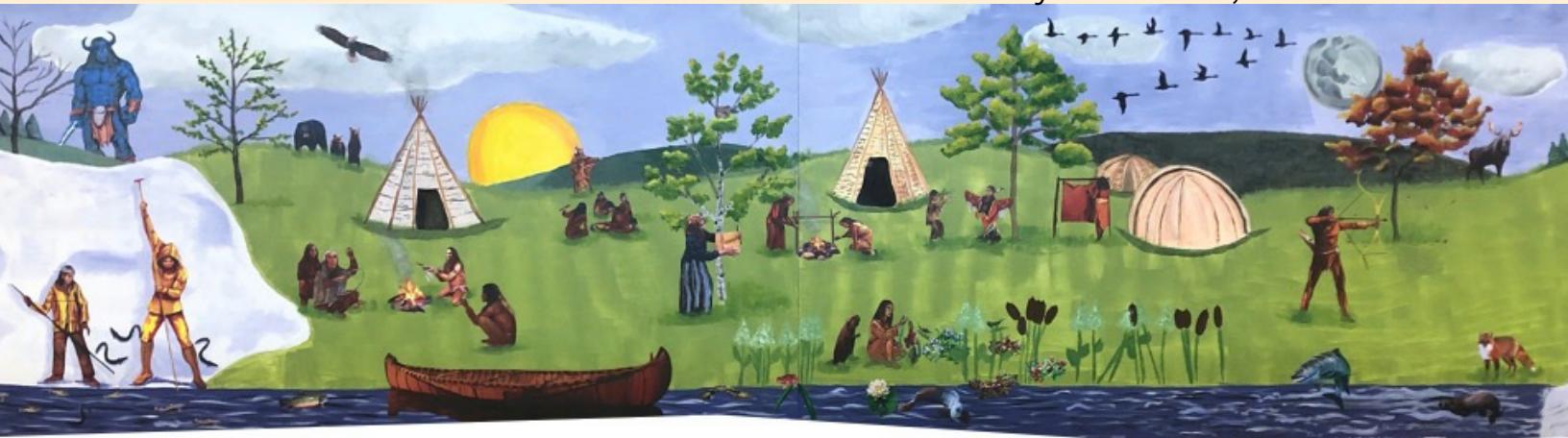


Dr. Gerald Gloade and Lily-Beth Fisher, 2021 *BEFORE* Mural.



The lack of culturally appropriate early childhood education services for Indigenous children across Canada.

“Education got us into this mess, and education will get us out of it.” -
The Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair, Chair of the Truth and
Reconciliation Commission (2016)

Emma Charland & Jazmine Day
October 30th, 2024 - POLS 2003

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Foreword

We, the authors, are a group of Acadia University students POLS 2003: Introduction to Public Policy. Our class has received the opportunity to research the poor Social Determinants of Health faced by Indigenous communities in Canada. This report shone on how early education for Indigenous children requires celebration.

Although our research focuses on issues by Indigenous communities, we would like to emphasize that it would be unethical for us as non-Indigenous to make policy recommendations, **given that we cannot thoroughly or fully understand** the needs and experiences of Indigenous. We put forth this report simply as summary of our research in an introductory public policy course.

In our research, we have attempted to listen and learn from Indigenous voices. We have **prioritized Indigenous sources** including:

- Assembly of First Nations, Center for Indigenous education, First Nations Education Steering Committee, Truth and Reconciliation Final Report, Native Woman's Association of Canada, Dr. Piita Irniq, Brooke Paul, and Lara Hartman

Our group focuses on drawing information from Indigenous news outlets, including:

- The Turtle Island News
- Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami
- APTN

Drafting this report taught us the importance of investigating Indigenous articulated policy options and **prioritizing Indigenous perspectives.**

This class has showed us the importance of learning from with Indigenous experts, and has provided us the with the honour to do so through dialogues with incredible Indigenous policy experts, elders, and community members. Learning via Kesalul, Mawio'ma and the Fall series.

We would like to extend our gratitude to the Indigenous policy experts who have trusted us with their knowledge and expertise including: Lara Hartman, Brooke Paul, Dr. Piita Irniq, and Cole Kippenhuck.

We thank **CEWIL Canada** for the generous grant that was provided to our class. We would like to thank **Dr. Cynthia Alexander and our class partner Darlene Peters Copeland** for their feedback, knowledge, and support.

This class has offered us an opportunity to look deeper and go beyond our default sources.

In this report we have attempted to further our **decolonization journey, and our understanding of the information and the validity of these sources.**

Executive Summary

Canada's education system has **marginalized Indigenous languages**, cultures, and knowledge, leading to intergenerational impacts on Indigenous identity and language continuity. This is **cultural genocide**.

In 1920, the Indian Act made attendance at Indian Residential Schools compulsory for Treaty-status children between the ages of 7 and 15 to be ripped from their families & communities.

The residential "school" system aimed to **assimilate Indigenous children**, stripping them of cultural knowledge and linguistic heritage with impacts continuing today (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015).



"Our objective is to continue until there is not an Indian that has not been absorbed into the body politic, and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department." Duncan Campbell Scott, the Canadian Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs (1920)

- More than **150,000** children were taken to residential "schools" over 150 years, **many did not come home**
- For 32% of deaths, the government and the church administrators did not record the name of the child who died.
- For 49% of deaths, the government and the church administrators did not record the cause of death (OSI report)

Addressing Educational Injustice today:
The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC)
issued Calls to Action #6 to #12 specifically on education in 2015

Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Education Calls to Action

- Eliminate **educational and employment gaps**
- Develop & maintain **culturally relevant curricula**
- Establish and fund ECE programs
- Indigenous education legislation

These calls focus on addressing **historical inequities** and respecting and **celebrating Indigenous knowledge** in education. (TRC 2015)

9 years later ... have the calls been answered?

NO.

Indigenous education funding disparities remain, per-student funding still lags behind provincial averages.
(AFN, 2019)

First Nations university programs and language immersion schools **remain underfunded** despite their proven benefits in supporting Indigenous culture and identity (FNIGC, 2020)

There is **inconsistent** and piecemeal **integration of Indigenous knowledge** and languages into school curricula across Canada. (NCTR, 2020)

The Indigenous Languages Act was introduced by The Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism, the Honourable Pablo Rodriguez, in 2019, however the Assembly of First Nations notes that comprehensive **legislation focused** specifically on Indigenous education is still absent today.

Impacts of colonial education:

- Only **21%** of Indigenous children are registered in licensed childcare facilities across Canada (FNIGC, 2020).
- Standardized education rooted in Colonialism continues to **perpetuate the trauma** from the residential school system (Yellowhead Institute, 2021).
- Early exposure to **culturally relevant education is crucial for language acquisition**, yet few children have access to such programs due to underfunding and a lack of systemic support (AFN, 2021).
- **Indigenous identity formation** in early childhood is critical for mental health and well-being; however, most ECE programs still reflect Eurocentric values (NCCIH, 2017).

These are only **SOME** of the broad implications of this issue.

The effects of the Canadian federal government's colonial roots of discrimination are entrenched in the education system, and reconciling their impacts requires listening and responding to Indigenous policy perspectives and priorities.

Three Indigenous Policy Options:

- Culturally appropriate early childhood education
- Family wellness impacts on early childhood development
- The application of Jordan's principle & accessible learning resources

We offer this report **not as recommendation**, but as research of available Indigenous preferred options.



NCCIH (2017),

https://www.nccih.ca/495/Infographic_Education_as_a_social_determinant_of_First_Nations,_Inuit_and_Métis_health.nccih?id=227

Background: Colonial Based Standardized Education

Mid 1600s

- Pre-Residential “schools”, churches were built for Indigenous children and called ‘mission schools’ that were primarily in eastern Canada but moved west as colonial efforts grew (IPAC, 2024).

1800s

- The origin of Residential schools can be traced back as early as the 1830s, before Confederation in 1867 (IPAC, 2024)
 - The Federal Residential school system began around 1883 (IPAC, 2024) starting the almost 160 years of colonial based standardized education for Indigenous students.

1900s

- By 1900 there were a total of 61 schools (22 Industrial and 39 residential) that were directed by the Catholics and Protestant churches, Government Indian agents and officials from many departments played a role in developing these ‘schools’, (IPAC, 2024).
 - In the 1930s at its peak there were 80 Residential schools’ in Canada. (IPAC, 2024).

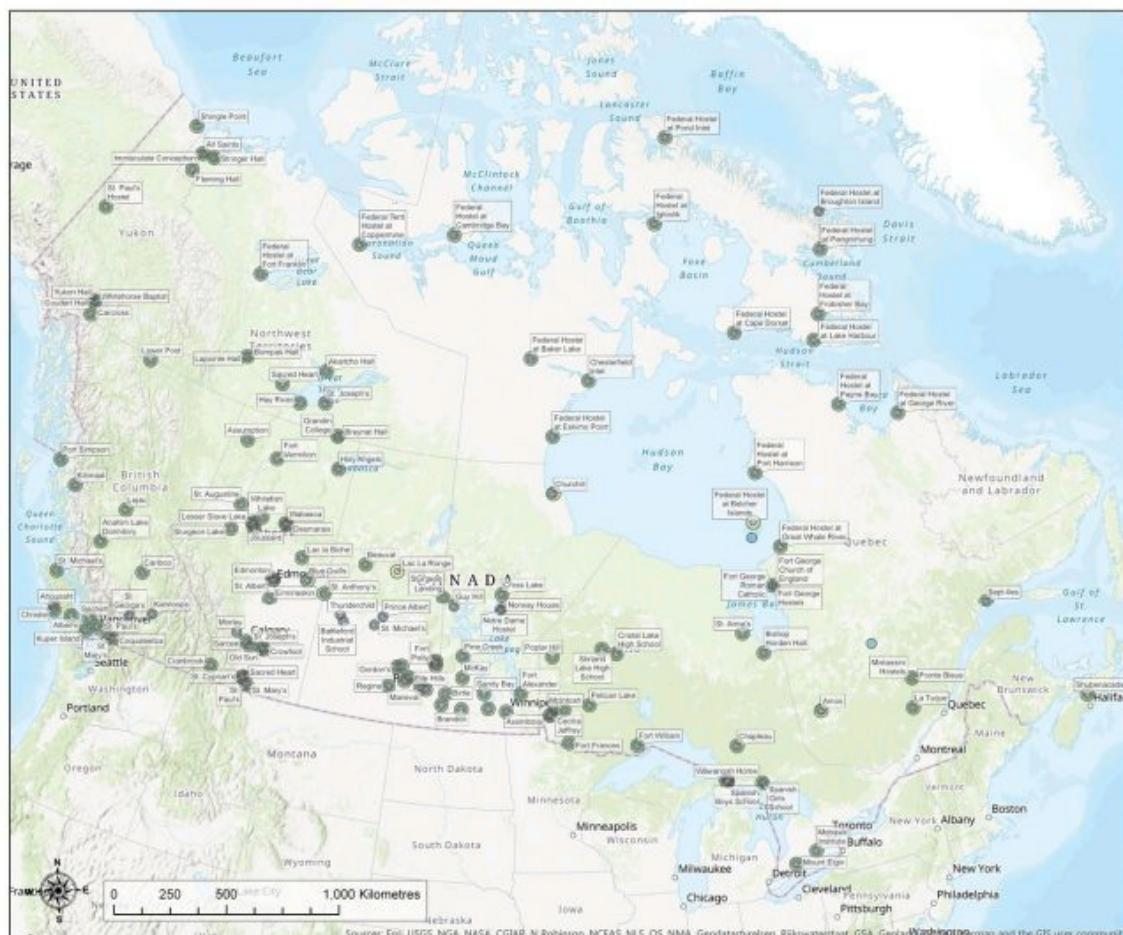
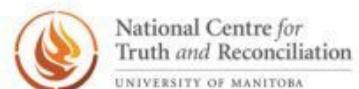


Figure II: Map of Residential schools in Canada retrieved from IPAC
<https://indigenouspeoplesatlasofcanada.ca/article/history-of-residential-schools/>



Canadian Indian Residential Schools



- Residential
• NCTR
● Hite

February 6, 2018

- Sources:

 - National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation
 - Morgan Hite, 2017
(http://hesperus-wild.org/GIS_carto/IRS.html)
 - Sam Vickars, 2017
(<https://nathab.com/svickars/theorie>)

Note: School names in the map labels are from the NCTR dataset. This map does not display residential schools in Newfoundland and Labrador.



“The Canadian government pursued this policy of cultural genocide because it wished to divest itself of its legal and financial obligations to Aboriginal people and gain control over their land and resources. If every Aboriginal person had been ‘absorbed into the body politic,’ there would be no reserves, no Treaties, and no Aboriginal rights”.

-Truth and Reconciliation Commission Canada,
Honouring the Truth, Reconciling the Future:
Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and
Reconciliation Commission of Canada, p. 3
<https://indigenouspeoplesatlasofcanada.ca/article/history-of-residential-schools/>

Residential schools were used as a way to **assimilate** Indigenous children into Euro-Canadian culture

The Impacts of Colonization on Indigenous Peoples and Families

- The **negative effects** of colonization of education and Residential ‘schools’ became long lasting amongst those who were forced to take part.
- These institutions caused **intergenerational trauma** leaving not just those who experienced it but also many generations following
- Survivors of residential schools faced abuse such as; physical, emotional, spiritual, and sexual
- The **tragic** discovery of the unmarked graves of **children** from the Residential schools in May 2021 (NCTR) put a **horrible light** on the events that were taking place within the Residential schools.



Photo of John A. Macdonald
Photo credit by The Canadian Encyclopedia, 2013
[https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/
sir-john-alexander-macdonald](https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/sir-john-alexander-macdonald)

“When the school is on the reserve, the child lives with its parents, who are savages, and though he may learn to read and write, his habits and training mode of thought are Indian. He is simply a savage who can read and write. It has been strongly impressed upon myself, as head of the Department, that Indian children should be withdrawn as much as possible from the parental influence, and the only way to do that would be to put them in central training industrial schools where they will acquire the habits and modes of thought of white men”

-John A. Macdonald, 1879

<https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/10-quotes-john-a.-macdonald-made-about-first-nations>

Indigenous Values in Education Policy

Our report **prioritizes respecting** the importance of Indigenous values within the educational system and attempting to apply their values to our research of policy options and the potential education policies we present.

"As with many Indigenous Peoples, the knowledge systems of First Nations were often guided by their relationships to each other and to the land and by their community, with a focus on preserving a physical, emotional, mental and spiritual balance."

-Tracy Coates, Mohawk and Welsh educator,
2024,

[https://indigenouspeoplesatlasofcanada.ca/
article/education-2/](https://indigenouspeoplesatlasofcanada.ca/article/education-2/)

Two-Eyed Seeing

"Two-Eyed Seeing refers to learning to see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous ways of knowing and from the other eye with the strengths of Western ways of knowing and to using both of these eyes together".

-Bartlett, Marshall, & Marshall, 2012, p. 335

- Two-eyed seeing is an approach to learning that was thought by Elder Albert Marshall, a respected Mi'kmaq Elder.
- Two-eyed seeing **incorporates** both **Indigenous knowledge** and Western knowledge.
- As this concept collaborates both, it avoids a clash of knowledge (Canadian Council on Learning, 2007).



*Photo of Elder Albert Marshall retrieved from
Two-Eyed Seeing, 2021*

<https://www.2eyedseeing.ca/about-5>

7 Sacred (Grandfather) Teachings

“The Seven Grandfather Teachings have always been a part of the Native American culture. Their roots date back to the beginning of time. These teachings impact our surroundings, along with providing guidance toward our actions to one another”. (NHBP, 2022)



Photo of the 7 Scared Teachings

Photo credit by SFNNC 2024

<https://www.southernnetwork.org/site/seven-teachings>

“We want to take back our education and teach our history, our language and our culture. We have begun to tell our story – our history – and we want to tell it in our own words to the world, so that this will never happen to any of the other nations in the world”

-Shirley William, Residential School Survivor, 2024

<https://www.southernnetwork.org/site/seven-teachings>

The Social Determinants of Health: Impact on Indigenous Peoples

The World Health Organization describes SDOH's as the following:

The social determinants of health (SDH) are the non-medical factors that influence health outcomes. They are the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life (World Health Organization, 2021).

- **Income and social protection**

High rates of low income and poverty among Indigenous populations (FNIGC, 2020).

- **Education**

Lower educational attainment among Indigenous communities, driven by historical inequities and barriers in the education system. (NCCIH, 2017).

- **Working life conditions & Unemployment and job insecurity**

Limited access to stable, well-paying jobs and safe working conditions has left many Indigenous people in precarious employment (AFN, 2018).

- **Food insecurity**

Food insecurity stems from factors such as geographic isolation, limited access to traditional foods, and reliance on costly store-bought foods. (Assembly of First Nations, 2018).

- **Housing, basic amenities and the environment**

Many Indigenous communities live in inadequate housing conditions without basic amenities such as clean water and sanitation. (Indigenous Services Canada, 2021).

- **Early childhood development**

ECE programs that respect and incorporate Indigenous cultures and languages are often lacking, limiting the potential for healthy development and lifelong learning (FNIGC, 2020).

- **Social inclusion and non-discrimination**

Experiences of discrimination and marginalization in various settings hinder social inclusion for Indigenous people, negatively affecting mental health and overall well-being (NWAC, 2019).

- **Structural conflict**

Ongoing structural conflicts, including land disputes and resource extraction issues, contribute to health inequities by destabilizing communities and disrupting traditional lifestyles and practices (AFN, 2019).

- **Access to affordable health services of decent quality.**

Many Indigenous communities face barriers to accessing affordable, high-quality health services (Yellowhead Institute, 2021).

The Colonial Education Crisis: Aspects and Interconnections

Kwesowaak, Pukt aq Pukt Kwe'sawe'k, Taqamkuk-
Image from Benoit First Nation.
"Grandfathers Teachings"
https://www.benoitfirstnation.ca/bfn_Grandfathers_teachings.html

Language Preservation & Revitalization

- **Language is fundamental to cultural knowledge transfer** and is best introduced **in early years** to maximize fluency and understanding of traditional worldviews (see images for Indigenous worldview examples) (FNESC, 2020).

How can this be taught when only 21% of Indigenous children are registered in licensed childcare facilities? (FNIGC, 2020).

