



Press Statement

On Prisoners' Justice Day, Incarcerated Indigenous Peoples Don't Need an Expansion to the Saskatoon Remand Centre

August 10, 2021—Saskatoon, SK—Today, the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples marks Prisoners' Justice Day, an annual commemoration in support of prisoners' rights and remembrance for those who have died while incarcerated.

For years, Indigenous Peoples in Canada have been over-represented in the Canadian prison system, [representing approximately 32% of the prison population, while accounting for only 5% of the overall Canadian population](#). This gross imbalance is fed by the continued discriminatory and racist treatment Indigenous Peoples face at all levels of the justice system.

“We know that Indigenous men, women, and youth are far more likely to face aggressive treatment by police and end up in jail for things that non-Indigenous people would receive a slap on the wrist for. Instead of focusing on reconciliation and dismantling systemic discrimination in the justice system, our provincial governments are more interested in expanding jail and remand centres. We need to address the real problem of why so many Indigenous Peoples are incarcerated” stated Congress of Aboriginal Peoples National Vice-Chief Kim Beaudin.

The proposed expansion of the Saskatoon Remand Centre is a prime example of the Saskatchewan provincial government being out of touch with its Indigenous constituents and current social issues. Not only is [the proposed expansion very costly to Saskatchewan taxpayers at \\$120 million](#), it does not address the fact that too many people, primarily Indigenous Peoples, are incarcerated for longer periods of time than necessary. The province reports that 75% of inmates in Saskatchewan jails are Indigenous. They should be investing in rehabilitation, and improved social programming to find a long term solution to recidivism. Sadly, many prisoner deaths occur in remand while awaiting trial without having been found guilty by the courts.

Let this Prisoners' Justice Day be a reminder to everyone that Indigenous Peoples continue to face discrimination and racism in the justice system, and that there is more work that needs to be done at all levels of government. We need to focus on reconciliation, addressing systemic injustice and adopting restorative justice models administered by Indigenous Peoples. Canada needs 400 more opportunities for Indigenous Peoples, not 400 more beds of the incarcerated.

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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 70% of Indigenous people live off-reserve.

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