the majority of the violence and harm toward Indigenous peoples is entirely preventable and avoidable. As mentioned above, there are guidelines, laws and agreements that were created between the British Crown, Canada and Indigenous

¹⁴ Edwards, D. (2020, September 25). *'Not a conservation concern': N.S. Mi'kmaq won't deplete lobster stock, says expert*. CTV News. <https://atlantic.ctvnews.ca/not-a-conservation-concern-n-s-mi-kmaq-won-t-deplete-lobster-stock-says-expert-1.5120296>

¹⁵ Tunney, C. (2020, October 19). *Minister says Mi'kmaw fishermen in Nova Scotia being 'let down' by police in wake of weekend blaze*. CBC. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/emergency-debate-lobster-fishery-dispute-ministers-1.5767602>

peoples since the arrival of Europeans. These agreements and treaties guide us on how to live and work together in respectful ways. Over the course of the last 150 years, Indigenous peoples and allies have also written report after report on how to improve the relationships.¹⁶ Some of these reports include:

- Dr. Peter Henderson Bryce's report to the Department of Indian Affairs on the conditions of residential schools and the high rate of preventable student deaths. Dr. Bryce later published this report in 1922 in *The Story of a National Crime*.
- The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples in 1996
- The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Reports and Calls to Action in 2015
- The Roadmap on the Implementation of TRC Call to Action 66 in 2018
- The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls' Reports and Calls for Justice in 2019

There have also been multiple Supreme Court decisions, and legal court cases won that have affirmed Indigenous rights and found that Canada is discriminating against Indigenous peoples. However, Canada is slow to respond or take action on recommendations or calls to action issued by Indigenous peoples throughout the years. In some cases, legal decisions date back over thirty years, while the government has dragged their feet on taking action. In the majority of instances, these reports are shelved, and the recommendations are never enacted. In the meantime, the lives of Indigenous people continue to be impacted by the lack of action and chronic inaction leading to further harms transformed over generations.

Indigenous youth in the session indicated that more research and reports are not necessary. Instead, the Canadian government should review and implement existing treaties, laws and agreements. This is key to improving the wellbeing of Indigenous peoples.

¹⁶ First Nations Child & Family Caring Society. (n.d.). *History of Inequity*. <https://fncaringsociety.com/history-inequity>

Systemic Racism is Fatal

While Canada must take steps to honour and restore original agreements and begin taking action on reports and recommendations from Indigenous peoples to improve broken relationships, a large part of the problem is the systemic racism that is woven in Canada's foundations. Systemic racism is lethal and fatal for Indigenous peoples. Examples of systemic racism include the Indian Residential School system, the 60's Scoop. While Canada has apologized and compensated survivors for their traumas, it has failed to address the root systemic issues that permitted policies like residential schools and the 60's Scoop to proliferate. Instead, Canada has allowed systemic racism to continue to impact the lives of Indigenous peoples and, in some cases, even kill Indigenous peoples.

Below is a list of troubling areas of systemic racism that must be addressed for the wellbeing of Indigenous peoples:

Racism within the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and other Police Forces

The systemic racism present within all forms of policing in Canada has adverse and often fatal effects on Indigenous peoples in Canada. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP, initially the North-West Mounted Police) was created in 1873 to intimidate, displace and subsequently control Indigenous peoples and communities and their resources. The RCMP participated in the forced starvation of Indigenous peoples in the Prairies, the relocation of Treaty First Nations onto reserves, the enforcement of the pass system, and the removal of Indigenous children from their families into residential schools and later the child welfare system. Youth participants indicated that they see the RCMP as a branch of the Canadian government and, therefore, also responsible for upholding the honour of the treaties. Instead, the RCMP is used to respond to Indigenous peoples resisting ongoing colonization in their territories.¹⁷

A recent example of this was seen in Wet'suwet'en territory. The Wet'suwet'en have been opposing a proposed pipeline by Coastal Gaslink that would run through their ancestral, unceded territory. The RCMP has been acting as a paramilitary force for the non-governmental project, once again displacing and arresting Indigenous land defenders in their own territory. In February 2020, RCMP held a pre-dawn raid of the