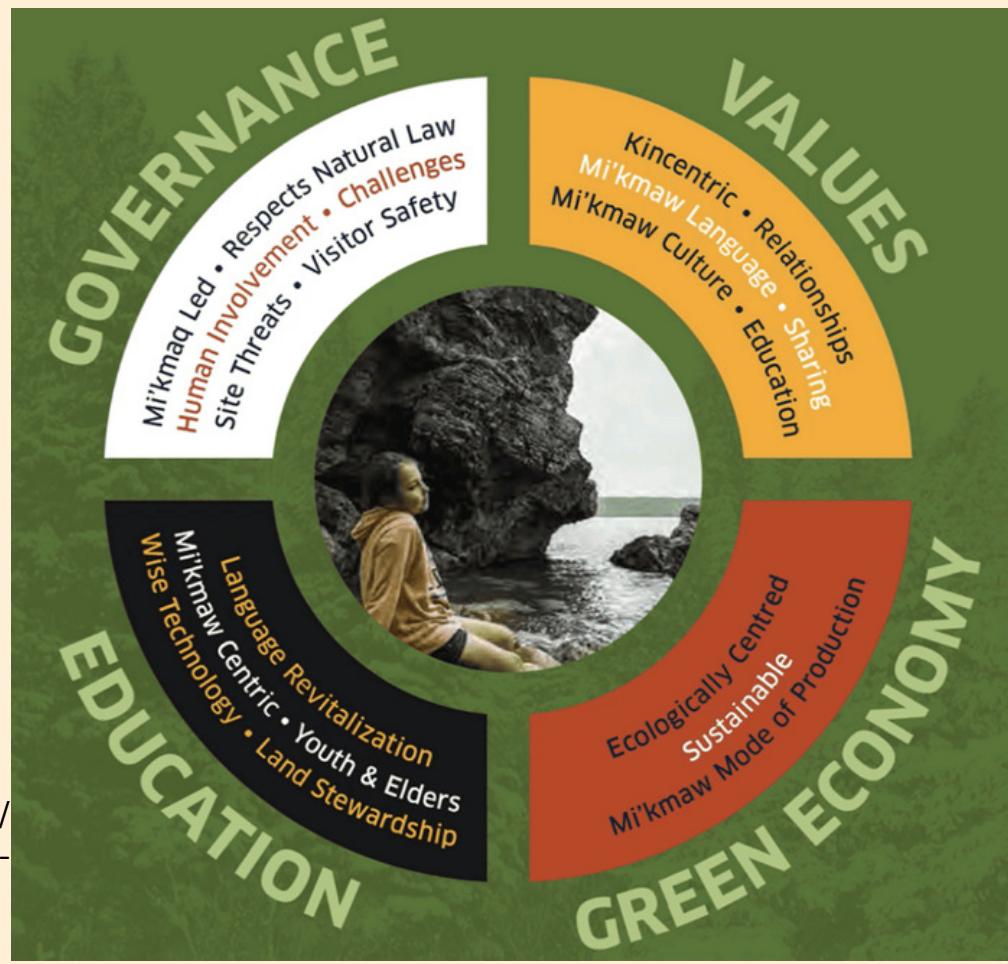


Family & Community Integration

- Indigenous teachings embrace the role of **family and community** in education to promote **collaboration** (opposing the individual Western model).
- The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) says this learning must involve **elders, parents, and siblings** as active educators, which builds **relational skills and a strong sense of belonging** (AFN, 2019).

(IPCA, 2021)

<https://ipcaknowledgebasket.ca/emerging-indigenous-protected-and-conserved-areas-the-unamaki-mikmaw-ipca-project/>



Intergenerational knowledge transmission within Community Integration

- Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) emphasizes **the role of Elders** in fostering Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ), Inuit traditional knowledge, as part of early learning, which can be applied to all Indigenous children. (ITK, 2019)
- Including Elders in ECE ensures that Indigenous knowledge is **passed to future generations**, affirming cultural identities and offering children models of leadership. This is imparting cultural wisdom and traditional practices that may otherwise be lost.

Land-based learning & Environmental stewardship

- Land-based learning practices are tailored to **specific Indigenous communities and seasons**, such as the land camps practiced in many Indigenous communities.
- For example, an expert fisher from their community teaching them how to fish for themselves.
- These camps introduce **young children to traditional knowledge, environmental stewardship**, and respect for the natural world from an early age (Simpson, 2014)



(IPCA, 2021) novascotia.ca/abor/aboriginal-people/community-info/

Culturally appropriate Indigenous ECE is not only an educational priority but a foundation for Indigenous self-determination and community well-being across generations.

Contributions of the ECE SDOH on other social determinants of health

Physical health & Nutrition

- Indigenous-led ECD programs often integrate health education, including lessons on “**land food**”, physical activity, and land-based practices, which support children’s physical health.
- Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada reports that Inuit ECD programs promoting **healthy eating and traditional food sources help combat food insecurity and malnutrition**, which are common challenges in Northern communities. (2016)
- These teachings also create a lifelong connection to healthy habits, **supporting physical health into adulthood** (Pauktuutit, 2016)



Photo: Bruce Murray, VisionFire

Language and Cultural Identity

- ECD programs that integrate Indigenous languages and cultural practices play a **critical role in preserving Indigenous identity** and fostering a strong sense of belonging
- The AFN notes that language programs in ECD **support children’s emotional and mental wellbeing** by connecting them to their heritage

Housing

- ECD programs that offer safe, welcoming spaces for children to learn outside the home **reduce the strain on overcrowded households**
- These programs can empower communities by educating parents about **advocacy for better housing conditions**
- Indigenous children experiencing stable, culturally supportive learning environments outside the home can **positively impact their health and reduce some of the stresses** associated with inadequate housing conditions (ITK, 2019; Pauktuutit, 2016).

HOUSING CONDITIONS

7X

Close to half (49.3%) of all First Nations people live on reserve (Statistics Canada, 2015a).

Statistics Canada (2015a) reports that, “[m]ore than one-quarter (27%) of First Nations people living on reserve were living in **crowded conditions** in 2011, about 7 times the proportion of non-Aboriginal people nationally” (p. 14).

10X

According to the most recent data, “nearly **4 in 10** (39%) Inuit living in Inuit Nunangat lived in **crowded homes**, about 10 times the proportion of non-Indigenous people (4%) nationally” (Statistics Canada, 2015a, p. 14).

Access to Healthcare

- EC development/education programs can help bridge healthcare gaps by offering routine health check-ups, vaccinations, and **early interventions on-site** or through partnerships with local health services (FNHA, 2019).
- Programs grounded in Indigenous culture **foster holistic wellness**, which integrates physical, mental, and spiritual health—essential elements of Indigenous health concepts (Pauktuutit, 2016).

Family Well-being

- Programs that involve Elders and parents in traditional knowledge-sharing help **repair familial bonds disrupted by historical trauma**, as discussed by the National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health (NCCIH 2017).

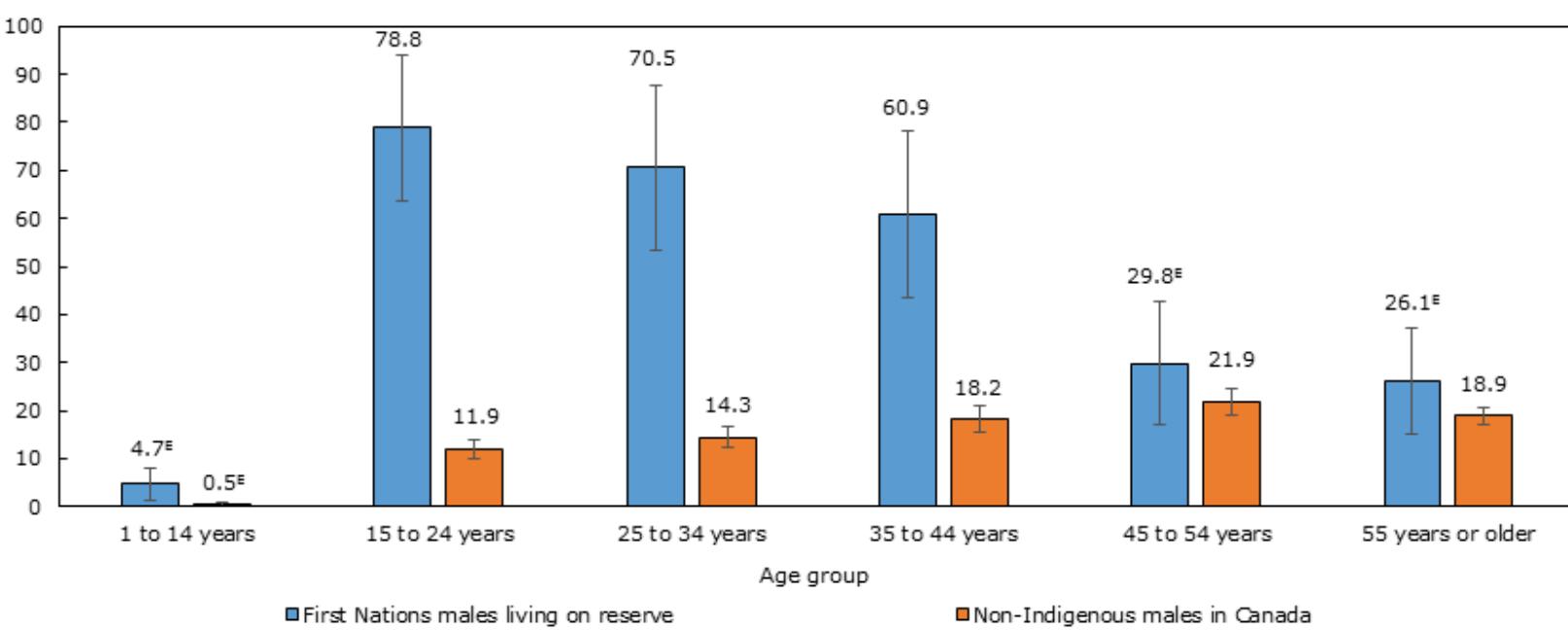
Mental Health and Intergenerational Trauma

- Culturally-rooted ECE reinforces positive self-identity, which is linked to **reduced rates of suicide and mental health challenges** (FNHA, 2019)
- Culturally inclusive ECE fosters **mental resilience**, reducing the prevalence of depression, anxiety, and substance use in later years (FNHA, 2019)

Chart 1

Age-specific suicide rates (number of deaths by suicide per 100,000 person-years at risk) among First Nations males living on reserve and non-Indigenous males in Canada, household population aged 1 year or older, Canada, 2011-2016

number



^E use with caution

Notes: Error bars denote 95% confidence intervals.

5.6-year follow-up period: May 10, 2011 to December 31, 2016.

Excluded from data: institutional population at time of census collection (e.g. nursing homes, jails), population living in collective households (e.g. motels, hotels, rooming houses), persons not enumerated by the 2011 National Household Survey, incompletely enumerated reserves.

Source: Statistics Canada, 2011 Canadian Census Health and Environment Cohort integrating the 2011 National Household Survey with Canadian Vital Statistics Database (2011-2016).

Unfortunately, this is the most recent data available which speaks to the disappointing priorities of the Canadian Federal government.

Culturally Appropriate Early Childhood Education for Indigenous Children in Canada

- Indigenous children in Canada **face barriers in accessing quality early childhood education** that involves Indigenous teachings and languages.
- Standardized early childhood education (ECE) further disconnects Indigenous children from their heritage, as it most often fails to incorporate Indigenous languages, cultural practices and knowledge.
- This contributes to lower educational outcomes in Indigenous groups, intergenerational struggle of culturally appropriate ECE, and undermines the well-being and identity of those children.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS (ECE) AND ASSISTANTS INDIGENOUS/NON-INDIGENOUS



5% are Indigenous, higher than the proportion of Indigenous workers represented among all workers (4%). A slightly higher proportion of Indigenous workers are represented among early childhood assistants.

Federally Funded ECE Programs

- Aboriginal Head start (on and off reserve) (NCCAH)
- First Nations and Inuit Child Care Initiatives (NCCAH)
- 7 federal schools on reserve and 518 band-operated elementary schools on reserve (NCCAH)
“Federally supported Indigenous educational systems have been underfunded for many years” (NCCAH, 2017)

Steps Toward Culturally Appropriate ECE

NCCAH says that progress has been made in the Head Start program to put language and culture into community-based learning in these ECE programs (2017).

TRC Calls to Action

Call 64. “We call upon all levels of government that provide public funds to denominational schools to require such schools to provide an education on comparative religious studies, which must include a segment on Aboriginal spiritual beliefs and practices developed in collaboration with Aboriginal Elders” (TRC talk)

This particular TRC calls to action makes sure that Indigenous and non-indigenous peoples are taught the history and culture of Indigenous peoples.

Lack of Indigenous Educators

- “So many teachers know so little about the concepts and community values supported by the traditional Aboriginal peoples reliance on their strong and dedicated attachment to their own spirituality”
(IACOT)
- As noted by the IACOT, there is a major lack of knowledge on Indigenous values and teachings, this making ECE lack culturally appropriate knowledge that needs to be carried on intergenerationally.

Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Framework

These frameworks were **co-authored** by AFN and Employment and Social Development Canada in 2018

National Indigenous ELCC

“The Framework creates an historic opportunity to establish a comprehensive, coordinated, regional **First Nations-developed** and –led ELCC system that is responsive to First Nations, their communities and families” (FNELCC).

- This framework would ensure that First-Nations would **receive** an early education that would be **culturally appropriate**.

New Process: First Nations-Driven Decision Making

This is an envisioned framework:

- **National Expert Working Group ELCC:**

“Convene regional representatives; recommend regional allocations to Chiefs; set national priorities; offer coordinated guidance and advice; support joint national reporting, planning, research, evaluation and accountability framework development, etc” (FNELCC).

Regional Tables:

- Bring together **First Nations representatives** and existing or new partnership tables (FNELCC).
- Recommend program & community allocations to community & regional chiefs (FNELCC).
- Lead coordinated regional implementation planning and reporting (FNELCC).
- Build capacity for Regional Coordination Bodies (FNELCC).
- Lay groundwork towards transfer of programs to regional First Nations governance structures or authorities at a pace and scope of First Nations’ choosing, as mandated by communities (FNELCC).

Family Wellness Impacts on Early Childhood Development

Challenges in Indigenous ECD

IECDD talks on more challenges in ECD:

- “The characteristics and composition of Indigenous families, which are younger, larger, include more extended family members, and are more often lone-parent or foster families compared to non-Indigenous families” (IECDD).
- Indigenous people earn about 9% less than non-Indigenous people. (Stats Canada, 2022)
- Lower rates of income and employment lead to higher rates of poverty in Indigenous households (IECDD).
- 31% of Indigenous families struggle with food insecurity compared to 14% of Indigenous families. (Stats Canada, 2022)
- Food security is an issue for Indigenous families and can lead to poor physical, cognitive, and emotional development (IECDD).

Intergenerational Trauma

Intergenerational trauma can play a major role in the **development** of the child:

- “Young Indigenous children’s health and well-being are influenced by factors at the level of family” (IECDD).
- “Community and family wellbeing contributes to healthy, safe and supportive environments for children’s development but continues to be impacted by the legacy of Indian Residential Schools” (IECDD).

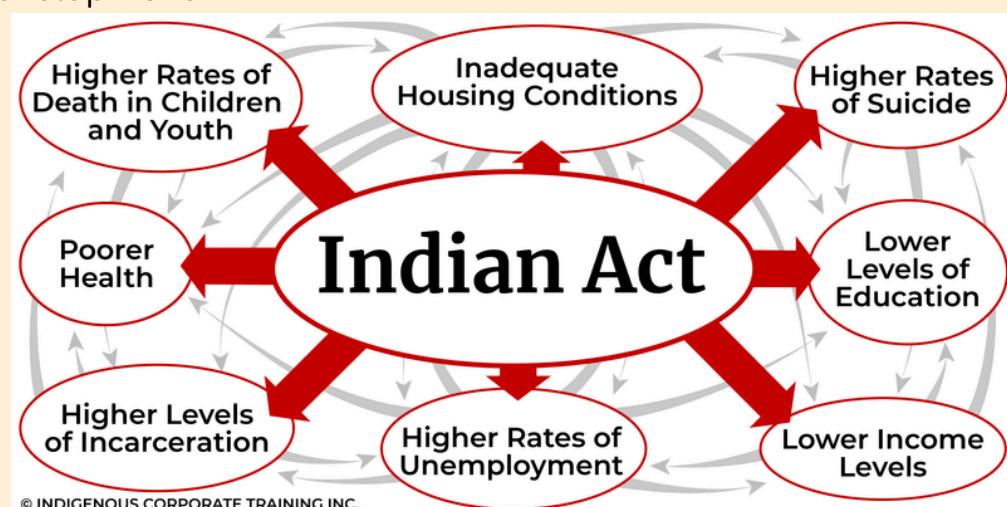


Photo of the effects of the Indian Act of 1876 on Indigenous families

Photo credit by ICT, 2023

<https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/higher-rates-of-death-in-children-and-youth-7-of-8-key-issues>

Jordans Principle & Accessible Learning Services

Jordans' Principle is a program founded in 2016 for **First-Nation children** that is based off child-first principle to get **services they need when needed** (FNCFAS).

- Support for First-Nations children is complicated based on federal or provincial and which level of government is responsible to give support and resources (FNCFAS).
- There are disputes between the Federal government and the Provincial/Territorial Governments on who gives services and supports to First-Nation children (FNCFAS).

“Jordans’ Principle is a legal requirement that provides access to supports for First Nations children in need and ensures that the government of first contact pays for the supports without delay” (FNCFAS)

- **Mawita'mk (being together)** Society is an Indigenous led charity in We'koqma'q L'Nue'Kati that was founded by the late **Chief Ben Sylliboy** and his two sisters who were Residential school survivors (Mawita'mk).
- Mawita'mk society is a **major** contributor to Jordan's Principle and has also made strides for **Indigenous peoples with disabilities** to have assisted community living on their community (Mawita'mk).

