

How do we solve

Structural Racism?

A 5 x 5 Review



Yellowhead
Institute

FEBRUARY 2020

Over the past 30 years, various **inquiries and commissions** have all **articulated the violence** that Indigenous peoples continue to face as a result of ongoing colonialism in Canada. More than **1,000 recommendations** have emerged from these initiatives, **identifying issues** related to structural racism and inequality and **providing solutions, hundreds of them**. Here, we highlight a select number of these solutions, framed in five themes.

A Review of Recommendations & Calls from 5 Reports...

1. National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Final Report (2019)
2. Truth and Reconciliation Commission Reports & Calls to Action (2015)
3. Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996)
4. Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba (1991)
5. Report of the Ipperwash Inquiry (2007)

...categorized into 5 Themes related to Structural Racism

1. Representation in Society
2. Public Education and Awareness
3. Institutional Change
4. Addressing Policing and the Justice System
5. Indigenous Self-Determination

Click here for the accompanying list of recommendations referenced in this document.

(1) Representation in Society

While not often discussed, there is evidence that Indigenous peoples are experiencing continued psychological harm when instances of anti-Indigenous racism and violence are reported in the media.

Studies **show** that when Indigenous youth are exposed to mythical, stereotypical, and otherwise negative depictions of Indigenous peoples (including news headlines that focus on poor health and well-being of Indigenous peoples), they report lower self-esteem scores.

This shows a clear link between the lack of positive Indigenous representation and decreased well-being of Indigenous peoples.

A separate but related problem is the online engagement of a racist Canadian public. Since 2015, **CBC has disabled comments on all Indigenous-related content** as these stories prompted a disproportionate number of **“vitriolic” comments that “violate the CBC’s guidelines”**.

The various inquiries and commissions of the last 30 years have maintained that positive Indigenous representation in society will not only have psychological benefits for Indigenous peoples, but can contribute to normalizing Indigenous presence and perspectives in mainstream Canadian society.



Related Recommendations

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women
and Girls Inquiry (2019)

5.10

5.12

6.1

Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry
of Manitoba (1991)

4

7

9

10

“Support Indigenous people sharing their **stories**, from their perspectives, **free of bias**, discrimination, and false assumptions, and in a **trauma-informed** and culturally sensitive way.

Call 6.1 ii., Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Inquiry (2019)

(2) Public Education and Awareness

Increased Indigenous representation in society must be accompanied by quality public education and awareness about Indigenous peoples.

Over the last 30 years, Indigenous peoples have advocated for curriculum in public schools and post-secondary education that is inclusive of Indigenous perspectives, as well a focus on the responsibilities and obligations of Canada for a just relationship with Indigenous peoples. Further, several of the hundreds of recommendations made over the years call upon public and private sectors to provide cultural competency training to their employees as an effort to learn more about the Indigenous populations they are serving, and to make these spaces more inclusive for Indigenous peoples.

All too often, the call for public education and awareness about Indigenous peoples is conceptualized as optional; an **"elective"** topic whose categorization amongst the Canadian public is not attentive to the foundational role that Indigenous Nations and peoples have in what is currently known as Canada.

In the worst cases, education and awareness about Indigenous peoples can be met with hardline commitment to ignorance, **in the case of infamous Senator Lynn Beyak**, whose recent behaviour at a mandated cultural-competency was described as "volatile" by the Indigenous facilitators of the training.



With **several provinces trailing behind** in their progress on implementing up-to-date Indigenous content in public schools, it is not exactly promising that Canadians at large in the mainstream public school system will be learning the information necessary to maintain even a basic conciliatory relationship with Indigenous peoples, let alone awareness of Indigenous perspectives and ongoing issues.

Related Recommendations

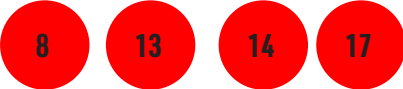
Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Inquiry (2019)



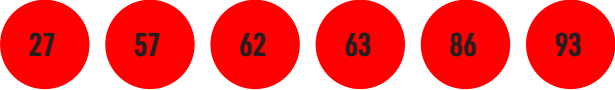
Ipperwash Inquiry (2007)



Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba (1991)



Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015)



Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996)



“We call upon all governments to **develop laws, policies, and public education campaigns **to challenge** the acceptance and normalization of violence.”**

Call 1.9 from the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Inquiry (2019)

We call upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to **repudiate concepts used to justify European sovereignty over Indigenous peoples and lands, such as the **Doctrine of Discovery** and *terra nullius*, and **to reform** those laws, government policies, and litigation strategies that continue to rely on such concepts.**

Call to Action 47, Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015)

(3) Institutional Change

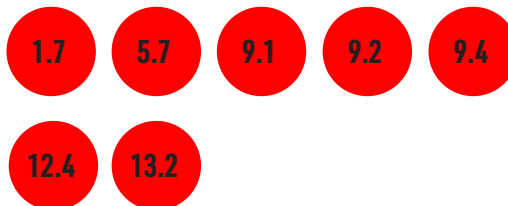
The inquiries and commissions of the past 30 years have pointed out that Canadian institutions continue to enact violent colonial practices that cause ongoing harm to Indigenous peoples.