¹⁷ Gerster, J. (2019, June 15). *The RCMP was created to control Indigenous people. Can that relationship be reset?* CTV. <https://globalnews.ca/news/5381480/rcmp-indigenous-relationship/>

blockade and their healing lodge, arresting six land defenders, as well as obstructing the rights of multiple journalists in the process by not allowing them access. Videos show excessive amounts of officers, equipment and guns used to arrest peaceful, unarmed land defenders. In total, the RCMP has spent more than \$13 million policing the Wet'suwet'en.¹⁸

The systemic racism within Canadian policing extends beyond the RCMP into other police forces. Much like the RCMP, other police forces throughout Canada were created to protect and serve the colonial state, rather than upholding treaty obligations. This meant and continues to mean the attempted erasure of Indigenous peoples through the use of police brutality.¹⁹ Since 2017, Indigenous people in Canada are ten times more likely to die by police violence than white Canadians. Of the 66 people that were shot and killed by police since 2017, 25 were Indigenous.²⁰ Here are some of the names we know of: Eisha Hudson, Jason Collins, Stewart Andrews, Greg Ritchie, Chantal Moore, Regis Korchinski-Paquet, Randy Cochrane, Sean Thompson, Chad Williams, Josephine Pelletier, Brydon Whitstone, Rodi Levy, Abraham Natanine.

In April 2020, Winnipeg police shot and killed three Indigenous people, all within ten days of each other.²¹ In Winnipeg, Indigenous people represent, on average, 10.6 percent of the population but account for nearly two-thirds of the victims of death by the hands of police.²²

¹⁸ Bellrichard, C. (2020, October 21). *RCMP spent more than \$13M on policing Coastal GasLink conflict on Wet'suwet'en territory*. CBC. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/rcmp-wetsuweten-pipeline-policing-costs-1.5769555>

¹⁹ Stelkia, K. (2020, July 15). *Police Brutality In Canada: A Symptom Of Structural Racism And Colonial Violence*. Yellowhead Institute. <https://yellowheadinstitute.org/2020/07/15/police-brutality-in-canada-a-symptom-of-structural-racism-and-colonial-violence/>

²⁰ Flanagan, Ryan. (2020, June 19). *Why are Indigenous people in Canada so much more likely to be shot and killed by police?* CTV. <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/why-are-indigenous-people-in-canada-so-much-more-likely-to-be-shot-and-killed-by-police-1.4989864>

²¹ Morin, B. (2020, June 11). *As the RCMP deny systemic racism, here's the real history*. The Star. <https://www.thestar.com/opinion/contributors/2020/06/11/rcmp-deputy-commissioners-words-on-racism-fly-in-face-of-150-years-of-history-and-pain-for-indigenous-peoples.html>

²² Marcoux, J. & and Katie Nicholson, K. (2017). *Deadly force: Fatal encounters with police in Canada: 2000-2017*. CBC. <https://newsinteractives.cbc.ca/longform-custom/deadly-force>

In addition to the threat of police violence, Indigenous peoples are also over-represented in the jail system. While Indigenous peoples make up only 5% of the Canadian population, the total of Indigenous people incarcerated in federal prison surpassed 30% in 2020. This is an increase since 2016. The total percentage of Indigenous women incarcerated in federal prisons is 42%. These percentages do not include provincial incarceration rates; in some provinces the percentages are much higher.²³

While all of the facts clearly expose systemic racism within the policing and the criminal systems in Canada, government representatives and the commissioner and deputy commissioner of the RCMP continue to deny that there is a problem. Indeed, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls found that “the RCMP have not proven to Canada that they are capable of holding themselves to account.”²⁴ If those in power cannot accept the truth of the injustices that Indigenous and racialized people face at the hands of police and RCMP, then the fatal issue of systemic racism cannot be addressed. As the youth participants pointed out, this means that their organizing efforts will continue to be overpoliced and are far more likely to experience police brutality.

Racism within Policy Making

Indigenous nations have complex laws that govern their peoples and their territories in a way that ensures the growth and flourishing of life for generations. These systems of governance have been undermined at every turn by the Canadian colonial state. In 1982, after significant Indigenous-led campaigns and demonstrations, section 35 of the Constitutional Act was made to recognize and affirm Aboriginal rights. While the Act recognizes Aboriginal rights, it does not determine what those rights exactly are.