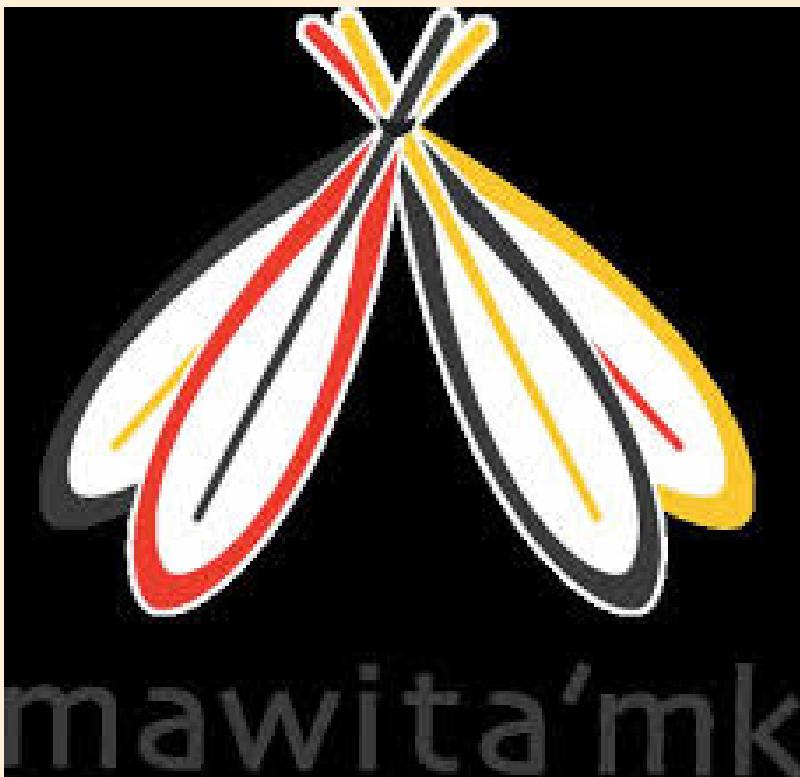


Photo of the Mawita'mk Society symbol
-Mawita'mk, 2024

"We expect the Department of Indian Affairs (INAC) to treat people with intellectual disabilities and their families fairly. INAC, under their institutional care program should stop removing people from their culture and begin to support community-based services and supports within Mi'kmaq communities."
– Assembly of Nova Scotia Chiefs, 2005

Brooke Pauls' Experiences with Jordans' Principle:

- She spoke about her experiences with Jordans Principle and how it has changed her and her families life.
- The weight off her shoulders being felt when Jordan's Principle was put into place.
- “Just because of Jordans Principle look where he’s at now, and if Jordan’s Principle was not there I probably would not be working because i’d have to be fighting other fights for my kids”
(Paul, 2024)
- “Jordan’s Principal really does make a big difference in a lot of Indigenous children’s lives”(Paul, 2024).
- This is just one example and experience on how Jordan’s Principle has changed the lives of Indigenous families and their children.
- “I think this is a great opportunity now to reset, and make sure that the discrimination stops against First Nations children all over Canada.

That it never happens again, all over Canada and that we ensure that every penny goes to maximum value for children and families,”

-Cindy Blackstock, 2024, ATPN

<https://www.aptnnews.ca/national-news/great-opportunity-now-to-reset-says-cindy-blackstock-after-chiefs-vote-against-afn-deal-on-child-welfare/>

“This isn’t about what Canada wants. This is about ensuring our children are safeguarded against Canada’s discrimination, now and forever.”
- Cindy Blackstock, 2024, ATPN

Photo of Cindy Blackstock and Jordans' Principle bear

Photo retrieved from CBC News, 2024

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/jordans-principle-non-compliance-tribunal-1.7079566>



Challenges & barriers to culturally appropriate ECE

Implementing policy options such as these comes with many challenges, as Indigenous peoples in Canada are still systematically discriminated against and the government of Canada has repeatedly failed at answering calls to action.

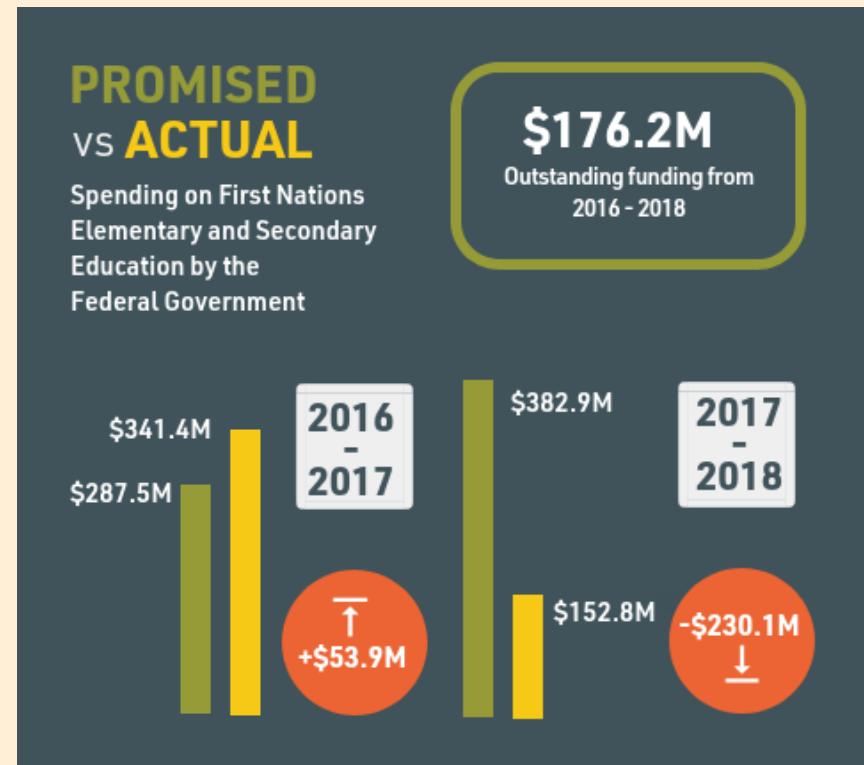
Yellowhead institute (2018)

<https://yellowheadinstitute.org/2018/12/04/federal-education-funds/>

- Funding Constraints and Inconsistent Resources:** Many Indigenous-led ECE programs face limited or unstable funding, making it difficult to maintain consistent programming. (Assembly of First Nations, 2019)

- Shortage of Indigenous Educators:** A lack of trained Indigenous educators and ECE professionals limits the availability of culturally grounded instruction in Indigenous communities. (First Nations Education Steering Committee, 2020)

- Limited Access to ECE Facilities in Remote Areas:** Geographic isolation in many Indigenous communities complicates access to ECE facilities and resources, impacting the quality and reach of education services. (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2019)



- Language Preservation Challenges:** Revitalizing Indigenous languages within ECE settings is challenging due to limited language resources and the decline in fluent speakers. (First Peoples' Cultural Council, 2018)
- Cultural Disconnect in Curricula:** Many standardized ECE curricula do not align with Indigenous values, knowledge, and practices, leading to a lack of culturally relevant content. (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2016)
- Systemic Bureaucratic Barriers:** Federal and provincial policies often impose restrictions on Indigenous communities' ability to control and tailor ECE programming to their cultural needs. (First Nations Health Authority, 2019)

Concluding Reflections

Our group acknowledges and respects that we are not Indigenous and therefore we are not in the position to make recommendations about policy options. Throughout our research, our group has focused on prioritizing policy options that Indigenous have identified as being important to the wellbeing of their communities.

As a collective, our research has opened our eyes to the lived realities of the Indigenous peoples, the **systemic discrimination** Indigenous peoples face at **the hands of the federal government**, and **the effects of inequality on the social determinants of health**.

Listening to the stories of our Indigenous partners has impacted us all, and we would like to sincerely thank **Brooke Paul, Dr. Piita Irniq**, for sharing their stories with us. Your knowledge has informed our research, but has also allowed us to change our perspectives on how we see the Canadian government, our own responsibilities and the world around us.

“The secret of our success is that we never, never give up.”

– Wilma Mankiller, Cherokee One Feather, 2021

<https://theonefeather.com/2021/06/22/principal-chief-mankiller-to-be-featured-on-u-s-quarter/>

This research furthered our groups' understanding of the federal and provincial/territorial governments' responsibilities in the ECE of Indigenous children. This was something that our group was unaware of going into this project and was crucial to understanding ECE for Indigenous children. To combat the lack of culturally appropriate ECE, the federal and provincial/territorial governments must be held accountable for their failure to provide Indigenous children with culturally appropriate education.

Glossary

Abbreviations

AFN - Assembly of First Nations

ECD - Early childhood development

ECE - Early childhood education

ICTINC – Indigenous Corporate Training INC

IK – Indigenous Knowledge

NCCAH - National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health

NCCIH – National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health

NWAC – Native Women’s Association of Canada

SDOH - Social determinant of health

Definitions

- **Culturally Relevant Education:** Educational practices and curricula that reflect, respect, and incorporate the cultural values, traditions, and languages of Indigenous communities.
- **Early Childhood Development:** The physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development that occurs in children from birth to around age five.
- **Indigenous Knowledge Systems:** The unique, traditional knowledge and ways of knowing developed by Indigenous communities over generations, often deeply connected to the environment, language, and cultural practices.
- **Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit** (IQ): Inuit traditional knowledge and cultural practices, encompassing a holistic worldview that guides social values, environmental stewardship, and community wellbeing.
- **Social Determinants of Health:** Conditions in which people are born, grow, work, and live that impact health outcomes, including factors like housing, education, income, and access to healthcare.
- **Language Revitalization:** Efforts to preserve, strengthen, and teach Indigenous languages, often a focus in culturally relevant ECE to maintain cultural identity and heritage.
- **Holistic Approach:** An approach to education and health that considers the whole person, including physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional aspects, often central to Indigenous teaching methods.

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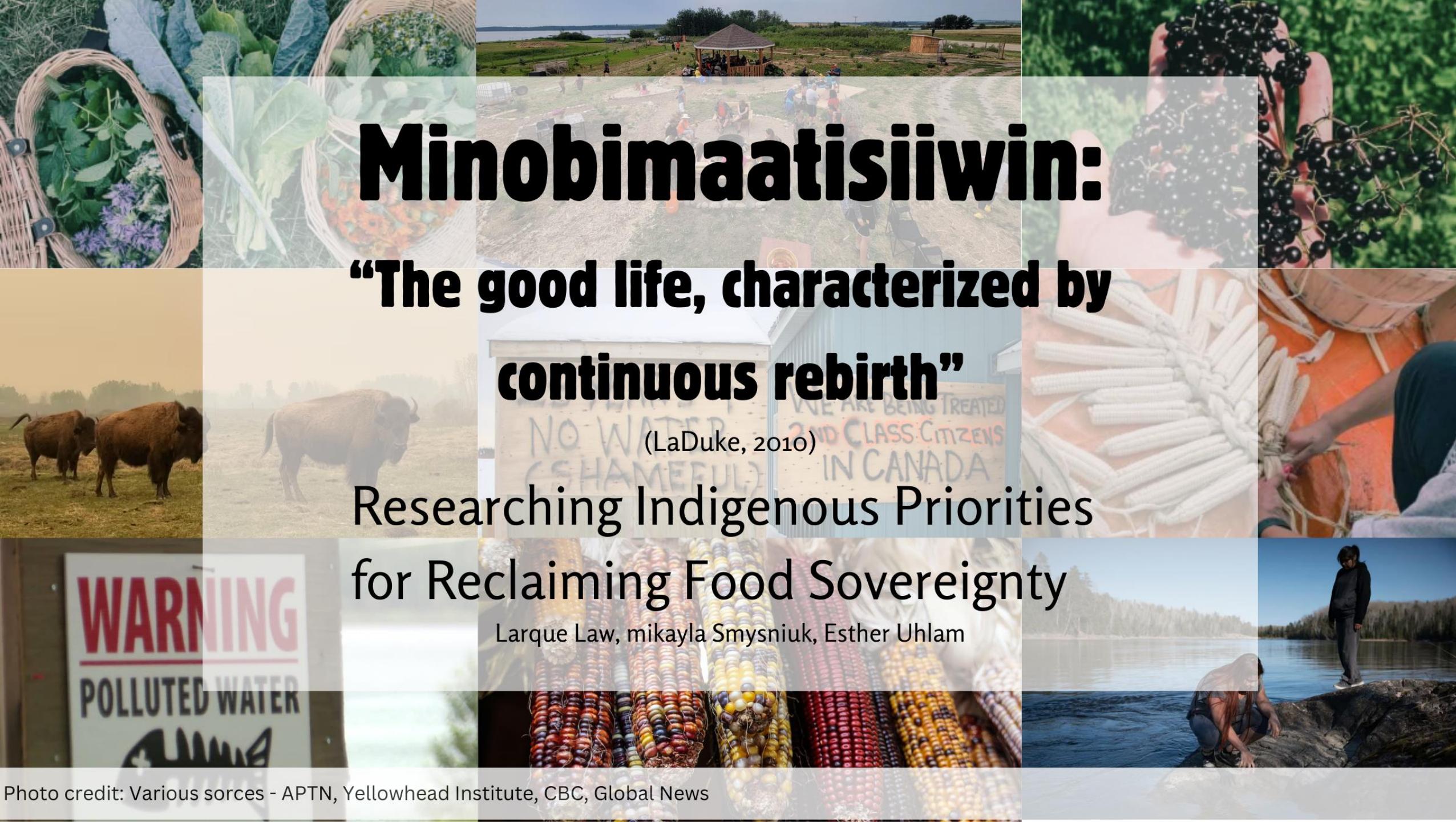
Minobimaatisiiwin:

“The good life, characterized by continuous rebirth”

(LaDuke, 2010)

Researching Indigenous Priorities
for Reclaiming Food Sovereignty

Larque Law, mikayla Smysniuk, Esther Uhlam

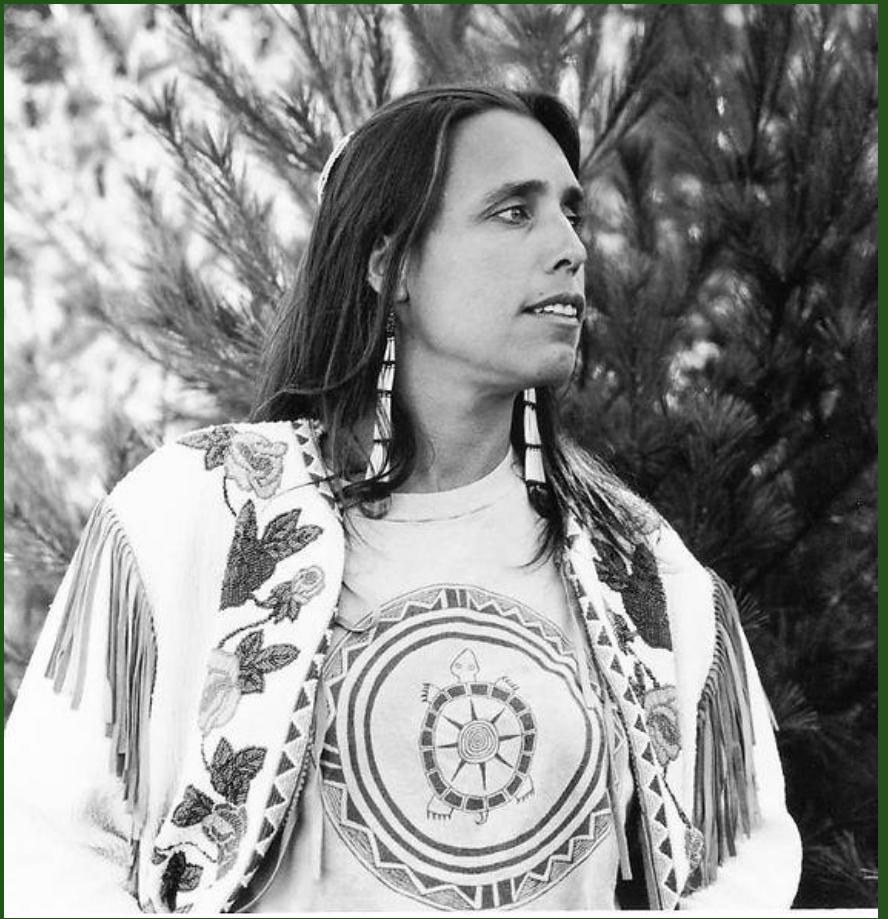




Foreword

- We are a group of students at Acadia University in Intro to Public Policy focusing on **the importance of establishing Indigenous Food Sovereignty.**
- The intentions of this report is **in pursuance of uplifting Indigenous knowledge and voices**
- This presentation will summarize our reports research from various Indigenous peoples and experts and their experiences.

Photo retrieved from NWAC policy brief, 2017



"Implicit in minobimaatisiiwin is a continuous habitation of place, an ... understanding of the relationship between humans and the ecosystem" - Winona LaDuke, Anishinaabe Economist and Food Sovereignty Activist, 2010

Executive Summary

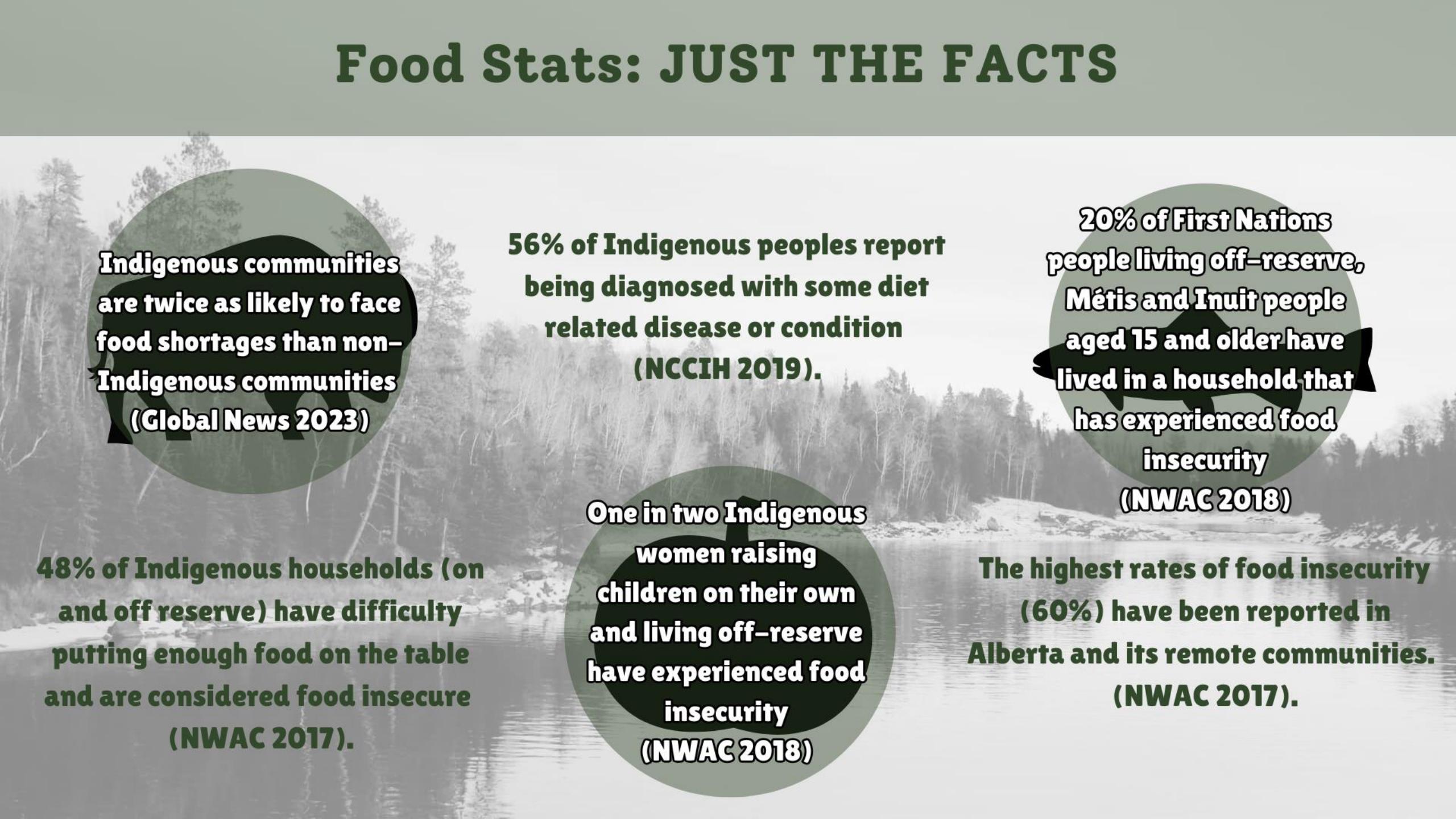
Corporate colonialism is the largest threat in reclaiming Indigenous food sovereignty.