To really address this, there needs to be concerted effort to change the structures themselves. Of the hundreds of recommendations that are made in the inquiries and commissions over the past 30 years, several propose structural changes needed to address systemic bias—from enacting Indigenous-specific processes for redress to Indigenous oversight bodies meant to prevent harm in the areas of industry, social services, health, education, policing, justice, and child welfare.

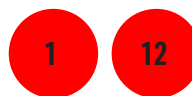


Related Recommendations

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Inquiry (2019)



Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba (1991)



Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996)



Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015)



(4) Addressing Policing and the Justice System

Each of the commissions and inquiries over the past 30 years call upon Canada to address the injustices linked to the historic and ongoing over-policing of Indigenous peoples.

Related to structural change, this requires an acknowledgment that the RCMP is an inherently racist and anti-Indigenous institution that was created to oppress Indigenous peoples and to facilitate the colonization of Canada.

Call 9.1 of the MMIWG Inquiry calls upon all police and justice system actors to acknowledge that "the justice system has been largely defined by colonialism, racism, bias, discrimination, and fundamental cultural and societal differences".

Beyond this acknowledgment, the recommendations propose systemic changes to the policing and the justice system at large, including increasing Indigenous representation and oversight over policies and procedures; as well as ensuring that police have the adequate capacity and resources to police without racial bias.

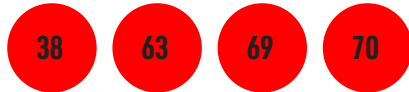


Related Recommendations

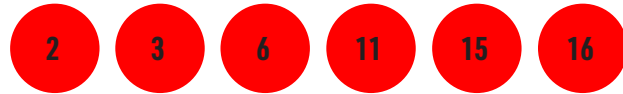
Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Inquiry (2019)



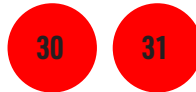
Ipperwash Inquiry (2007)



Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba (1991)



Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015)



(5) Indigenous Self-Determination

Of all the recommendations to come from the various commissions and inquiries, Indigenous self-determination may be the most difficult for Canadians to embrace.

Recommendations in the past 30 years have ranged from proposing Indigenous control over the administration of justice and social programs generally to expanded jurisdiction of lands and resources. Indigenous self-determination would require the reclamation and restoration of Indigenous Nationhood beyond the limitations of colonial recognition that exists in the Indian Act and contemporary **Self-Government agreements**. Yet, the Canadian state (and indeed, settler colonialism at large) draws its legitimacy and power from ongoing Indigenous land dispossession and oppression, resulting in the historic and ongoing dismissal of Indigenous sovereignty.

As is evident in the past month in **Wet'suwet'en territory**, the least amount of movement on the hundreds of recommendations have happened in this area. Canada continues to justify its colonial violence and occupation in unceded territories as "Rule of Law."



When **Indigenous Nations assert their self-determination** in ways that are described in the commissions and inquiries, they are cast as **unruly, privileged, “protesters”** and law-breakers. If Indigenous self-determination is rooted in locally specific relationships that are informed by historical Nation to Nation diplomatic processes (where they exist, i.e. treaties), perhaps then the Canadian state can engage Indigenous peoples in a meaningful relationship that it claims to be of **utmost importance**.

Related Recommendations

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women
and Girls Inquiry (2019)

7.1

12.1

Report of the Aboriginal Justice
Inquiry of Manitoba (1991)

5

**Aboriginal communities
be encouraged to develop
the best method of
communicating their
concerns to the court
in a manner that is
respectful of the rights
of the accused, and of the
dignity and importance of
the proceedings.**

Recommendation from the Report of the Aboriginal
Justice Inquiry of Manitoba (1991)

“Police services in Ontario should **promote peacekeeping** by adopting the following objectives when policing Aboriginal occupations and protests:

- **minimize the risk of violence** at occupations and protests.
- preserve and restore public order.
- facilitate the exercise of **constitutionally protected rights**.
- remain neutral as to the underlying grievance.
- facilitate the **building of trusting relationships** that will assist the parties to resolve the dispute constructively.



Learn More

- Recommendations related to Structural Racism
- National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Final Report (2019)
- Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba (1991)
- Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996)
- Report of the Ipperwash Inquiry (2007)
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission Reports & Calls to Action (2015)

CREDITS:

Written by Eva Jewell
Research Support from Josie Slaughter
Design by Yumi Numata
Editing by Hayden King

info@yellowheadinstitute.org

[@Yellowhead_](#) | fb.me/yellowheadinstitute

www.yellowheadinstitute.org | redpaper.yellowheadinstitute.org