Four First Minister’s Conferences on Aboriginal Rights were held between 1983 and 1987 to further define the rights of Indigenous peoples as set out in Section 35 of the Constitution. Some amendments were made, including adding land claim agreements

²³ Cecco, L. (2020, January 22). ‘National travesty’: report shows one third of Canada’s prisoners are Indigenous. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jan/22/one-third-canada-prisoners-indigenous-report>

²⁴ National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. (2019). *Reclaiming Place and Power: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*. <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/>

as treaties and guaranteeing gender equality. Nevertheless, no agreement was made on the affirmation of Indigenous peoples rights to land or self-governance.²⁵ Indigenous nations argued that the right of self-government was an inherent right already included in section 35. This notion was completely overlooked by government officials who thought it was preposterous to have Indigenous peoples governing themselves. The dominant view of government officials was that self-government was a delegated right that depended on each Indigenous nation reaching an agreement with the Canadian government.

These events may have very well been the closest Indigenous people have got to being recognized by the government as sovereign peoples. Had these meetings not been infiltrated with racism and contempt, Indigenous peoples may be in a position of wellbeing, and so would Canada as a whole.

Systemic racism within policymaking plays out in governments disregarding Indigenous knowledge and science of their ancestral lands. As youth participants indicated, a prominent example of this is the Quebec government continuing to allow moose sport hunting despite Algonquin communities raising the alarm of a steady decline in moose populations. In an effort to safeguard the land and moose populations, Algonquin communities began to enforce its own moratorium on moose hunting in September 2020 by enacting road blockades preventing hunters from accessing hunting grounds. The lack of understanding and respect for Algonquin knowledge puts Algonquin communities at risk of harm. Youth participants indicated that they are facing increased police presence at the road blockades. Furthermore, Algonquin communities rely on moose for food and livelihood. Without access to a healthy moose population, Algonquins have indicated that their own wellbeing will suffer.²⁶

Continued systemic racism within government policy moves decision-making further away from the original agreements and laws made between Indigenous peoples and the Crown and Canada and has positioned the RCMP and police bodies to protect the interest of companies and businesses first. This further breaks the treaties and

²⁵ Diabo, R. (2017, September 17). *When moving past the Indian Act means something worse*. Policy Options. <https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/september-2017/when-moving-past-the-indian-act-means-something-worse/>

²⁶ Deer, K. (2020, September 14). *Algonquin community enforces its own moratorium on moose hunting in Quebec wildlife reserve*. CBC. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/algonquin-barriere-lake-moose-moratorium-1.5723545>

agreements originally made and continues to threaten the livelihood and wellbeing of Indigenous communities.

Racism within the Healthcare System

Indigenous peoples continue to experience systemic racism within the healthcare system. Colonialism and its ongoing impact on Indigenous communities have affected health outcomes in many different areas, including mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual health. This can be seen through the life expectancy of Indigenous peoples in comparison to the Canadian average. The life expectancy for Indigenous men is about 70.3 years compared to 79 years for other Canadian men. Life expectancy for Indigenous women is about 77 years compared to 83 years for other Canadian women.²⁷

A report by the College of Family Physicians of Canada highlights four main areas in which systemic racism in Canada affects Indigenous health. First, colonial policies such as mandatory residential schools have had severe impacts on survivors' health and their family members who experience the intergenerational effects. Secondly, limited access to healthy food choices due to systemic poverty and a lack of access to lands to eat traditional foods have severely affected Indigenous communities. Furthermore, the systemic displacement of Indigenous peoples has resulted in inadequate housing and living conditions on reserve and cities. Lastly, interpersonal racism towards Indigenous patients within the Health Care system itself is so prevalent that many Indigenous people have to contemplate seeking care.²⁸

Recent examples of the lethal systemic racism found within the healthcare system are found with the awful deaths of Joyce Echaquan and Georges-Herve Awashish within the span of one month. Both were Indigenous people who experienced racism at the hands of healthcare workers in hospitals before their deaths. In Joyce's case,