- Indigenous food sovereignty is reliant on maintaining the health of the land
- Minobimaatisiiwin: Indigenous peoples have lived off the land sustainably through time-honored traditional practices in their food systems.

The Wendigo Economy: "The economy of a cannibal, one which destroys its mother" - LaDuke, 2021.

Photo of Winona LaDuke, retrieved from her website Winonaladuke.com

Food Stats: JUST THE FACTS



Indigenous communities are twice as likely to face food shortages than non-Indigenous communities
(Global News 2023)

48% of Indigenous households (on and off reserve) have difficulty putting enough food on the table and are considered food insecure
(NWAC 2017).

56% of Indigenous peoples report being diagnosed with some diet related disease or condition
(NCCIH 2019).

One in two Indigenous women raising children on their own and living off-reserve have experienced food insecurity
(NWAC 2018)

20% of First Nations people living off-reserve, Métis and Inuit people aged 15 and older have lived in a household that has experienced food insecurity
(NWAC 2018)

The highest rates of food insecurity (60%) have been reported in Alberta and its remote communities.
(NWAC 2017).

The Wendigo Economy: How Does It Work

Accumulation

Of land, resources, and wealth

- **Past:** Rupert's land, Hudson's Bay company, the reserve system (YI 2021).
- **Present:** Camp Unistoten, the Ring of Fire, Peace River valley

Degradation

“This assumption that as long as you have bush, you have food just isn't true because it's not healthy. There's stuff that's going in our environment that wasn't there previously. You have to own that when you look at the activity that's happening here.”

- Anonymous participant in a Yellowhead Institute report, 2023

Exclusion

Even though corporations and governments have a legal **duty to consult** First Nations, that duty is ignored:

- The government of Ontario gave out **4000 mining claims** on Grassy Narrows territory **without consultation or consent** (Morin 2024).

Assimilation

Indigenous people are forced to depend on the Wendigo economy for survival:

- Loss of traditional knowledge (TRC 2015).
- Loss traditional land (NWAC 2018).
- Expenses related to hunting or fishing (NWAC 2018).

Could YOU afford to eat in this First Nation community?

Item	Attawapiskat	Toronto
4L of Milk	\$10.99	\$4.69
Frozen Pizza	\$12.49	\$5.87
Cheddar cheese	\$9.99	\$6.24
Bag of apples	\$7.99	\$5.97
Case of water	\$36.49	\$2.97
1kg of beef	\$19.98	\$9.85
Total:	\$97.93	\$35.59

Food Sovereignty

There are four pillars of food sovereignty:

- **Mekiwin:** Recognizing food as a sacred gift
- Land-based participation
- Nehiyaw-askiy: Self-determination
- Policy

Photo of Neskatanga First Nation, retrieved from Indigenous Watchdog, *No Consent, No Ring of Fire*, 2023



Mekiwin: Food as a Sacred Gift



Photo retrieved from the Yellowhead Institute,
Indigenous Food Sovereignty in Ontario, 2023

"When you look at Indigenous communities, it's always around food and the sharing of food"

- Kory Wilson, in a policy dialogue with POLS 2003 students, 2024.

Food is a gift given to humanity from the 'Creator/Great Spirit'.

- Food is a means of **understanding our responsibilities and relationships** between ourselves, the land, water, plants and animals that provide us food (Morrison 2020).

Restricting access to traditional food systems would mean disrespect to the Creator, and might lead to further decline of availability of those gifts (Pawlowska-Mainville, 61).

“We hope that through education, support and adding variety of daily food choices, we aspire to nourish attitudes which change approaches to food in a long-term, positive and healthy direction for our future generations” (Tsartlip First Nation 2024)

Indigenous food systems require **“active land-based participation”, and is “integral to community and individual well-being and development”** (Pawlowska-Mainville 2020)

To strengthen knowledge in traditional practices, participation from all age ranges is essential:

- **Relationships between youth, parents, elders and knowledge keepers nurtures a constant flow of knowledge across generations.**

Land-Based Participation



Photo of Tsartlip First Nation, retrieved from their website: tsartlipgoc.com

Tsartlip First Nation Garden Project



Tsartlip First Nation flag, retrieved from their website:
Tsartlip.com

“Caring for another, preparing for bigger responsibilities for family and other relations; learning from the land and caring for the land is a good place to start” - Judy Bartleman, a participant in Tsartlip First Nation's garden project, 2014

The creation of Tasrtlip First Nations Garden Project **was in response to the increasing poverty rates within the community.**

- **It empowered residents**
- **reconnected them with their traditional lands**
- **revitalized their “traditional survival skills and knowledge”**
(Tsartlip First Nation 2024)

Contemporary Colonialism attempts to disconnect Indigenous peoples, separate the collective and individual from the land, their culture, and community (Jeff Corntassel 2013).

Nehiyaw-Askiy: Self-Determination



Photo: Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug councillor Cecilia Begg,
Grassy Narrows Chief Rudy Turtle and Muskrat Dam
representative Alvin Fiddler joined Wayne Moonias and Chris
Moonias. Allen Brown, right, represented Wapekeka retrieved
from Indigenous Watchdog, *No Consent, No Ring of Fire*, 2023

“What legal value is the federal government’s constitutional obligation to consult, accommodate and obtain the consent of First Nations ... if ‘consent’ is interpreted as the right to say yes but excludes the right to say no?” - Pam Palmater in *Warrior Life*, 2020

Treaties, laws, and conventions that uphold Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination:

- Delgamuukw case (BC Treaty Commission)
- The Marshall Decision (Decembrini 2020).

Governments are still able to justify infringing on Indigenous and treaty rights through these legal tests:

- The Sparrow Test (Center for Constitutional Studies, 2021).
- The Van Der Peet Test (Beaudoin 2006).
- The Gladstone Test (RAVEN Trust 2012).

Governments often infringe on Indigenous sovereignty even without judicial permission, and they usually get away with it.

- The ring of fire (APTN 2023).
- Site C Dam (Cox 2021).
- Coastal Gaslink pipeline (Morin 2024).

"I look around North America to see what's happening with land, how land is being used what land means ...In terms of national policy, in terms of provincial policy, in terms of state policy ... land is a commodity" - Thomas King
in *The Inconvenient Indian*, 2012

What do Indigenous peoples identify as policy solutions?

- Land-Back: Respecting Indigenous jurisdiction and autonomy over the land.
 - Governments must uphold their treaty obligations.
- Restoring traditional knowledge
 - 93% of participants said they would access teachings and time on the land if given the opportunity (NWAC 2018).
- Holding corporations accountable
 - Stronger regulations preventing grocery companies from price gouging
 - Compensation when companies degrade and pollute lands
- Healing the land
 - Governments and corporations take equal responsibility in restoring the land after it's been harmed by pollution and extraction.

Policy:



Photo retrieved from the Yellowhead Institute,
Indigenous Food Sovereignty in Ontario, 2023

Two-Eyed Seeing

Key Strengths
Lived knowledge
Place-based
Holistic
Connected to legal traditions
Extended Oral Archive

Indigenous Knowledge Systems Western Knowledge Systems



Key Strengths
Scientific method
Common principles
Highly specific
Repeatable
Measurement tools

Key Strengths from Coexistence

- Mutual research interests
- Research co-development
- Shared recognition & co-benefits
- Wider set of tools and archival data
- Holistic conception of success

Conclusion



Elder Dr. Piita Irniq delivering a keynote speech at Acadia University, for the 2024 Mawio'mi, September 30, 2024.

"We are still here, and we are always going to be here" - Elder Dr. Piita Irniq in a keynote speech at the 2024 Mawio'mi

In conclusion, the biggest threat to food security in Indigenous communities is corporate expansion into traditional lands.

- Access to land is necessary for land-based food activities, including hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering
- Pollution from corporate expansion threatens food systems
- Indigenous people are excluded from the policy process and from protecting their food systems.
- Indigenous people largely identify knowledge revitalization projects as an effective policy solution for protecting food sovereignty

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GROWING

YOUTHFULNESS



MEDIAN AGE

Growing faster
than any other
segment of the
Canadian
population

31 Métis
26 First Nations
23 Inuit

For many Indigenous people, experience with Canada's formal education systems has been a traumatic one and despite improvements over the decades, Indigenous people continue to have significantly lower levels of education than the general population. Addressing these educational gaps is especially imperative given the youthfulness of the Indigenous population.

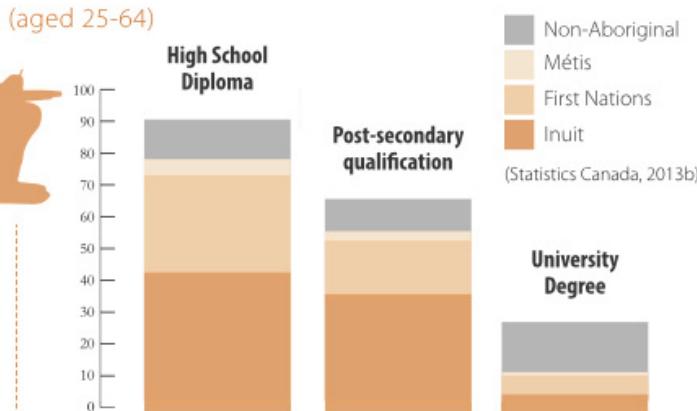
DEMOGRAPHIC WAVE

PERSONAL FACTORS

While Indigenous students dropped out of school at fairly high rates, this study showed that many went back and completed their high school at some later point in time. An estimated 14% of off-reserve First Nations, 15% of Inuit and 9% of Métis had dropped out at least once before completing their high school diploma, highlighting the need for multiple pathways to pursue post-secondary education (Bougie et al., 2013).



EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT



Please see pg. 7 of the fact sheet for the complete table of educational attainment levels of Indigenous Peoples compared to the general population.

CHRONIC

UNDERFUNDING

Reported in 2011, First Nations schools on-reserve:

Need major repairs	74%
Health and safety concerns	72%
Lack clean drinking water	32%

(Chiefs Assembly on Education [CAE], 2012)

31% of First Nations students attended off-reserve provincial schools. Having to attend secondary school some distance away from home communities is a significant barrier to high school completion for First Nations students living on reserve.

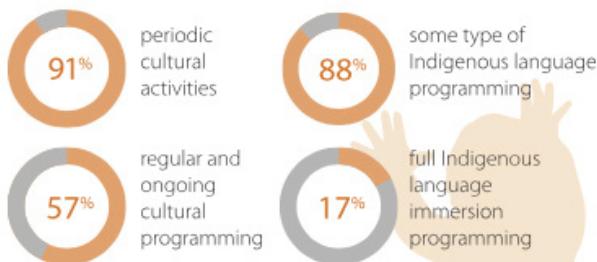
Despite population and inflationary pressures, increases in funding for INAC programs for First Nations and Inuit have remained capped at 2% annually since the mid-1990s (CAE, 2012).

18.3% decline since 1997 in the number of students funded through the Post-Secondary Student Support Program (Tasker, 2016).

ISOLATION BARRIERS

DECOLONIZING EDUCATION

First Nations schools offer approximately: (CAE, 2012)



There is a strong body of evidence that including Indigenous culture and language in education is associated with developmental and academic outcomes for Indigenous students (Findlay & Kohen, 2013).

DISPARITIES IN QUALITY AND ACCESS

CULTURAL PROGRAMMING

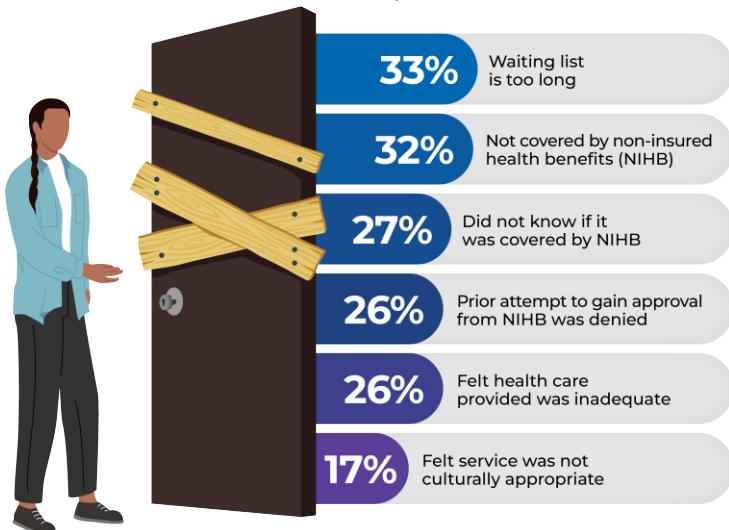
Jurisdictional Barriers to Indigenous Health in Canada

Madelynn Gaudett – October 2024

Issue: How do jurisdictional barriers in Indigenous health in Canada stem from the complex division of responsibilities between federal, provincial, and territorial governments? Do they often result in fragmented and inconsistent healthcare services? And, how does this division lead to gaps in funding, service delivery, and accountability, disproportionately affecting the health outcomes of Indigenous communities?

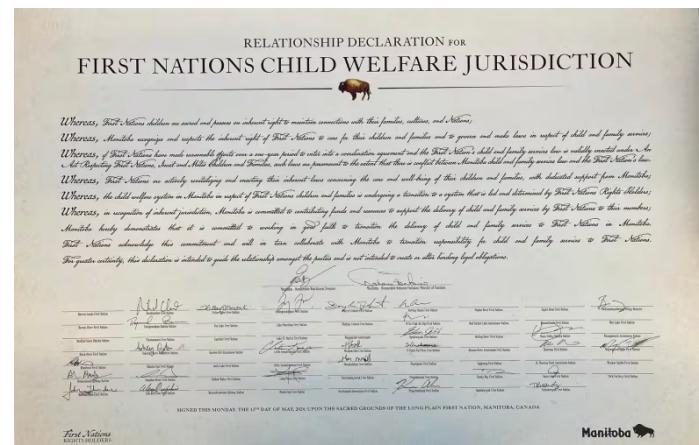
Background:

- Indigenous communities greatly value **holistic approaches** for preventative healthcare
 - Family, friends, and the community provide support and comfort when a member of the community is sick
- **Inherent Jurisdiction vs. Crown Jurisdiction**
 - Indigenous governments claim jurisdiction over their traditional territories and communities through **Inherent Jurisdiction**
- The Crown claims jurisdiction through **Crown Jurisdiction**
- Unclear division of responsibilities between **federal, provincial, and territorial governments**.
- First Nations make claims against the Government of Canada for breaches of the Crown's lawful obligations
 - Claims can occur where the **Crown failed to meet its obligations** under a Treaty or other agreement, or mismanaged First Nations' land or other assets – Assembly of First Nations, 2024



Updates:

- **Jurisdictional disputes over funding responsibility** often lead to delays in care. One of the most prominent examples is *Jordan's Principle*. Although progress has been made in applying Jordan's Principle to children, **similar jurisdictional issues continue to affect adults and elders** in Indigenous communities.
- **a lack of political will at every level of the government** to prevent occurrence of the disease among all citizens equally – C. Heffernan, G. Ferrara, R. Long, 2022
- **Bill C-92:**
 - A **new federal law which affirms Indigenous nations have jurisdiction over child and family services** and outlines national minimum standards of care



"**Healthcare is a provincial issue. They say, 'I will give you money but it's your responsibility'**" – Kory Wilson, October 31st, 2024.

Summary: Jurisdictional complexities between federal, provincial, and Indigenous governments create significant barriers to equitable health care access for Indigenous peoples in Canada. The division of responsibilities often results in gaps in services, delays in care, and confusion over who is accountable for providing health services to Indigenous communities, particularly for those living off-reserve.

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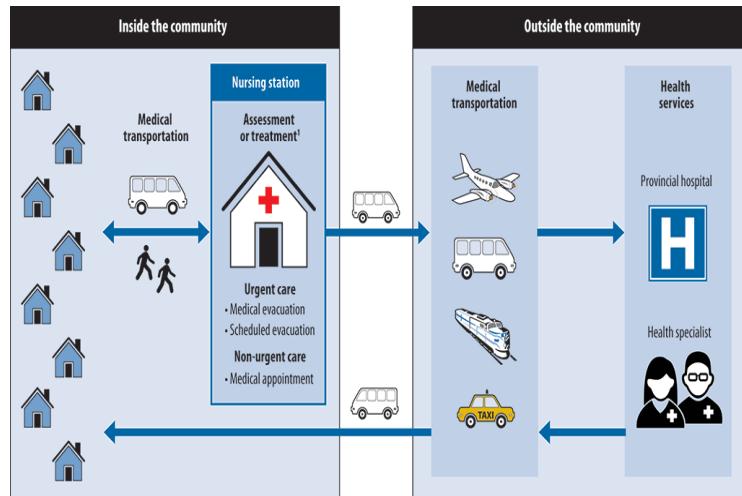
Geographic Barriers to Indigenous Health Care Access in Canada

Madelynn Gaudett – October 2024

Issue: How does geographic isolation in remote areas, like Nunavut, limit Indigenous communities' access to health care? Do these limitations result in delayed diagnoses, treatment, and emergency care due to sparse facilities and reliance on seasonal or fly-in services?

