



Press Statement

CAP Calls for Systemic Changes to the Correctional System

OTTAWA, March 16, 2021 – One year after the suicide of Curtis McKenzie at Saskatchewan Penitentiary, The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP) is calling for systemic change to Canada’s correctional system. McKenzie was a member of the Lac La Ronge Indian Band in Saskatchewan, who tragically took his own life after many attempts to seek help from Correctional Services Canada.

Statement by Congress of Aboriginal Peoples National Vice-Chief Kim Beaudin:

“One-year later and the Province of Saskatchewan has not provided any updates on their internal investigation into Curtis McKenzie’s death. His family and friends deserve closure on his death, and we should not be in the dark on the circumstances that allowed for this happen. The trend of Indigenous Peoples being abused by the corrections system is nothing new, and I have had numerous families reach out regarding similar failures”.

Last year, Indigenous musician Jonathan Wayne Lee Anderson died from his injuries following his suicide attempt at the Edmonton Remand Center, just days after McKenzie’s death. In the last week, CAP heard from Prisoners’ Legal Services (PLS) on violence directed towards Nick Dinardo, a member of the Piapot First Nation while undergoing treatment at Shepody Healing Centre in New Brunswick.

“Time and time again we see our community members mistreated and abused by the Canadian correctional system. The system fails to provide Indigenous Peoples with basic human rights and safe custody. Premiers and Attorney Generals need to take steps to improve safety in institutions for offenders who must remain in custody.”

CAP is calling on the Province of Saskatchewan to update the public on their inquiry into the death of Curtis McKenzie. Correctional reform is needed across Canada to prevent more avoidable loss of life. We invite government leadership at all levels to sit down with Indigenous community leaders and work toward a better system for the future.

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Background

The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP) is the second-oldest national aboriginal organization in Canada. It was founded in 1971, one year after the AFN. CAP represents the interests of off reserve status and non-status Indians, Métis and Southern Inuit Aboriginal Peoples throughout Canada. CAP is one of five national Indigenous organizations recognized by the federal government, and holds consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council.