



Press Release

CAP Calls for Indigenous-Led Commission on Policing

June 18th 2020 (Ottawa, ON) – The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP) calls on the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Bill Blair, and Justice Minister David Lametti to convene an emergency meeting of Indigenous leaders with a focus on the policing relationship with Indigenous people.

The purpose of this meeting would be to launch an inquiry into the relationship between policing and Indigenous people, and to examine alternatives to traditional policing models. This includes:

1. Examine whether there is a need for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) going forward
2. Create plans for a new national community policing strategy, under federal oversight, and the need for a national community safety organization.
3. Create a national Indigenous oversight committee tasked with investigating the RCMP.

According to a recent ABACUS Data poll conducted for City News June 5th to 10th 2020 75 per cent of Canadians believe systemic and institutional racism does exist in Canada for Indigenous people, a 7 per cent jump from the same question in 2016.

“The death of George Floyd in the United States is forcing the Canadian government to finally listen to the voices who are demanding change. Canada's leaders must take decisive action to protect Indigenous people within Canada's institutions”, says Kim Beaudin, CAP National Vice Chief.

Policing in Canada has been discriminatory towards Indigenous people since the beginning. The RCMP (formerly Northwest Mounted Police until 1873) was founded to suppress, control and implement a policy of genocide towards Indigenous people in this country.

Innumerable reports and investigations confirm the ongoing discrimination from the RCMP and Canada's justice system more broadly:

- Helen Betty Osborne an Indigenous woman attending school in The Pas Manitoba was murdered in 1971. It took 16 years for the RCMP to fully investigate this and brought only one person to Justice as a result of a botched investigation.
- In 1991, when the Canadian government implemented the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, justice was front and centre. Despite a \$91 million budget, today it collects dust and very few recommendations were followed up on.
- In 1999 Manitoba Aboriginal Justice Implementation Commission report confirmed the need for more Indigenous participation and a need for preventative measures.
- In 2003, the Ipperwash, inquiry prompted by the death of Dudley George acknowledged the need for better recognition of Indigenous rights.
- In 2004, the Saskatchewan Justice inquiry regarding Neil Stonechild concluded that discrimination and racism were the cause of mistreatment and deaths at the hands of police.

Despite a catalogue of reports, inquiries and royal commissions, the recommendations and conclusions have not seen substantial movement, and conditions continue to worsen for Indigenous people. In 2016, a Maclean's report declared prisons were "the new residential schools"¹.

"We have a public safety crisis with Indigenous people in Canada. Our have been traumatized and brutalized as a result of interaction with officers. Both Chantel Moore and Rodney Levi paid with their lives when interacting with police" says Kim Beaudin, CAP National Vice Chief. "The federal government is responsible under 91.24 of the Constitution for Indigenous people in Canada and must take a leadership role in addressing our concerns."

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The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples is the national voice representing the interests of Métis, status and non-status Indians, and Southern Inuit Indigenous People living off-reserve. Today, over 80 per cent of Indigenous people live off-reserve.

¹ <https://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/canadas-prisons-are-the-new-residential-schools/?fbclid=IwAR2wRdBvtwvZs-HKsuBxoB5VLRB7d58z84sAs1Wu0-gSZoJj-wIBv451AHU>