Background:

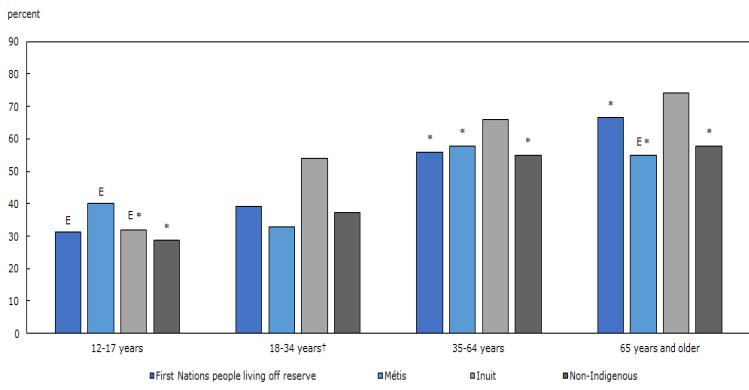
- **Remote** Indigenous communities lack adequate health infrastructure:
 - Hospitals, clinics, and pharmacies.
 - **Basic health services** such as:
 - Maternal care, mental health support, and emergency care
- **Shortage of doctors, nurses, specialists (NCCIH).**
 - Reluctance to work in isolated regions due to limited resources & difficult living situations
- Rural communities have difficulty attracting and keeping family physicians
 - Policy interventions focus on short term rather than long term (C. Ruth Wilson et al).
- Policy decisions are often **guided by urban health care models**
 - Lack of understanding the potential **negative effects in rural communities**



Updates:

- **2017-2020:** First Nations people living off reserve (**20.3%**), Métis (**17.9%**) and Inuit (**56.5%**) across Canada **reported being without a regular health care provider**, compared with their non-Indigenous counterparts (**14.5%**) (Statistics Canada).

Chart 2
Percentage of First Nations people living off reserve, Métis, Inuit and non-Indigenous people who reported lack of availability as a reason for not having a regular health care provider, by age group, Canada, 2017-2020



† reference category

‡ use with caution

* significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)

Notes: 'Lack of availability' includes people who reported not having a regular health care provider because none were available in the area or no one in the area was taking new patients or they had a provider who left. Responses 'not stated', 'don't know' and/or refusal are excluded from the calculation of the percentages.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) combined two-year files (2017-2018 and 2019-2020).

- More than 2 week wait for an appointment in remote areas
 - **25.4%** of First Nations
 - **24.2%** of Métis (Statistics Canada).
- CMA working towards **incorporating Indigenous perspectives** in all its work
 - Building relationships with Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous-led organizations
 - **NVision**, an **Indigenous-owned and led** consultancy group (Canadian Medical Association).

Summary: Many Indigenous communities, especially those in remote and northern regions of Canada, face significant challenges in accessing health care due to geographic isolation. Limited access to health infrastructure, the absence of specialized medical services, and a shortage of health professionals worsens health inequalities.

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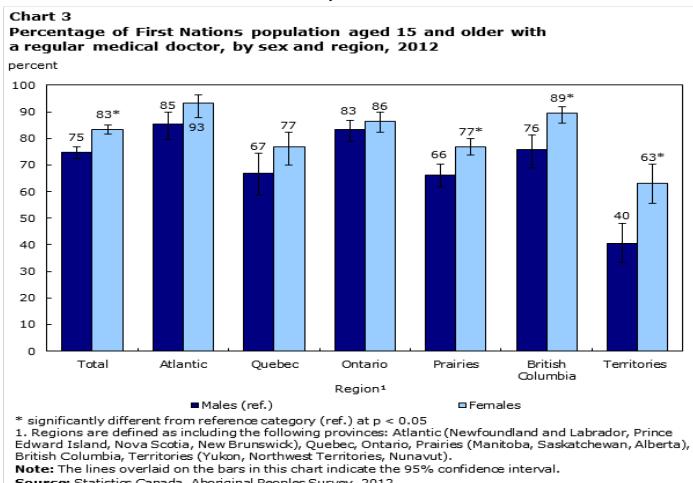
Cultural Barriers in Health Care Affect Indigenous Peoples in Canada?

Madelynn Gaudett – October 2024

Issue: How can cultural barriers in Indigenous access to healthcare in Canada be addressed? Do these barriers stem from systemic racism, lack of culturally safe practices, and historical mistrust, leading to inequitable care and health outcomes for Indigenous peoples?

Background:

- Deep cultural significance of hair and braids in First Nations and Métis cultures (Rachel May, APTN).
- Indigenous communities greatly value **holistic approaches** for preventative health care
 - Family and community provide support and comfort (Our History, Our Health).
- Racism is expressed through:
 - Longer wait times
 - Fewer referrals
 - Disrespectful treatment
- “Indigenous females waited longer for primary care, more used hospital services for non-urgent care and fewer had consultations with dental professionals” (PHAC, Canadian Medical Association Journal).



- 2012: 49% of First Nations people aged 15 and older living off reserve reported excellent or very good health (Statistics Canada).
- 2012: 67% of off-reserve First Nations **females** aged 15 and older reported having at least one chronic condition, compared with 58% of **males** (Statistics Canada).
- **Consequences of Racism Within Healthcare:**
 - Emotional and social harm
 - Losing trust in the healthcare system
 - Diminished utilization of services critical to health
 - Reduced health outcomes

Updates:

- Health team at NWAC:
 - working on a project on medical assistance in dying and its **impact on Indigenous women**
- First Nations children living on-reserve in Manitoba are now eligible for provincial disability-related services
 - Home care after a **14-year legal battle** was settled (Sav Jonsa, APTN).
 - **2 main commitments:**
 - expand children's disability services
 - create group with federal and First Nations governments (Sav Jonsa, APTN).
- Canadian Medical Association apologized for:
 - racism, neglect, and abuse done to First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples (Leanne Sanders, APTN).
- 2023: Life expectancy of Indigenous people
 - Alberta: **dropped by 7 years** since 2015
 - 60 years for Indigenous men and 66 for Indigenous women.
 - Life expectancy of non-Indigenous people:
 - 79 years for men and 84 years for women



Summary: Indigenous Peoples in Canada face significant cultural barriers to accessing health care, which contribute to persistent health inequalities. These barriers include a lack of culturally safe care, limited recognition of Indigenous healing practices, and language obstacles. Cultural differences between Indigenous patients and the mainstream health care system limit access to care.

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Healthcare Affordability in Inuit

Aaleyah S. Evans

"Indigenous concepts of health and well-being include a balance between mind, body, spirit and emotion; as well as living a good life in harmony, reciprocity and relationship with other human beings and the natural world". – National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health

Issue: How can healthcare systems improve **affordability** by reducing cost without compromising the quality of care provided to low-income patients?

Background:

The Government of Canada's support for Indigenous healthcare is limited to registered First Nations that are on the reserve and Inuit living in the north. Many of the services are not catered to, available or accessible to people that are living in urban spaces through either their respective Nations or their Province of residence. With high living cost combined with limited healthcare infrastructure, exacerbate barriers to timely affordable medical services. Inuit people are more likely to experience higher rate of illnesses.

- *"The reality for off-reserve is we are the most discriminated and disadvantaged people - no access to services from our communities/bands and on top of that we face the systemic racism that is inherent in the public health system" — November roundtable participant, quoted from Our Health, Our Voice (2022)*
- In 1984, it was a federal legislation, the Canada Health Act was passed. This allowed a universal, pre-paid
- Canada allows persons to be able to access healthcare services for free. The quality of these services will depend upon their ability to pay for care. The policies that governments and service providers employ to also make healthcare available.
- The ability for Inuit people to be able to pay for healthcare is all under the

amount of income that they make. In which income is another social determinant of health.

- The Median Total Income for **Inuit** in it was **\$27,665** for the year 2016 and for a **non-Inuit** it was \$34,604.

	First Nations (on-reserve ⁷)	First Nations (off-reserve)	Metis	Inuit ⁸	Non- Indigenous
Median Total Income (\$)	16,907	25,134	31,916	27,665	34,604
Employment rate	36.3%	52.0%	60.3%	52.5%	60.5%

Table 1: 2016 census data showing socio-economic factors often recognized as determinants of health (Statistics Canada, 2017c, 2018)

Current Update:

- In support of healthcare access for Inuit that are in Nunavut, the government signed a new **\$190 million agreement**. This includes additional funding to support the increase in cost of medical travel.
- The gap between indigenous and non-indigenous communities has remained high.
- In **2015**, the unemployment rates of Indigenous versus general Canadian populations were **12.4%** and **6.8%**.
- Having a low income contributes to individuals not pursuing education and training. This poses a barrier to travel for treatment off-reserve.
- Supplementary insurance coverage is provided low – income resident and seniors not all qualify for these benefits

Summary: For Inuit communities, limited income in remote regions makes healthcare costs and insurance premiums difficult to afford, deepening health inequities.

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Healthcare Availability in Inuit

Aaleyah S. Evans

“Indigenous control over the design and administration of health services is recognized as central to ensuring cultural safety in health care provision in their communities” - (Cameron et al., 2014; Horrill et al., 2018; Ringer, 2017).

Issues: How can healthcare systems improve **availability** by increasing local services and resources to meet the healthcare needs of Inuit communities in remote regions?

Background: Healthcare availability in Inuit communities faces critical shortages due to geographic isolation and limited local services. Many Inuit people would have to travel for very long distances even to be able to access specialized care, and community health center.

When getting to these places they are often under resources, lacking essential equipment and staff.

- *“Our people need culturally competent care provided by healthcare workers who understand the realities of Inuit life.”* - Natan Obed, President of ITK
- Inuit communities face significant barriers in healthcare availability due to a scarcity of facilities and Indigenous providers.
- According to Inuit Kanatami (ITK) only a limited number of healthcare facilities operate in the North.
- These health care facilities often lack the essential equipment forcing Inuit patients to travel south.
- According to the National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health (NCCIH) reports that there are 5% of healthcare professionals being Indigenous.
- Inuit’s regions have one of the lowest doctor-to-patient ratios in Canada.
- The gap impacts care quality and cultural relevance, as many Inuit patients find it challenging to relate to

non-Indigenous doctors who lack knowledge of Inuit culture and traditional practices.



Current Issues:

- There are many inadequate healthcare infrastructures. Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami reports that many Nunavut residents would have to travel hundreds or thousands of kilometres to access special care.
- There are high rates of suicide and trauma-related issues that are prevalent.
- With the high rates of server lack of mental health, the availability of counselling and psychiatric services remains limited.
- Often times when Indigenous peoples come to the hospital. They are dismissed or deemed to be seen as a “drunkard”

Summary: Inuit communities struggle with healthcare availability due to few local facilities, a lack of Indigenous providers, and limited access to maternal and mental health services.

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Healthcare Accessibility in Inuit

Aaleyah S. Evans

“Social determinants not only directly influence health, they are also transformative – producing subsequent circumstances that further affect health.” - UNDERSTANDING INDIGENOUS HEALTH INEQUALITIES THROUGH A SOCIAL DETERMINANTS MODEL

Issue: How can healthcare systems improve **accessibility** by overcoming geographic and transportation barriers that prevent Inuit communities from receiving timely medical care?

Background: Inuit communities face significant barriers to healthcare accessibility due to geographic isolation, challenging terrain and high cost of travel.

- According to a report by **Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK)**, over **70%** of Inuit live in remote communities with limited health care services.
- Often Inuit people are required to travel to urban centres for specialized care.
- The **National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health (NCCIH)** reports that Inuit people face **10-year lower life expectancy** than any other Canadians. This is largely due to the lack of accessible healthcare and high rates of preventable illnesses.
- The Indian Act (1985) highlights that it gives the federal government the authority to make regulations related to medical treatment and public health of Indigenous health.
- **“Does not outline an obligation to provide services and does not provide sufficient authority for a comprehensive public health and health service regulatory framework on First Nations reserves.”** – Lavoie on Healthy Debate (2017)

- **“Access to healthcare for Inuit is hampered by gaps in the system, and it’s not equitable or reflective of our needs”** - Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK)

Inuit Midwifery: Irnisuksiijiit ~ Our Right



Current Update:

- Today Inuit must travel a long distance to get access to care.
- 92% of deliveries in Nunavik occur within the community. The C-section rate of 2.4%, compared to 23% in southern Quebec.
- There are 7 CLSC on the coast, one in each village. There are in Salluit, Ivujivik, Akulivik, Puvirnituq, Inukjuak, Umiujaq and Kuujjuarapik.
- The rate of tuberculosis in Canada are highest among Inuit with rate over 300 times than Canadian-born non-Indigenous population.

Summary: Inuit communities in Canada face critical healthcare shortages, with limited local services and high travel costs to urban centers, leading to significant health disparities and urgent calls for improved access.

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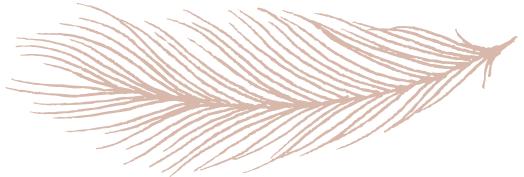


Photo Credit: Warunya Ngamcharoen, Shutterstock.com

Gigii-bapiimin:
“An Ojibwe term that reflects survival, resilience and overcoming
adversity” (Roger Roulette, Ojibwe Language Specialist)

Researching Barriers to Wellness: Indigenous People’s Struggle Toward Equitable Access to Healthcare in Canada

Madelynn Gaudett and Aaleyah Evans

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FOREWORD

We, the authors, are a group of Acadia University's POLS 2003: Introduction to Public Policy class. Our professor, Dr. Cynthia Alexander has given us the opportunity to choose one **Social Determinant of Health** and research its effect on Indigenous peoples in Canada. This report outlines our research on the affordability, availability, and accessibility challenges faced by Inuit people in obtaining equitable healthcare in Canada. It demonstrates how colonization plays a significant role in these struggles.

Although our research does focus on the issues that Indigenous people encounter when trying to access healthcare, it must be stressed that **we are not Indigenous** and therefore cannot fully understand the experiences, needs, and priorities of Indigenous peoples. This report is merely a compilation of the research we have done.

In our research, we have attempted to draw information from a **variety of Indigenous sources** as well as statistics provided by Statistics Canada.

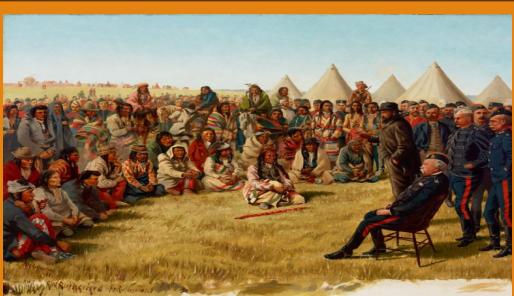
Some Indigenous sources I used are:

- **First Nations Health Authority**
- **APTN News**
- **National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health**
- **Native Women's Association of Canada**
- **Pauktuutit**
- **Nunatsiaq**
- **The Mi'kmaq Newspaper**



Art Credit: Christi Belcourt

Creating this report has taught us how important it is to listen and engage with Indigenous voices as they are the people that have been most negatively impacted by the colonization of Canada.



"The Surrender of Poundmaker at Major-General Middleton at Battleford, Saskatchewan, on May 26, 1885." Painting by Robert William Rutherford. Library and Archives Canada.

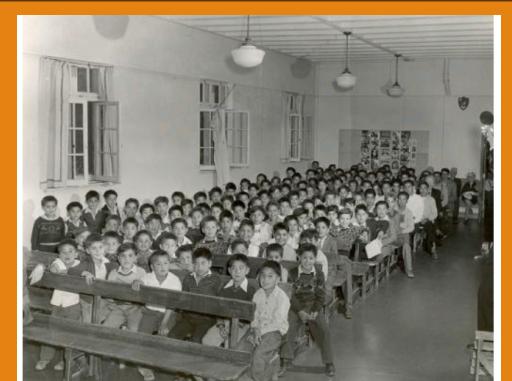
We would like to take this opportunity to thank the **Indigenous experts** who have shared their knowledge and experiences with our class, including:

- **Elder Dr. Lorraine Peters Whitman, Darlene Peters Copeland, Brooke Paul, Lara Hartman, Cole Kippenhuck, Dr. Piita Irniq, Kory Wilson, Kayla Mansfield, Rosemary Cooper and If we wish to go down the road of decolonization, the voices of Canada's Indigenous population must be heard**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Indigenous Peoples in Canada have been struggling with significant barriers in **accessing equitable healthcare**, which contributes to persistent health inequalities. Compared to Canada's non-Indigenous population, the overall health and wellbeing of an Indigenous individual and Indigenous communities is drastically lower. These inequities are rooted in the **traumatic history of colonialism and colonization, racism, marginalization, and dislocation, and social exclusion** that continue to impact Indigenous families and communities today in 2024.

"The treatment of Indigenous people in health care settings has often been cruel and dismissive, reflecting deep systemic racism. These are not isolated incidents but patterns of neglect that stem from colonial policies like the Indian Act, leaving a legacy of mistrust and harm." – Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond (Aki-Kwe)



Male students in the assembly hall of the Alberni Indian Residential School, 1960s. United Church Archives, Toronto, from Mission to Partnership Collection.