²⁷ Gunn, B. (2016). *Ignored to Death: Systemic Racism in the Canadian Healthcare System*. (Submission to EMRIP the Study on Health, Robson Hall Faculty of Law, University of Manitoba). <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/IPeoples/EMRIP/Health/UniversityManitoba.pdf>

²⁸ Indigenous Health Working Group of the College of Family Physicians of Canada and Indigenous Physicians Association of Canada. (2016). *Health and Health Care Implications of Systemic Racism on Indigenous Peoples in Canada*. The College of Family Physicians of Canada. https://portal.cfpc.ca/ResourcesDocs/uploadedFiles/Resources/_PDFs/SystemicRacism_ENG.pdf

Quebecois nurses uttered racial insults and ignored Joyce's pleas for help.²⁹ This comes on the heels of the Viens Commission, which found that it is "impossible to deny" Indigenous people in Quebec are victims of systemic discrimination in accessing public services.³⁰

Racism within the Child Welfare System

Like the residential school system, the child welfare system is based on colonial policies to assimilate Indigenous children into Canadian society. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission found that the child welfare system is a legacy, an extension of the residential school system.³¹ The 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) found that as the Canadian government phased out residential schools, it began expanding its role in the funding of social welfare services. RCAP found that the Canadian government's willingness to fund child-in-care costs, along with the resistance to fund preventative services, were major factors in the permanent removal of Indigenous children from their families and communities.³²

More than forty years before residential schools closed, a new section in the *Indian Act* (section 88) made way for provincial and territorial laws to be applied to First Nations people living on reserve.³³ This gave provincial welfare authorities the authority to apprehend large numbers of Indigenous children from their homes and communities. Later known as the 60's Scoop, this mass apprehension placed Indigenous children in residential schools or adopted Indigenous children out to non-Indigenous families. In

²⁹ Barrera, J. (2020, October 1). *Criminal investigation needed into death of Joyce Echaquan, say 2 legal experts*. CBC. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/joyce-echaquan-death-lawyers-investigations-1.5745587>

³⁰ Shingler, B. & Hinkson, K. (2019, September 30). *Quebec should apologize for systemic discrimination in treatment of Indigenous people, Viens report says*. CBC. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/quebec-treatment-indigenous-viens-commission-report-1.5297888>

³¹ The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). *Canada's Residential Schools: The Legacy*.

³² Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. (1996). *Volume 3: Gathering Strength*. <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/aboriginal-heritage/royal-commission-aboriginal-peoples/Pages/final-report.aspx>

³³ National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health. (2017) *Child, Youth and Family Health: Indigenous Children and the Child Welfare System in Canada*. <https://www.nccih.ca/docs/health/FS-ChildWelfareCanada-EN.pdf>

1967, it was found that 80 percent of residential school students were placed in the schools for reasons related to the “welfare needs” of the family and that there was no evidence of preventative services operating to support the family.³⁴ In 1985, the Review Committee on Indian and Metis Adoption and Placements found that virtually all the children placed for adoption outside the province of Manitoba were First Nations or Metis, which the report found amounted to cultural genocide.³⁵

This system of apprehension and its goals remain today, effectively severing the connection that Indigenous children have with their families and communities at high rates. In Manitoba, 10,000 of the 11,000 children in care are Indigenous, while nationally, Indigenous children account for nearly half of the children in foster care. This is despite Indigenous children making up just 7 percent of the overall Canadian population.³⁶ In 2016, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (the Tribunal) found that the Canadian government is racially discriminating against 165,000 First Nations children and their families by providing flawed and inequitable child welfare services and failing to implement Jordan’s Principle to ensure equitable access to government services. The Tribunal found that the Canadian government-funded on-reserve child welfare in ways that incentivized the removal of First Nations children from their families and communities.³⁷

Despite the generations of children growing up outside their homes and communities, Canada continues its “willful and reckless” discrimination in ways that unnecessarily separates First Nations children from their families and contributes to the deaths of some First Nations children.³⁸ Many of the youth participants expressed that Indigenous