The Indian Act

- The establishment of the Indian Act in 1876 disturbed the **traditional healing methods, holistic approaches to preventative healthcare, and the social structures** of Indigenous Peoples
- **Symptoms:** Poorer health, higher rates of suicide, higher rates of death in children and youth, inadequate housing, higher rates of unemployment
- Caused: **trauma, human rights violations, cultural and social disruption**

Racist and oppressive colonial structures and systems caused great harm to Indigenous Peoples:

- **Intergenerational Trauma**
- PTSD
 - Stress
 - Violence
 - Behaviour problems in children
 - Substance abuse

"We need accomplices, not allies"

– Kory Wilson, October 31st, 2024, at 2:15pm

Residential schools

- School system created by the Canadian Government and administered by churches
- Assimilating them into mainstream Canadian society
- The children were severely abused

The system forcefully separated children from their families and forbade them from:

- Speaking their language
- Acknowledging their Indigenous heritage
- Practicing their culture

The federal government has a responsibility that must be satisfied. They must listen to the **94 Calls to Action** by the **Truth and Reconciliation Commission**

- They cover a wide range of areas:
 - Child welfare
 - Education
 - Health
 - Justice
 - Language and Culture
 - Social and Economic Outcomes

Indigenous-led Organizations

- Native Women's Association of Canada
- Indigenous Rising
- Indspire
- Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami
- Crossroads
- First Nations Child & Family Caring Society



Credit: Traditional Indigenous Dwellings, Destination Indigenous

Jordan's Principle and Bill C-92

- Jordan's ensures that First Nations children **can access the supports they need, when they need them**
- Bill C-2 is a federal law which **affirms Indigenous nations have jurisdiction over child and family services** and outlines national minimum standards of care
- When implementing one of these, the Indigenous person in charge of asking for it must be extremely clear about what they want and what they need



*“Federal Indigenous health policy has fallen by the wayside for decades” – Mike Gouldhawke, *The Failure of Federal Indigenous Healthcare Policy in Canada**

This report will explore the impacts of colonialism on Indigenous health as well as what is being done, and what can be done, to rectify the inequalities faced by Indigenous people in accessing culturally safe healthcare:

- The impact of colonialism on the health of Indigenous individuals, families, and communities
- The steps that are being taken already to make healthcare more equitable for Indigenous Peoples
- Healthcare laws that have been created to benefit Indigenous peoples, including youth
- Reforms that Indigenous peoples wish to see enacted for the betterment of Canada's healthcare system

BACKGROUND: PRE-CONTACT HEALTH

“Traditional healing refers to the health practices, approaches, knowledge and beliefs that incorporate First Nations healing and wellness” – FNHA

Good health stems from an active lifestyle and healthy traditional diets – Our History, Our Health, FNHA.

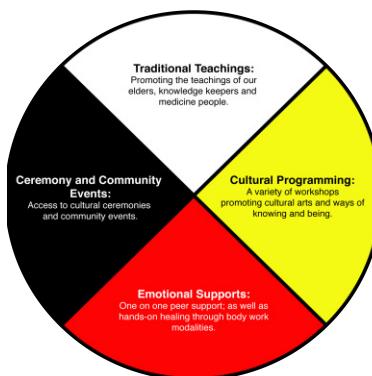
- Diets are balanced and include protein, healthy fats, and some fruits and vegetables
- **Oral history**, and ceremonial, spiritual, and physical elements are all a part of good health

Indigenous communities greatly value **holistic approaches** for preventative healthcare

- Family, friends, and the community provide support and comfort when a member of the community is sick

Other “**health-protecting**” characteristics of pre-contact lifestyles:

- Small size, low population density
- Mobility on **land and water**
- Seasonal relocations
- Knowledge of the local environment
- Environmentally friendly practices



Culture:

Different regions and communities of First Nations had **varying cultures**

- General practices included hunting, fishing, and gathering food
- Complex social and cultural institutions existed
- Sophisticated methods of harvesting, management, and preservation of food

“Although there were some health problems related to work, such as arthritis, prior to contact First Nations experienced virtually no diabetes and no dental cavities [...] some instances of First Nations people having a limited number of infectious diseases and dermatological problems”
– Our History, Our Health, FNHA

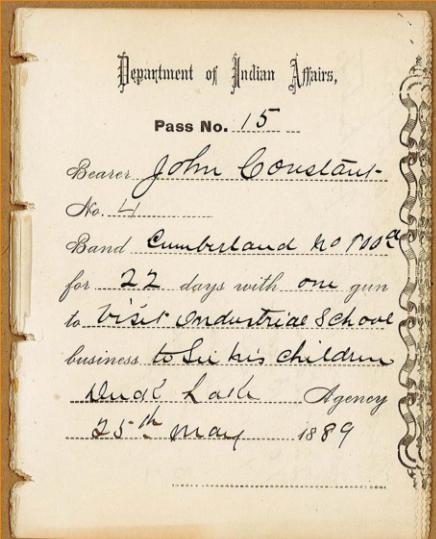
Traditional healing utilized:

- Ceremonies
- Plant, animal or mineral-based medicines
- Energy therapies and physical techniques



Photo Credit: Traditional Healers Program, SCO

THE INDIAN ACT



Source: The Indian Act, The Canadian Encyclopedia

"It is a paradoxical document that has enabled trauma, human rights violations and social and cultural disruption for generations of Indigenous peoples" – TCE,

The Indian Act first came into effect on **April 12th, 1876**.

- Consolidated a number of colonial laws that aimed to assimilate Indigenous peoples into Euro-Canadian culture
- One goal was to eliminate First Nations culture
- Granted the federal government exclusive rights to create legislation regarding **"Indian status, bands, and Indian reserves" – TCE, 2006 – 2022**
- Outlines the governmental obligations to First Nations peoples



© INDIGENOUS CORPORATE TRAINING INC.
Source: Indigenous Corporate Training, 8 Key Issues for Indigenous Peoples in Canada, December 5th, 2022.

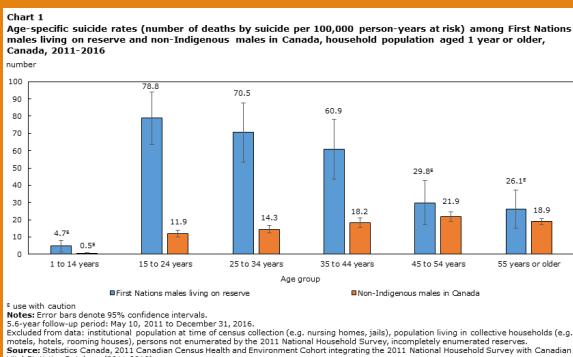
The World Health Organization investigated health determinants and now recognizes "European colonization as a common and fundamental underlying determinant of Indigenous health" – ICT, 2022

Despite any improvements made to the Indian Act, **"Indigenous people remain at higher risk for illness and earlier death than non-Indigenous people" – ICT, 2022**

- Chronic diseases such as diabetes, tuberculosis and heart disease, as well as cancer, are increasing
- Higher rate of respiratory problems
- Higher rate of other infectious diseases among Indigenous children – ICT, 2022

Indigenous peoples in Canada have some of the highest suicide rates in the world

- For Inuit, the suicide rate is **9 times** the national rate
- For First nations, the suicide rate is **3 times** the national average
- For Métis, the suicide rate is **twice the national average**



Source: Canada's National Observer

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS AND HORRIFIC HEALTH

7

"In addition to the aforementioned abuses, conditions in the schools were such that disease and death among the children was unmanageable and included the spread of smallpox, measles, influenza and TB" – C. Heffernan, G. Ferrara, R. Long, 2022

Summary of risks for infection by Mycobacterium tuberculosis, and disease if infected

Risk of infection	Risk of disease after infection
Entering school with infection/disease	Repeated infections/infecting dose Malnutrition/undernourishment • diet type; withholding of food as punishment
• Children who were already ill were not to be admitted but may have been for purposes of reaching enrolment quotas (funding to the schools was on a per capita basis)	Stress-induced • dislocation from family and home; forbidden use of language, cultural practice, and religious practices; abusive punishments and practices
Lack of access to medical care Re-purposed buildings with characteristics related to:	Child labour Communication barriers Concurrent viral illness Lack of access to medical care
• Overcrowding • Poor ventilation; poor ultraviolet light exposure	

Source: C. Heffernan, G. Ferrara, R. Long, 2022

"Sister Marie Baptiste had a supply of sticks as long and thick as pool cues. When she heard me speak my language, she'd lift up her hands and bring the stick down on me. I've still got bumps and scars on my hands. I have to wear special gloves because the cold weather really hurts my hands. I tried very hard not to cry when I was being beaten and I can still just turn off my feelings.... And I'm lucky. Many of the men my age, they either didn't make it, committed suicide or died violent deaths, or alcohol got them. And it wasn't just my generation. My grandmother, who's in her late nineties, to this day it's too painful for her to talk about what happened to her at the school."

– Musqueam Nation former chief George Guerin,
Kuper Island school

Stolen from our Embrace, p 62

Source: indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca

"TB programmes in Canada ought to acknowledge and confront the legacy of residential schools as relevant to the experience of disease for Indigenous peoples and communities" – C. Heffernan, G. Ferrara, R. Long, 2022

Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action:

18. We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to acknowledge that the current state of Aboriginal health in Canada is a direct result of previous Canadian government policies, including residential schools, and to recognize and implement the health-care rights of Aboriginal people as identified in international law, constitutional law, and under the Treaties.

What were Residential Schools?

- School system created by the Canadian Government and administered by churches
- Integrating Indigenous Peoples into Euro-Canadian and Christian ways of living
- Assimilating them into mainstream Canadian society

Excluído: <objeto>

The system forcefully separated children from their families and forbade them from:

- Speaking their language
- Acknowledging their Indigenous heritage
- Practicing their culture

If these rules were broken, the children were severely abused. Residential school survivors have spoken about physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological abuse

- Residential schools only provided inappropriate education to the Indigenous children
 - Focus on prayer
 - Manual labour in agriculture
 - Light industry such as woodworking
 - Domestic work such as laundry and sewing

We were taken away from our parents and forced to live in institutions where we were abused, where we were mistreated, where we were neglected, and where we lost our innocence." - Chief Phil Fontaine, a survivor and former National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations

BACKGROUND: COLONIALISM'S IMPACT ON THE HEALTH OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

“Since the early days of colonialism, Indigenous Peoples have been proclaiming the health harming effects of oppressive political, economic, and social structures and systems” – Charlotte Loppie & Fred Wien, NCCIH.



1800s: Some epidemics have originated in the prairies

- The introduction of infectious diseases from Europe and Asia + increase in the severity of warfare had **devastating effects** on Indigenous Peoples

Confederation: “The Indian people at the time were in a vacuum, were being taken advantage of both socially and economically; also, through inadequate health resources, were considered a vanishing race” – *Micmac News, January 1971*

1953, Alberta: Madeleine Kéteskwēw Dion Stout was 7 years old when her appendix almost burst – CMHR

- Living in Kehewin Cree Nation
- No doctors or nurses
- No clinic or hospital

1971: “*health care in most Indian and Inuit communities of Canada is a national disgrace*” – *Micmac News*

- Mortality rate of “Indian and Inuit” children in 2 **and a half times higher** than the rate for all other Canadian children
- Young “Indian and Inuit” adults is **5 times** that of other Canadian adults
- “Lack of even minimum standards of medical care, aggravated by poor housing, has created **appalling conditions**” – PC’s policy proposal on native people, *Micmac News*

1991: Dr. Jay Wortman, of “Metis extraction himself,” says he became a doctor due to his concern over the poor health in native communities compared to the rest of the country – *Micmac News*

Epidemics spread through First Nations communities upon contact with Europeans

- Inland contact was primarily through traders like the **Hudson's Bay Company** and **explorers** such as Alexander McKenzie and Simon Fraser – FNHA

Racist and oppressive colonial structures and systems caused great harm to Indigenous Peoples

- Intergenerational Trauma**
- PTSD**
 - Stress → substance abuse
 - Violence
 - Behaviour problems in children

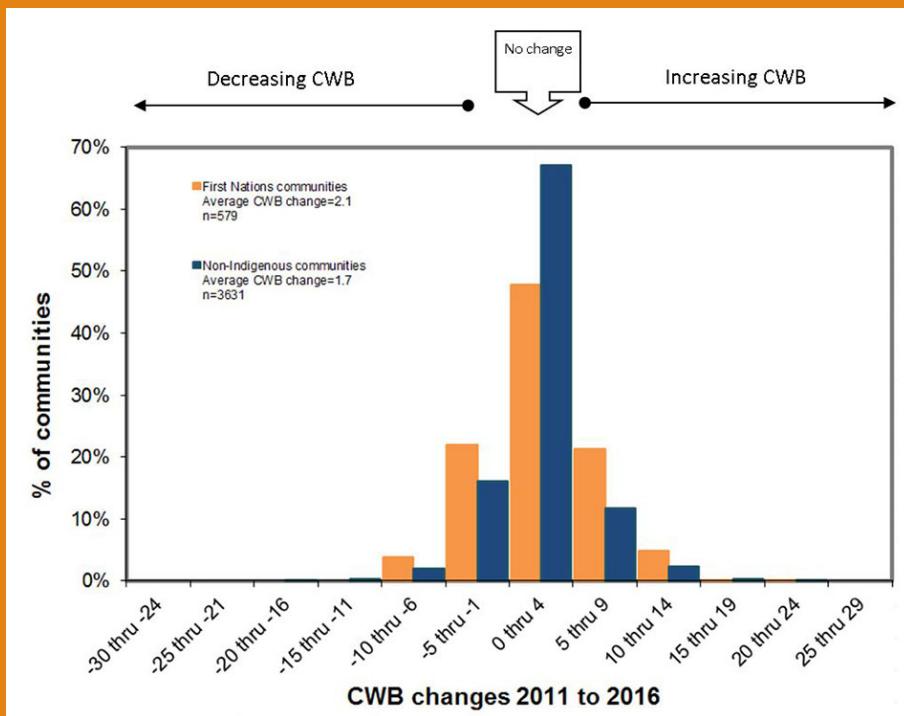
“There is now a growing body of research which suggests that trauma can change the way DNA is expressed and how those changes are passed on to the next generation” – Charlotte Loppie & Fred Wien, NCCIH

Trauma can alter the part of a person’s DNA called the epigenome and has been **linked to the inheritance of diseases** such as cancer, type 2 diabetes, Alzheimer’s, depression, and addiction – Loppie & Wien, NCCIH



HEALTHY LIVING
“It requires healthy people. It requires healthy families. It requires healthy communities. It requires healthy nations.”
- Dr. Jay Wortman, a doctor of Metis extraction, said the responsibility for overall health comes from within through prevention and the promotion of healthy lifestyles.
Photo by Clifford Paul

Micmac News, December 1991, Page 4



Change in individual First Nations and non-Indigenous communities' CWB Scores, 2011 to 2016.
Source: Statistics Canada, National Household Survey, 2011 and Census of Population, 2016.

20th Century:

First Nations retained virtually no political power in the face of repressive Canadian legislation.

- Social disruption of existing First Nations health care systems
- Damage to traditional belief systems
- Decrease in orally-held knowledge – FNHA

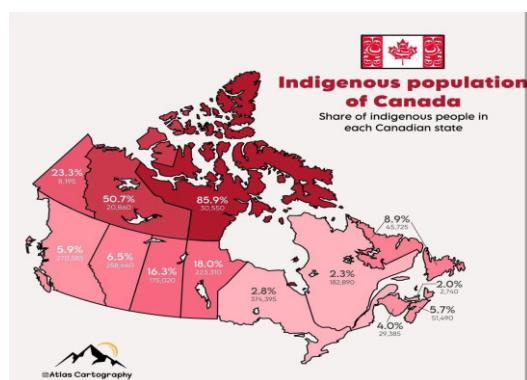
New “infectious agents” wreaking havoc with First Nations health:

- displacement from territory and resources
- poverty and reduced food security
- crowded living conditions

Western medicine was only sporadically available; it was seldom of the highest quality and largely segregated. Little if any western medical care was available to First Nations to deal with tuberculosis until the **1940s** – FNHA

Community Well-Being Component Scores, 1981 to 2016:

- 4 components: education, labour force activity, income and housing
- Each can range from a low of 0 to a high of 100



Affordability of Healthcare in Inuit Communities

"We Inuit are continually faced with barriers to receiving culturally relevant and effective health care, with the burden of those barriers often falling on the most vulnerable, including elders, children, and those living in remote areas." — Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK)

Healthcare affordability remains a significant challenge, particularly for Indigenous communities such as the Inuit. Limited access to culturally relevant healthcare, geographic isolation, and systemic barriers contribute to these difficulties. While efforts like the Indigenous Health Equity Fund aim to address these gaps, affordability remains a complex issue, compounded by the rising costs of healthcare and the need for tailored services that respect traditional knowledge and practices.

"The reality for off-reserve is we are the most discriminated and disadvantaged people - no access to services from our communities/bands and on top of that we face the systemic racism that is inherent in the public health system" — November roundtable participant, quoted from Our Health, Our Voice (2022)

Geographic Isolation:

- Approximately **81.6% of Inuit** living in very remote areas do not have a regular healthcare provider, compared to **30.1% of non-Indigenous people** in similar regions.
- The high cost of **medical transportation** is a significant barrier; in **2020-21**, the Government of Nunavut projected expenditures of **CAD 107 million on medical travel, equating to CAD 2,903 per resident.**

Economic Challenges

- Inuit communities often experience higher unemployment rates and lower incomes, making healthcare expenses less affordable.
- Limited access to employer-based insurance exacerbates financial barriers to healthcare.
- The ability for Inuit people to be able to pay for healthcare is all under the amount of income that they make. In which income is another social determinant of health.
- The **Median Total Income for Inuit** in it was **\$27,665** for the year **2016** and for a **non-Inuit** it was **\$34,604**.

	First Nations (on-reserve ²)	First Nations (off-reserve)	Metis	Inuit ³	Non- Indigenous
Median Total Income (\$)	16,907	25,134	31,916	27,665	34,604
Employment rate	36.3%	52.0%	60.3%	52.5%	60.5%

Table 1.1: 2016 census data showing socio-economic factors often recognized as determinants of health (Statistics Canada, 2017c, 2018)

High Costs of Living:

- In northern regions, the cost of basic goods is 2–3 times higher than in southern Canada. This economic pressure forces many to prioritize essentials over healthcare.

"The cost of healthcare is not just monetary but also cultural. For Inuit, affordability means access to services that align with our values and traditions, without the added burden of traveling far or facing systemic racism. True affordability considers the whole person, our history, our identity, and our needs as a people." — Natan Obed, President of Inuit Tapiriit

Availability of Healthcare in Inuit Communities

"Availability of healthcare for Inuit communities is not just about having services; it's about having services that are accessible, timely, and culturally appropriate. Without the infrastructure in place to support these needs, many Inuit are left without adequate care, which leads to worse health outcomes." — Natan Obed, President of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK)

The availability of healthcare is a critical issue for Inuit communities, where geographical isolation, limited infrastructure, and a shortage of culturally competent services often hinder access to necessary care. Despite efforts to improve healthcare delivery, many Inuit continue to face significant barriers, such as long wait times, inadequate local resources, and the absence of culturally relevant healthcare providers. This report examines the challenges surrounding healthcare availability for Inuit, explores ongoing initiatives aimed at addressing these issues, and provides policy recommendations to ensure that Inuit communities receive timely, accessible, and culturally appropriate healthcare services.

"Many Inuit communities continue to struggle with the availability of healthcare, particularly in remote areas where medical professionals are scarce and essential services are limited. Without access to timely and culturally appropriate care, Inuit face significant health challenges." — Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK)

Geographic Barriers:

- Inuit communities, particularly those in remote areas, face significant geographic barriers to accessing healthcare. Many regions lack sufficient healthcare infrastructure, meaning that Inuit often need to travel long distances to access basic services.
- Approximately **50% of Inuit in remote regions do not have access to a local healthcare provider**, leading to reliance on distant medical facilities.



Transportation Challenges:

- The cost and logistics of medical transportation are significant issues for Inuit. Travel to urban centers for specialized care is expensive and not always covered, leading to delays in treatment and additional financial burdens.
- In Nunavut, medical travel costs have exceeded CAD 107 million in recent years, which translates to over CAD 2,900 per resident.

Shortage of Healthcare Professionals:

- A lack of healthcare professionals, including doctors, nurses, and specialists, in Inuit regions severely limits the availability of care. This shortage leads to long wait times and fewer opportunities for preventative and emergency care.
- Nunavut, where the majority of Inuit live, has one of the lowest numbers of doctors per capita in Canada, with fewer than 10 doctors available for every 1,000 residents.

Accessibility of Healthcare in Inuit Communities

Access to healthcare remains a critical issue for Inuit communities, where geographic isolation, language barriers, and systemic inequities hinder equitable care. Despite efforts to bridge these gaps, many Inuit still face challenges in accessing essential services such as midwifery, mental health support, and emergency care. This report explores the factors affecting healthcare accessibility for Inuit, supported by Indigenous perspectives and statistics, and provides recommendations for creating localized, culturally appropriate, and sustainable healthcare solutions.

"Accessibility means more than proximity to services; it's about creating spaces where Inuit feel safe, heard, and respected. Without culturally relevant care and support in our language, healthcare remains out of reach for many Inuit." — Natan Obed, President of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK)

- According to Statistics Canada, **Eight in ten Inuit and one-half of off-reserve First Nations people and Métis** living in very remote areas **in 2017-2020** did not have a regular health care provider



Lack of Midwifery Services:

- Midwifery services, which are culturally and medically significant for Inuit, are severely limited in most Inuit communities. The absence of local midwives forces many women to travel to southern Canada for childbirth
- Only **12% of Inuit women** have access to midwifery services within their own community.

Language Barriers:

- Healthcare services often do not provide translation or support in Inuktitut, which makes accessing care difficult for many Inuit, particularly elders.
- Over **60% of Inuit** report **difficulty understanding medical information** because it is not available in their **first language**, Inuktitut.

Delayed Emergency Responses:

- Emergency response times in remote Inuit communities are significantly delayed due to limited medical infrastructure and transportation challenges.
- Response times for medical emergencies in Nunavut average over 90 minutes compared to 20 minutes in urban centers.

"Access to healthcare is a basic right, but for many Indigenous peoples, including Inuit, it remains a daily struggle. Ensuring services are available in our communities and in our languages is essential to addressing the inequities we face." — Marjorie Tahbone, Indigenous Advocate and Health Educator.

GROUPS: WORKING TOWARDS BETTER OVERALL HEALTH OF INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

13

Indigenous Led Organizations

Indigenous Rising: An Indigenous Environmental Network Project

- “Indigenous Peoples are Rising Up in Solidarity to defend our Rights as Indigenous Peoples; to protect the Sacredness of, the Territorial Integrity of, and Rights of (Grandmother) Mother Earth; and the Rights of Future Generations”

Indspire: Indigenous Education is Canada’s Future

- “In partnership with Indigenous, private and public sector stakeholders, Indspire educates, connects and invests in Indigenous people so they will achieve their highest potential”

Native Women’s Association of Canada:

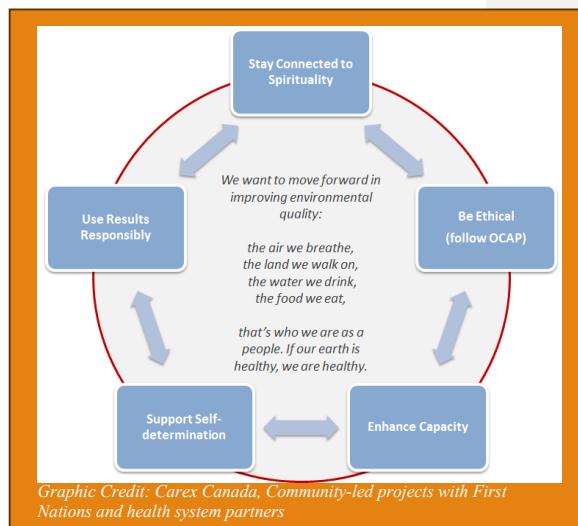
- “Defends the rights, delivers programming to, and amplifies the perspectives of Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse people in Canada”

First Nations Child & Family Caring Society:

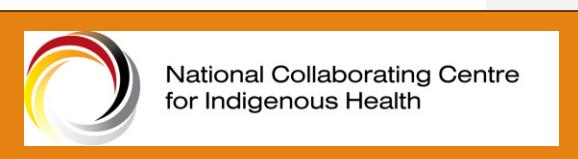
- “Stands with First Nations children, youth and families so they have equitable opportunities to grow safely at home, be healthy, get a good education and be proud of who they are”

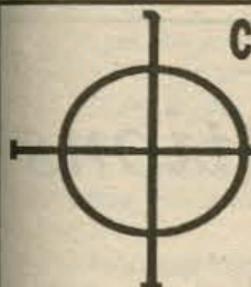
Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami:

- “Our communities face significant social and economic challenges around issues such as education, health, poverty and housing. ITK is taking action to address these complex challenges through research, political advocacy, and public outreach and education”



“While our centre brings forth a strong focus on the social determinants of health, we aim to **move beyond health as conceived as a matter of illness due to bio-medical cause and effect** [...] We take the approach that **Indigenous ways of knowing and being**, including concepts of **spirituality, connectedness and reciprocity to the land and all life, self-reliance, and self-determination** advance health equality and outcomes” – National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health, 2005-2024.





CROSSROADS CONSULTANTS AND ASSOCIATES

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Ontario N6E 1V0
(519) 686-7061

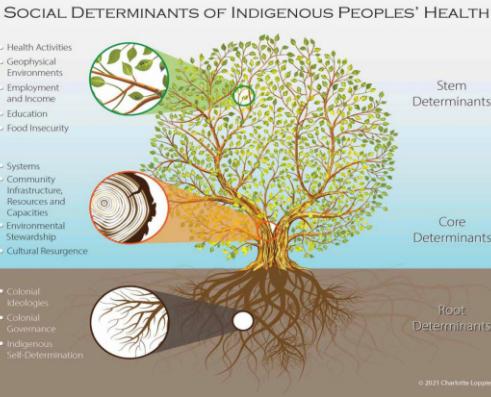
CROSSROADS is a multi-disciplinary group of social services professionals who serve as consultants and trainers to Native and non-Native organizations and institutions regarding social policy, social services programming, communications and cross-cultural education. CROSSROADS bring together trained & experienced Native professionals related to the needs of the client/agency. Our group includes women and men with training and experience in criminal justice, social work, Native policy issues, corrections, family violence, non-profit organizational administration & development, addictions, social research, social service program design and development and the issues of Native youth.

The philosophy behind CROSSROADS? We are committed to working together to promote effective, holistic, social service organizational health and development. We are interested in empowering Native people. The needs of First Nations people in Canada are great and many. Our group is Native and diverse in training and experience. We are positive and optimistic regarding the possibilities for agencies and organizations such as yours in building impactful programming for Native communities.

If you think CROSSROADS can be of assistance to your agency or organization, please contact us to discuss the possibilities!

For further information contact Andrew J. Stevens Jr.
Consultant at (519) 686-7061

SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH: IMPACT ON INDIGENOUS PEOPLES



“Individuals, communities and nations that experience inequalities in the social determinants of health not only carry an additional burden of health problems, but they are often restricted from access to resources that might ameliorate problems” – Charlotte Reading & Fred Wien, 2009.

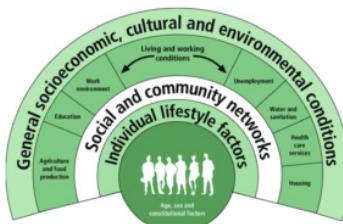
The World Health Organization defines the Social Determinants of Health as “the non-medical factors that influence health outcomes. They are the **conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life**” – WHO, 2024.

The National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health outlines **15 SDOH** that encompass the broader social forces that impact health:

- Poverty
- Employment
- Working Conditions
- Education and Literacy
- Social Status
- Social Support Networks
- Housing
- Physical Environments
- Geographic Location
- Access to Health Services
- Food Security
- Early Child Development
- Gender
- Culture
- Language

“The health disparities and inequities experienced by Indigenous peoples are **rooted in racism and marginalization, dislocation, and social exclusion**”
– NCCIH

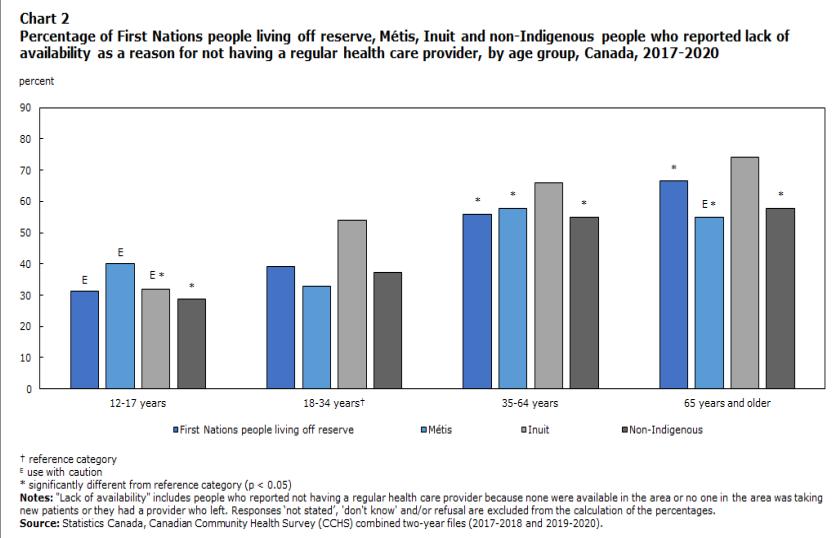
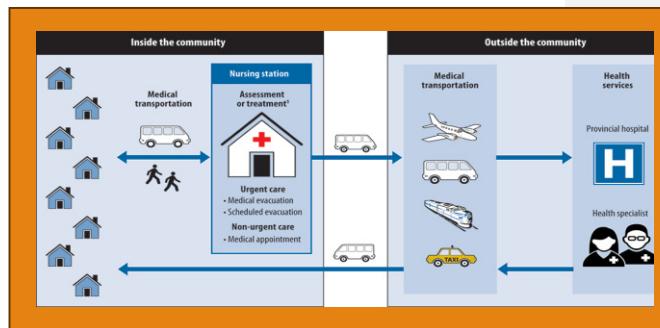
Colonization and colonialism influence **all** social determinants of health of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis individuals, families, and communities.



LACK OF EQUITABLE ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE: GEOGRAPHICAL BARRIERS

2017-2020:

- First Nations people living off reserve (**20.3%**), Métis (**17.9%**) and Inuit (**56.5%**) across Canada reported being without a regular health care provider, compared with their non-Indigenous counterparts (**14.5%**) – Statistics Canada



The **Canadian Medical Association** is working towards **incorporating Indigenous perspectives** in all its work

- Building relationships with Indigenous peoples and Indigenous-led organizations
 - NVision
 - **Indigenous owned and led** consultancy group

– Canadian Medical Association, 2024

In Remote Areas:

- **25.4%** of First Nations
- **24.2%** of Métis

Waited for **more than 2 weeks** for an appointment
– Statistics Canada, 2019-2020

Remote Indigenous communities lack adequate health infrastructure:

- Hospitals, clinics, and pharmacies
- **Basic health services** such as:
 - Maternal care, mental health support, and emergency care

Policy:

- Policy decisions are often guided by **urban health care models**
 - There is a lack of understanding the potential **negative effects in rural communities**
- Policy interventions focus on **short term** rather than long term
 - C. Ruth Wilson et. al.

HEALTH LAWS DIRECTED AT INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

What is Jordan's Principle?

Jordan's Principle is a child first principle named in memory of Jordan River Anderson. Jordan was a First Nations child from Norway House Cree Nation in Manitoba. Born with complex medical needs, Jordan spent more than two years unnecessarily in hospital while the province of Manitoba and the federal government argued over who should pay for his at home care. Jordan died in the hospital at the age of five years old, never having spent a day in a family home.

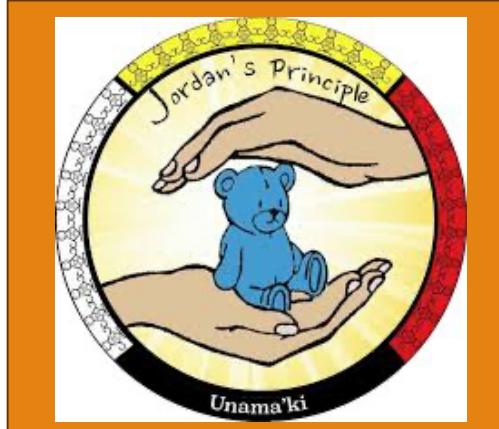
Credit: First Nations Child & Family Caring Society

Jordan's Principle:

Ensures that First Nations children **can access the supports they need, when they need them**

- Supports are provided on the basis of substantive equality, best interests of the child, **culturally relevant service provision**, and account for distinct community circumstances

Jurisdictional disputes over funding responsibility often lead to delays in care. One of the most prominent examples is *Jordan's Principle*. Although progress has been made in applying Jordan's Principle to children, **similar jurisdictional issues continue to affect adults and elders** in Indigenous communities.



Unama'ki in the Mi'kmaw language means "land of fog"

Personal Experience with Jordan's Principle:

"I needed Jordan's Principle to get my children health services in regard to their health – help with ADHD and Autism. **Without it, I would be fighting for my children's health instead of doing what I'm doing right now**" – Brooke Paul (October 29th, 2024, at 1:24pm).

"Children's reaction to pain is different depending on their age... a young boy came into the shelter and his wrist was broken. They didn't know it was broken because **he was so used to having** pain that his pain tolerance was very high. He also wasn't able to tell anyone that he was hurting or where it hurt because he did not speak English." – Brooke Paul (October 29th, 2024, at 2:00pm).



- In **2022**, Canada ordered to fund research through the Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy to assess available data on the application of Jordan's Principle – First Nations Child & Family Caring Society

BILL C-92

In 2020, Bill C-92 became law

- A federal law which **affirms Indigenous nations have jurisdiction over child and family services** and outlines national minimum standards of care
- Peguis First Nation became the first Indigenous community in Manitoba to take control of child welfare under federal legislation – CBC News, 2024

Province of Manitoba says it “supported that move through amendments to the Child and Family Services Act, which allowed Indigenous government bodies and CFS providers to collaborate and share information, as well as **prioritize child placements with family, kin or community**”
– CBC News, 2024

“Part of an inherent and Aboriginal right to self-governance; to establish national standards in this area, in response to the **TRC’s Call to Action #4**” – Metallic et al, 2020

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Some Implementation Strategies:

NATIONAL STANDARDS

1. Define what Best Interests of the Child means for your own Indigenous community as soon as possible. Write it down, make it public and distribute it to Children Services Managers and Workers as soon as possible.
2. Ensure workers and advocates know the new National Standards, your BIOC standards, and advocate for them to be applied in every case.
3. Consider **strategic and coordinated advocacy** with other Indigenous groups. In particular, how the BIOC and “reasonable efforts” of this Act are actually interpreted and applied will make a huge difference for Indigenous children.
4. Even if you don’t have a full piece of legislation and a coordination agreement, the National Standards require notice, consultation and provide standards. Develop your own laws to fill the gaps. This will build toward jurisdiction as well.

For example, consider clauses like:

- Active efforts, not just reasonable efforts, to keep a child in family care,
- Maximum contact with siblings, extended family, community and territory, as a principle for all children out of family care,
- Impermissible reasoning, where time out of parental care alone cannot be grounds for permanently ending the child’s legal relationships

5. Internally, develop a list of people in or related to the community who are able and willing to act as safe houses in emergencies or take in children temporarily or permanently. Also develop a list of people who might not be able to provide full-time care, but may be able to provide respite, regular or special visits, and facilitate familial and cultural connections for children out of family care.

6. Keep advocating for children’s and families needs as a whole, as well as for the needs of youth in care or aging out of care today.

JURISDICTION

7. This is your **inherent jurisdiction**, not jurisdiction granted or delegated to you.
8. Start sooner rather than later.
9. Define own BIOC, definitions and terms and start drafting (see National Standards above).
10. Consider what are the most important aspects of child welfare to your community, or most significant differences from provincial statutes or practices, and start writing these down.
11. Nothing in the Act states jurisdiction must be all or nothing. Consider your options and what your community’s capacity and goals are.

For example:

- Some communities have large populations and pre-existing agreements and/or have delegated agencies, and may want to develop, administer and enforce all aspects of child and family services, as well as create or expand dispute resolution processes.
- Some communities may have small populations, or not want to take on all aspects of administering and delivering children services. You may want to develop laws and coordination agreements that outline, for instance, standards for your children’s care. Like other governments, you may choose to delegate certain aspects of administration and service delivery while retaining oversight or final decision making power.
- Some communities with shared values and goals may choose to work together on all or some aspects of law development, administration, service delivery, enforcement and dispute resolution.

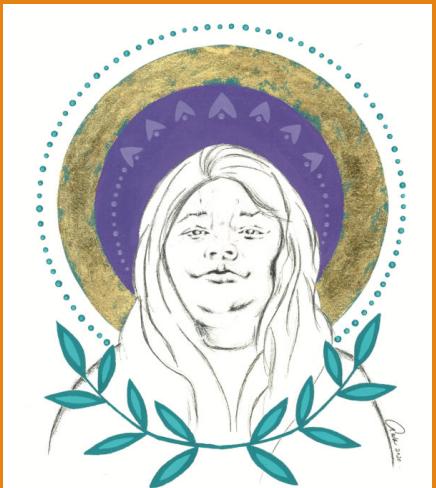
12. If you want your jurisdiction to extend to children off-reserve and even out of province, write this in clearly, and consider how you want this to work in practice, so you can explain this to provincial ministries and provide them guidance.