³⁴ Caldwell, George. (1967). *Indian Residential Schools: A research study of the child care programs of nine residential schools in Saskatchewan*. Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Canada. https://fncaringsociety.com/sites/default/files/indian_residential_schools_george_caldwell.pdf

³⁵ Review Committee on Indian and Metis Adoptions and Placements. (1985). *No Quiet Place*. Manitoba Ministry of Community Services. <https://legislative.mb.ca/catalogue/libraries.coop/eg/opac/record/107410115>

³⁶ Kassam, A. (2017, November 4). *The Ratio of Indigenous children in Canada welfare system is ‘humanitarian crisis.’* The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/nov/04/indigenous-children-canada-welfare-system-humanitarian-crisis>

³⁷ Canadian Human Rights Tribunal. 2016 CHRT 2. <https://decisions.chrt-tcdp.gc.ca/chrt-tcdp/decisions/en/item/127700/index.do>

³⁸ Canadian Human Rights Tribunal. 2019 CHRT 39. <https://decisions.chrt-tcdp.gc.ca/chrt-tcdp/decisions/en/item/453537/index.do>

sovereignties can only be truly exercised when our children and young people have the opportunity to grow up safely at home with their families, in connection with their culture and languages, and feeling loved by their community.

Indigenous Sovereignty Being Practiced

While the Canadian and provincial/territorial governments have yet to acknowledge systemic racism or ongoing colonization, many Indigenous communities are finding ways to practice their inherent rights and sovereignty or are finding ways to revitalize cultural traditions and languages.

Many youth participants felt that the Canadian government would never choose to “give back” Indigenous sovereignty. Nevertheless, Indigenous communities will not wait on the benevolence or goodwill of the government to practice what many communities see as an inherent right to practice their Indigenous sovereignties. There are hundreds of reports and solutions written to Canada on how to improve relations, work towards reconciliation, and repair the injustices that continue to happen. Yet Canada continues to ignore or disregard these reports, an approach that Canada has employed for well over 100 years.

Youth participants made clear that Indigenous sovereignty has in the lands currently known as North America for thousands of years, and as such, Indigenous nations do not need to ask the Canadian government for permission to exercise their inherent rights to sovereignty. Indeed, as youth participants pointed out, the treaties recognize and affirm this.

During the session, it became clear just how important it is to celebrate Indigenous peoples and communities in all of our diversity. Indigenous peoples are not a monolith; there are hundreds of different communities, linguistic groups and cultural groups. This means that sovereignty will be defined and practiced differently by each community. Many of the youth participants spoke about the importance of sovereignty being inclusive, sustainable, fluid and ever-adapting for each community.

For some communities, sovereignty can look like protecting and harvesting their traditional source of livelihood. For other communities, it can mean reclaiming and defending land or restoring Indigenous economies and trade routes. Others may determine that sovereignty means relearning traditional languages, relearning cultural practices and ceremonies. All Indigenous sovereignty deserves to be honoured and supported by both Indigenous peoples and Canadians.

We heard from several Indigenous youth and Indigenous groups about how they are practicing Indigenous sovereignty:

Algonquin Moose Moratorium

Victoria Marchand spoke about the Moose Moratorium, an Algonquin (Anishinaabe) led initiative to protect the declining moose population in their traditional and unceded homelands. For the past several years, the Algonquins of Barriere Lake have seen the moose population rapidly declining, yet non-Indigenous hunters continue to hunt for sport. Algonquins use moose as a source of sustenance, a way to feed their families; every part of the moose is utilized, and nothing goes to waste. In partnership with surrounding Algonquin communities, the Algonquins of Barriere Lake sought to protect the moose population by raising awareness and attempting to partner with the provincial government to establish a policy that would protect the moose for future generations.

Algonquin territory has never been ceded nor surrendered, and Algonquin people have never signed a treaty. Algonquin territory, which includes Ottawa, is occupied territory in the eyes of Algonquin people. The Algonquin right to sovereignty and right to stand up for their livelihood is couched in the fact that Algonquin have never given up their inherent rights to the land.

The Quebec government conducted an aerial survey of the park, 'experts' deemed that the moose population was not at risk and no further hunting restrictions would need to be applied. The Algonquin people have stewarded their homelands for hundreds of years, and over that time have developed an acute awareness of the balance of the environment. Algonquin Anishinaabeg are the experts on the moose. The Quebec government ignored Algonquin expertise and thus the Algonquin began to enforce a moratorium on moose hunting as a way to resist the decline of the moose.

“What we put on the table is our lives”

- Victoria Marchand, Algonquin

The Moose Moratorium (which has gained publicity in the 2020 hunting season, though it started three years ago) is a direct exercise of Anishnaabe sovereignty, including their right to jurisdiction over their lands. The true governance of Algonquin people, the communities themselves, have come together to enforce their duties and responsibilities to protect the moose population. Several checkpoints have been set up to prevent non-Indigenous moose sport hunters from accessing the Verendrye park, although hunting associations are aiding hunters to access the park to hunt. So far,

there have been four confirmed cases where non-Indigenous hunters have left the body of the moose to rot while they took the heads as trophies. As Victoria stated, Algonquin view this as an abuse to the moose, as well as an injustice to the Algonquin people who rely on the moose to live healthy lives. The moose is a fundamental part of the Algonquin diet, keeping with longstanding cultural traditions and due to the remote nature of many Algonquin communities from western-style grocery stores. Algonquin peoples rely on the moose for culture and sustenance, and the wellbeing of Algonquin communities and families are tied to the wellbeing of the moose. The Moose Moratorium will remain until the moose population returns to a healthy level and the Algonquin people have made it clear that they do not need government authority to exercise their inherent right to steward the land.

Mi'kmaw Fishing Rights

On September 17, 2020, the Sipekne'katik First Nation launched their own self-regulated lobster fishery, the first of its kind in Nova Scotia. As recognized and affirmed in the Peace and Friendship Treaties, the Mi'kmaq have a government recognized and affirmed right to hunt, fish, and harvest in pursuit of a moderate livelihood. Despite threats and acts of violence, the Mi'kmaw continue to assert their sovereignty by fishing for their ancestral food sources such as lobster. The Mi'kmaw remain governing their land and waters in accordance with their own laws as sovereign people whose jurisdiction over Mi'kmagi has never been surrendered or extinguished. The Mi'kmaw are now calling on other Indigenous nations to stand in solidarity with them while under attack from settler-commercial fishers, while RCMP remains idle.

The Arctic Refuge

Nigit'stil Norbert spoke about the ways that Gwitchin communities exercise their sovereignty. Gwitchin communities throughout the Northwest Territories, Yukon and Alaska assemble yearly to identify issues that need to be addressed as a nation and establish priorities moving forward. It is through this traditional governance that Gwitchen people are not only keeping a governance custom alive, but it has also led to representation in both Washington and Ottawa, further self-governance and reclamation of Gwitchin voices. Night'stil indicated throughout her talk that three major components link directly to Indigenous sovereignty; engagement, education and, most importantly, land. The Gwitchen employ all three of these components throughout their traditional governance. This ensures that the Gwitchin nation remains resolute, strong and retains the ability to exercise their inherent sovereignty and freedom.

Tiny House Warriors

Kakeka Thundersky spoke about the work they are doing with the Tiny House Warrior. The Tiny House Warriors are a group of Secwepemc land and water defenders who are asserting Secwepemc law and jurisdiction to block the TransMountain Expansion Pipeline (TMX). The original TMX pipeline is being expanded threefold to transport 890,000 barrels of crude oil per day from Edmonton, Alberta, to Burnaby, British Columbia, where it will be shipped across the Pacific Ocean to international markets.

The Tiny House Warriors have firmly stated that they will not consent to the pipeline being built on Secwepemc land, which includes 50 percent of the proposed pipeline route. Secwepemc land has never been ceded by treaty; therefore, the jurisdiction of the people stands, who are the rightful title-holders of the land. After Kinder Morgan backed out of the pipeline's construction, perhaps in part due to the Tiny House Warrior's resistance and national support, the Canadian government under the leadership of Justin Trudeau and the Liberal party, bought the pipeline for \$4.6 billion.

Worker camps, also called "man camps," are known to be extremely dangerous for Indigenous women and girls (who are already 12 times more likely to go missing or murdered than the national average) who live nearby them.³⁹ One of the multiple Tiny House camps is set up near Blue River, British Columbia, the proposed site of a thousand-person "man camp" where transient pipeline workers would be housed. With protecting the land, the waters, and the women and girls in their minds and hearts, the Tiny House Warriors are fearlessly resisting the Canadian colonial forces that threaten to force a pipeline through their territory.

Nimkii Aazhibikoong

Nimkii Aazhibikoong is a land-based cultural and revitalization camp located on the traditional territory of the Anishnaabek people along the north shore of Lake Huron. Nimkii Aazhibikong Eshkiniijig is the organizing youth group. Two youth, Taryn Bobiwash and Quinn Mewasige spoke about the revitalization and sovereignty-based work they and others have done, including moose hide tanning, natural fiber weaving

³⁹ National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. (2019). *Reclaiming Place and Power: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*. <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/>

and language learning. The two talked about how the goal of Nimkii Aazhibikong Eshkiniijig is to bring Indigenous youth into traditional territories and off of reserves with the intention of youth creating a deeper connection with the lands of their ancestors.

Quinn and Taryn discussed the reason why they chose to become more involved in the youth collective is because of a sense of responsibility. As they learned more about the reserve system and Indigenous peoples being displaced from their lands and languages, they felt that it was important to play a role in reconnecting back to their lands and language for their community. They are among the younger generation revitalizing this connection, and they have dedicated themselves to recover as much as possible so people in their communities will always have those who are carrying those teachings forward into the next generation.

Nimkii Aazhibikong Eshkiniijig are asserting their sovereignty by living off the land as their ancestors did for generations. They are not waiting for colonial laws or governments to authorize their journey and learning. Instead, they are practicing their inherent right to self-governance and are building a community that will be able to speak their ancestor's language, live off the land free of the Canadian economy, and they are restoring cultural knowledge without support from colonial intrusion.

Metis Settlements

Blake Desjarlais spoke about the Metis Settlements, which form the only constitutionally protected Metis land base in Canada. The Metis Settlement General Council is the governing body for the eight Metis communities that form the first and only Metis self-government in Canada. The Metis settlements find themselves uniquely positioned in Canadian society, history, and its legal system.

After the establishment of the Metis Settlements Betterment Act in 1938 and as a result of decades of political advocacy and court battles, the Metis Settlements were able to retain more control over their lands and self-government through the Metis Settlements Accord in 1989. This is an important example of how land can be restored back to Indigenous guardianship and authority.

However, Blake indicated that due to the circumstances of the establishment of the self-governance zone, the settlements do not receive adequate financial support from neither the Alberta nor Canadian governments. This is ongoing despite the 2016 Daniel's decision, which found that Canada has a fiduciary responsibility to Metis

people. This speaks to the necessity of establishing and ensuring long-standing equity alongside self-governance.

The Metis Settlements are an excellent example for many Indigenous communities on what “land back” can look like and how Indigenous sovereignty can exist beyond Canadian law.

Calls to Action

Indigenous Youth Lead

A common belief among many Indigenous peoples is that children and youth are the closest to the Creator, bringing an untinted and untampered perspective to decision-making. The dreams, strength, and resilience of Indigenous youth cannot be overlooked. The decisions we make today will affect us in seven generations, and the youth of today have a right to be involved in decision-making that will undoubtedly affect not only them but their descendants as well.

Communities Speak for Themselves

The definition of an Indigenous community must expand beyond band councils, and other governing bodies that youth participants indicated are too closely infiltrated by colonial policies and mandates. Grassroots communities must be amplified, especially those led through ceremony, women and girls, Two-Spirit and LGBTQ+ youth, and those operating through unpaid labour. It is important to support communities in having complete autonomy over their lands, bodies and families. Those who have not been involved in the hard labour of community-building must step back and give space for those who have.

Show Up

Showing up to marches and actions, signing petitions and sharing words of support and encouragement go a long way. There are many ways Canadians can show up for Indigenous rights, and youth participants encourage all Indigenous peoples and Canadians to continue being active and loud on issues of injustice. Some more examples of how everyone can show up are: educating your family, sharing stories from the frontlines, organizing non-violent direct actions and marches, organizing fundraisers, writing letters of support, signing petitions, calling your local government officials, and boycotting harmful and racist companies and businesses.

Put Your Money Where Your Mouth Is

Leverage your privileges to support Indigenous communities. If you have the financial means to support Indigenous sovereignty, then do. Be conscious about where and who you are buying from. Support Indigenous calls to boycott certain companies who are invested in harm towards Indigenous peoples or who are making money off of cultural appropriation. For example, many restaurants have shown solidarity with the Mi'kmaq by refusing to sell lobster not caught by Mi'kmaq people. Everyone can contribute in ways that uplift Indigenous youth and communities.

Be Active in Dismantling Oppressive Systems

Both Indigenous peoples and Canadians must stand up to the injustices that Indigenous peoples are facing. We all have a responsibility, both as caring people and as treaty people, to protect the rights of Indigenous peoples. Examples include supporting

culturally-based equity for Indigenous families so that all Indigenous peoples have a fair opportunity to raise our children at home and in our communities. If you are not active in dismantling oppression, you are enabling oppression to operate.

Learn about Land Defenders and Grassroots Indigenous Groups and Support Their Calls to Action

Below is a list of some of the land defender movements mentioned in the full report but there are many others that need your support:

- Tiny House Warriors: www.tinyhousewarriors.com
- Nimkii Aazhibikong Eshkiniigjig: www.facebook.com/nimkiiyouthcollective
- Mi'kmaw Fishing Rights: www.mikmaqrights.com/negotiations/working-groups/fisheries
- Algonquin Moose Moratorium: www.facebook.com/groups/372217760398748
- Gidemt'en Yintah Access: www.yintahaccess.com/take-action-1
- Protect the Arctic Refuge: www.protectthearctic.org
- 1492 Land Back Lane: www.facebook.com/1492LandBackLane
- Assembly of Seven Generations (A7G): www.a7g.ca
- First Nations Family and Caring Society: www.fncaringsociety.com/what-you-can-do
- Metis Settlements General Council: www.msgc.ca
- Indigenous Climate Action (ICA): www.indigenousclimateaction.com

An urgent call to action from Tiny House Warriors:

The Warriors call on Indigenous people and non-Indigenous people to support their fight for sovereign recognition. Right now, Tiny House Warriors, Kanahus, Mayuk, and Snutetkwe Manuel are facing a range of charges for their land defence and are looking for your support.

For more information:

- www.tinyhousewarriors.com/2020/05/the-tmx-pipeline-will-never-be-built
- www.transmountain.com/project-overview

Develop a Network of Land Defenders

It is important to form and maintain relationships between people with the common goal of protecting the lands and waters through Indigenous sovereignty. It is essential that we share skills about best practices and safety while organizing. We must focus on uplifting each other and amplifying each other's voices. The more empowered and amplified voices, the more warriors will be defending the sacred.

Support Revitalization

Be aware of the urgency of revitalization and the fact that Indigenous peoples may lose cultural practices and languages if nothing is done. Both Indigenous peoples and Canadians should be involved in the revitalization of Indigenous cultures because everyone has something to learn. Our languages and cultures are coded with a deep respect for creation. Learn the Indigenous language of the land you live on and support language revitalization projects. If you are Canadian and living on Turtle Island, you benefit every day from the land and waters, and you benefit from the colonization of our people. It is time you gave back.

Include Northern Voices

With the geographical separation of communities in the northern regions, both between one another and to government centres, northern voices are often left out of the conversation. When we do not listen and act inclusive, we lose mass sources of knowledge and wisdom. For Indigenous sovereignty to successfully sweep across Canada, conversations must be inclusive of all voices. It is not good enough to simply invite northern individuals and communities to the table; we must also take the proactive step of bringing the table to them.

Don't Wait

Be aware of the repercussions of not living in balance with the land. Every day you don't act to support Indigenous sovereignty is damaging the land and waters. We all need to be the guardians of creation, and that day will come sooner if we all take that step to make a change.

Further Reading

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