Source: Factsheet | Bill C-92 Implementation Strategies, Yellowhead Institute, Metallic et al, July 4th, 2019.

“Indigenous child and family service agencies have been doing the work and they know where funding is lacking. They have seen the results when programs are underfunded and staff is overwhelmed. **They have crucial knowledge** about federal child and family laws that have hindered their work of serving families in a culturally safe and holistic way. This knowledge can be drawn upon when creating the documents necessary to enter into negotiation” – Indigenous Child & Family Services Directors Our Children Our Way Society



JOYCE'S PRINCIPLE



Credit: Joyce's Principle Website

Origin:

- **September 28th, 2020.**
- The death of Joyce Echaquan, an Indigenous woman
- Did not receive medical care at the Joliette Hospital Center in Quebec
- Documented racist treatment she experienced in a Facebook Live video
- She passed away on the livestream

The Reason Behind Joyce's Principle:

- “Joyce’s Principle aims to guarantee all Indigenous people the right of equitable access to all social and health services without any discrimination,, as well as right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical, mention, emotional and spiritual health” – Paul-Émile Ottawa, Chef of the Council of the Atikamekw of Manawan
- “Joyce’s Principle requires the recognition and respect of Indigenous people’s traditional and living knowledge in all aspects of health” – Paul-Émile Ottawa, Chef of the Council of the Atikamekw of Manawan

“Without limitation, the following measures should be adopted:

- I. Health and social services organizations should be committed to continuous education related to Joyce's Principle. These training courses must be developed by, or at least in collaboration with, the Indigenous stakeholders in health and social services;
 - II. Health and social services organizations must put in place all the measures necessary to ensure the cultural safety of Indigenous people;
 - III. Health and social services organizations must facilitate access to an Ombudsman specific to Indigenous people;
 - IV. Health and social service organizations must prevent, denounce and condemn any manifestation of racism against Indigenous people.”
- Joyce's Principle Brief by the Council of the Atikamekw of Manawan and the Council de la Nation Atikamekw, November 2020.



Credit: Sidhartha Banerjee, Canadian Press, The Gazette.

JURISDICTIONAL DISPUTES: GAPS IN SERVICE & DELAYS IN CARE

“Studies have shown that jurisdictional confusion creates barriers to First Nations and Inuit accessing services other Canadians can expect” – Sara Gangbar, 2020

“Canadians faced with serious health issues experience considerable challenges navigating their provincial healthcare system. For First Nations and Inuit patients, this is **intensified** by having to continuously cross jurisdictional boundaries to access the care they need – **They are faced with additional challenges because federal and provincial authorities often disagree on which system should pay for which services**” – Sara Gangbar, 2020.

Inherent Jurisdiction vs. Crown Jurisdiction

- Indigenous governments claim jurisdiction over their traditional territories and communities through **Inherent Jurisdiction**
- The Crown claims jurisdiction through **Crown Jurisdiction**

First Nations make claims against the Government of Canada for breaches of the Crown’s lawful obligations

- Specific claims can occur where the **Crown failed to meet its obligations** under a Treaty or other agreement, or mismanaged First Nations’ land or other assets – Assembly of First Nations, 2024



Source: SAS Institute: Supporting Indigenous Communities with Analytics

“Indigenous peoples who comprise less than 5% of the total Canadian population experience the highest overall rate of disease. Moreover, the Prairie Provinces of Canada remain a regional hotbed with ~50% of the total annual episodes of TB disease being diagnosed in this population. At the same time, the overall rate of disease among non-Indigenous Canadians is approaching pre-elimination at 0.4/100,000 population” – C. Heffernan, G. Ferrara, R. Long, 2022

These facts suggest that Canada – a nation with the resources to achieve TB elimination – suffers from:

- a lack of political will at every level of the government** to prevent occurrence of the disease among all citizens equally – C. Heffernan, G. Ferrara, R. Long, 2022

“Healthcare is a provincial issue. They say, ‘I will give you money but it’s your responsibility’” – Kory Wilson, October 31st, 2024.

“If communities choose to give notice of their intention to exercise jurisdiction, there is **no guarantee that implementation of an Indigenous community’s child and family laws will be any more than surface level, because provincial and federal laws may prevail. [...] **Decisions about services may take even longer, as three levels of government will need to negotiate responsibilities”****

– Metallic et al, 2020



Source: CBC, Manitoba, First Nations leaders sign declaration pledging child welfare jurisdictional transfer

CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE AND SUSTAINABLE CARE

“Indigenous Cultural Safety is the process of making spaces, services and organizations safer and more equitable for Indigenous people by considering current and historical colonial impact and seeking to eliminate structural racism and discrimination – BC Centre for Disease Control

Cultural safety is an important instrument to amend significant health disparities which **result from colonial trauma** – CPAC, 2024



Source: Canadian Partnership Against Cancer, Was There Integration of Traditional Medicine for Those Wishing to Have It

Kory Wilson’s Thoughts on Culturally Safe Healthcare:

- “Cultural reform is needed in the healthcare system”
 - “A lot of money is given to healthcare, but it is not used properly”
 - “Students must take an Indigenous course to get into certain medical schools”
 - **“All of the players have to be fully informed of the people they will be working with”**
 - “Research will not solve real world problems”
 - “Peer-reviewed; people must stand up if they see something wrong”
 - **“We need accomplices, not allies”**
- Kory Wilson, October 31st, 2024, at 2:15pm

THINGS THAT HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS CAN DO TO CREATE A CULTURALLY SAFE ENVIRONMENT

1. Get to know Indigenous cultures, remember that no two cultures are the same
 2. Understand that traditional healing practices are very much a part of most Indigenous cultures. Asking about traditional healing practices can open a door to respect and communication
 3. Try to involve the patient by asking for their input and opinions
 4. Take an Indigenous awareness course. Understanding the history, influences, protocols, challenges, and issues will provide confidence and knowledge to create a culturally competent environment
- Bob Joseph, 9 Tips for a Culturally Competent Environment for Indigenous Patients





Source: Government of Canada, Common Definitions on Cultural Safety: Chief Public Health Officer Health Professional Forum

CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS IN HEALTHCARE

Canada's public health care system operates under a **jurisdictional patchwork**:

- Divided between the **provinces, territories, the federally funded NIHB program for First Nations and Inuit, and finally, limited Métis programs via Indigenous Services Canada**
- This means that there are **15 different** healthcare systems in the country
- Health care in general has **NEVER** appeared in the country's Constitution
 - It merely **delegates jurisdiction for hospitals to the provinces**
 - There is no mention of Indigenous Peoples or their jurisdiction

Policies such as health and safety, food inspection and food safety, and smoke-free environments **must be adjusted** to allow the **inclusion of traditional medicines and practices in healthcare settings**
 – CPAC, 2024

Life expectancy for Inuit is a **decade less** than the Canadian average, for instance, and **institutional racism** is so severe that **Indigenous people strategically avoid public hospitals**, when possible, in favour of clinics managed and staffed by Indigenous people.

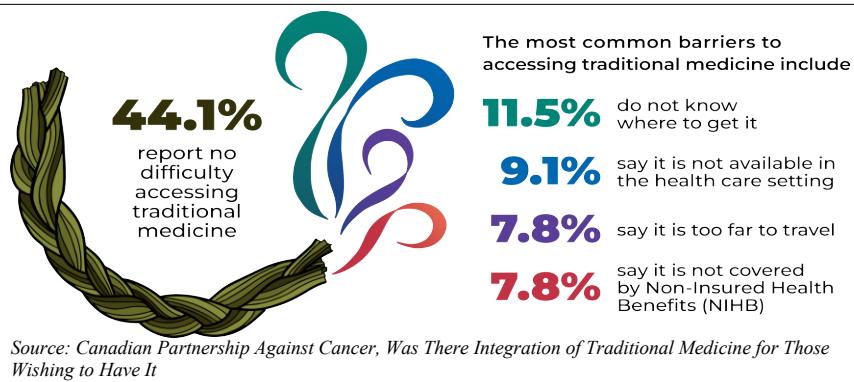
– Mike Gouldhawke

Barriers include:

- Inequitable federal funding for health and social services for First Nations children living on reserve
- Failure to address jurisdictional gaps in services and fully implement Jordan's Principle
- Lack of cultural safety in services provision.

Roots of These Barriers:

- Historical and Contemporary Colonialism
- Colonial Policies and Legislation



“These barriers continue to contribute to health inequities for Indigenous children youth, families, and communities” – NCCIH,

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

As non-Indigenous students, we acknowledge the limits of our understanding, yet we are committed to ongoing learning and advocacy. Since we have not shared the same or similar experiences as First Nations, Métis, or Inuit, we are Excluído: I am not in a position to make recommendations of policy amendments or new policies. This research underscores the importance of listening, amplifying Indigenous voices, and working toward a future where all people in Canada have equitable access to healthcare.

Throughout this research journey, we have gained a deeper appreciation for the complexities surrounding healthcare access for Indigenous peoples in Canada. **Engaging with Indigenous sources and voices has highlighted the multidimensional barriers that are rooted in historical and ongoing colonial practices**. Despite the numerous challenges outlined in the previous pages, it is essential to recognize the strength and resilience of Indigenous communities as they continue advocating for equitable healthcare and wellbeing.

One of our most significant realizations from this project on the Social Determinants of Health is the **pressing need for decolonization efforts to be meaningful and inclusive**. True progress requires a commitment from policymakers, healthcare systems, and society as a whole to prioritize Indigenous perspectives and ensure that solutions are co-created with Indigenous communities. Only then can we hope to dismantle the systemic inequities that persist.

In addition to the research we have done on our own, we have also had the opportunity to listen to and learn from our class's First Nations and Inuit partners which has made a major impact on our lives. We would like to express our utmost gratitude to Elder Lorraine Peters Whitman, Darlene Peters Copeland, Brooke Paul, Ana Martin, Dr. Piita Irmik, Cole Kippenhuck, and Kory Wilson for sharing their immense knowledge and experiences with us. Your knowledge has not only affected our research but also made us realize the impacts of colonialism that are still so present today.

The insights gained through this research remind us of our collective responsibility to support and uphold the health and rights of Indigenous peoples, not as an act of charity or pity, but as a pursuit of justice.

THE SEVEN GRANDFATHER TEACHINGS



"We want to take back our education and teach our history, our language and our culture. We have begun to tell our story – our history – and we want to tell it in our own words to the world, so that this will never happen to any of the other nations in the world."

- Shirley Williams, Residential School Survivor

Source: New Brunswick Social Studies Methods

GLOSSARY

ABBREVIATIONS:

ADHD: Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder

CMHR: Canadian Museum for Human Rights

CPAC: Canadian Partnership Against Cancer

FNHA: First Nations Health Authority

ICT: Indigenous Corporate Training

NCCIH: National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health

NIHB: Non-Insured Health Benefits

PHAC: Public Health Agency of Canada

PTSD: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

SDOH: Social Determinants of Health

TB: Tuberculosis

TCE: The Canadian Encyclopedia

TRC: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada

WHO: World Health Organization

DEFINITIONS:

Calls to Action: The 94 Calls to Action are actionable policy recommendations meant to aid the healing process in two ways: acknowledging the full, horrifying history of the residential schools system, and creating systems to prevent these abuses from ever happening again.

Crown Jurisdiction: The Crown in Canada is a symbol of the state and its government, and is the source of the country's non-partisan sovereign authority. The Crown's jurisdiction is divided between the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government.

Epigenome: The epigenome consists of chemical compounds that modify, or mark, the genome in a way that tells it what to do, where to do it, and when to do it.

Inherent Jurisdiction: In Canada, inherent jurisdiction is the authority of a superior court to hear any case, except when a statute or rule limits its authority. Superior courts are the basic level of superior court in each province and territory.

Indian Act: The Indian Act is the principal law through which the federal government administers Indian status, local First Nations governments and the management of reserve land and communal monies. The Indian Act does not include Métis or Inuit peoples. The Act came into power on 12 April 1876.

Residential Schools: Government-sponsored religious schools that were established to assimilate Indigenous children into Euro-Canadian culture. There was extreme abuse done to the children and the living conditions were inhumane.

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Barriers to Indigenous Wellness

Inequitable Healthcare Access



Racist and oppressive colonial structures and systems cause great harm to Indigenous Peoples:

- Intergenerational Trauma, PTSD
- Stress, Substance Abuse, Violence
- Behaviour problems in children

- 
- Native Women's Association of Canada
 - Indigenous Rising
 - Indspire
 - Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami
 - Crossroads
 - First Nations Child & Family Caring Society

- Inuit, the suicide rate is 9 times the national rate
- First Nations, the suicide rate is 3 times the national average
- Métis, the suicide rate is twice the national average

Personal Experience with Jordan's Principle:

"I needed Jordan's Principle to get my children health services in regard to their health—help with ADHD and autism. **Without it, I would be fighting for my children's health instead of doing what I'm doing right now.**" – Brooke Paul (October 29th, 2024, at 1:24pm).

"We need accomplices, not allies."

-Kory Wilson, October 31st, 2024, at 2:15pm



A Shift in Interests: Indigenous Artwork, Art Through Language, and Cultural Expression

Madalyn Conway

Issue: How has **colonialization** impacted *the spread and creation* of Indigenous artwork?

Background:

Loss of land, assimilation, and forced displacement led to *commodification and the loss of the cultural significance* of Indigenous artwork.

- Indigenous artwork reflects their *connection to the land, spirituality, and community*
- New materials such as oil paint and printmaking *brought by colonization displaced* Indigenous traditional artwork
- Indigenous artwork was **commodified** and **separated** from the original cultural context by **colonial commercialization**
- Call 67 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action asks for federal government funding to *undertake a review of museums alongside Indigenous peoples* to achieve compliance with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- Thousands of tourists have purchased **imitation Inuit artwork** assuming that it is authentic

Updates:

Artwork has now become a symbol of cultural resistance and activism for Indigenous people and a way to advocate for change, yet still suffers from underfunding and lack of recognition.

- From the late 1940s onward, Inuit artists have contributed to thriving set of media that **addresses Indigenous struggles with their identity** which has been published to the National Gallery of Canada
- The National Gallery received their *first sculpture by a Nunavik artist*, named Charlie Sivuarapik, in 1956
- The collaboration between settlers and First Nations peoples has *created a cross-cultural view of two-eyed seeing* which allows the two styles to interact
- The mixing of cultures produces artwork that contains the cultural significance of Indigenous artists and the style and medium of settler artists
- Indigenous people's artwork still faces a **lack of recognition due to cultural disconnect** and lack of understanding

"Though the 2017 "reconciliation year" (otherwise known as "Canada 150") brought increased Indigenous representation into Canada's art institutions, by 2020, financial pressures resulting from COVID-19 have exposed art institutional **priorities and "accomplishments"** (**or the lack of them**) in the intervening years."

-Lindsay Nixon (Yellowhead Institute, 2020)

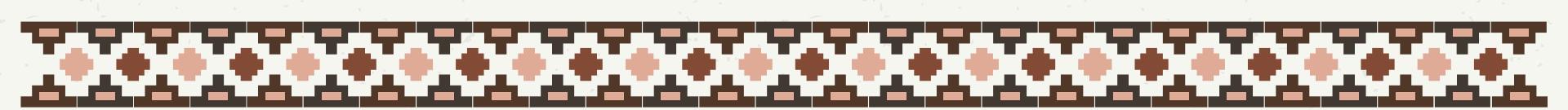
"They are making money off of our likenesses, our art, our people, our cultural practices."

-Natan Obed, President of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, a non-profit Inuit advocacy organization (2024)

Summary: Indigenous artworks *hold significant cultural and traditional meanings*. Colonization resulted in the **commodification** and **false reproduction** of traditional Indigenous works, however, there has been an increase in representation in recent years through galleries like the National Gallery of Canada setting aside sections specifically for Indigenous artwork to be recognized.

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Environmental Crisis and Indigenous Community of Canada



Lauren Kirton (0306112k) - POLS-2003

Dr. CJ Alexander

Dedication

This report is dedicated to the memory of Murray Sinclair, whose life's work had a tremendous impact on the movement for truth and reconciliation in Canada. His unwavering commitment to addressing the long-term repercussions of residential schools on Indigenous communities serves as a powerful reminder of the value of truth and justice. Sinclair's determination to prevent history from repeating itself is mirrored in his own words: "We have described for you a mountain. We have shown you the road to the top. We call upon you to do the climbing." This stunning message captures his unwavering efforts to establish a future where Indigenous peoples are treated with dignity, respect, and equality. His legacy continues to inspire and motivate us to act, to climb that mountain, and to effect genuine change.



"Murray Sinclair: Senator; judge; professor of law; chancellor of Queen's University; and Chief Commissioner of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Hawlii Pichette" (Dundas, n.d.)

Overview of the Crisis

- Mining, oil extraction, and deforestation cause pollution.
- Climate change leads to harsh weather, melting Arctic ice, and biodiversity loss.
- Environmental damage leads to health disparities.
- Loss of traditional lands disrupts cultural practices.
- Insufficient integration in policy-making.
- Weak enforcement of environmental regulations.



"The paper mill in Dryden, Ont., is located upstream from Grassy Narrows. A former owner of the mill operated a chemical plant on the site that dumped 9,000 kg of mercury into the water in the 1960s and '70s. (Ed Ou/CBC)" (*Children of the Poisoned River*, n.d.)

Health Challenges

Contaminated Water and Pollution:

- Continued boil water advisories
- Industrial activities like mining and petrochemicals contribute
- Increased chronic disease rates

Food Insecurity and Nutrition:

- Disrupts traditional food systems
- Increases reliance on expensive, less nutritious food
- Increases obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease rates

Environmental Degradation Impact on Mental Health:

- Increases stress and anxiety
- Worsens mental health
- Waterborne illnesses and healthcare access cause maternal health issues.



"Athabasca River and Mount Hardisty. Jasper National Park, Alberta, Canada. The Athabasca River flows from the north from the Rocky Mountains, past the tar sands, and into Lake Athabasca. Eventually the waters join the Mackenzie River and empty into the Arctic Ocean. Studies show that pollutant levels in the Athabasca River are higher downstream of the tar sands mines. Image by JD Hascup via Flickr (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)." (Hance, 2024)



Land and Cultural Impacts

Loss of sacred land:

- Industrial projects like pipelines, mining, and deforestation disrupt Indigenous territories. Ex: The Coastal GasLink pipeline on Wet'suwet'en territory

Biodiversity decline:

- Ecosystem devastation leads to the extinction of species essential for traditional hunting, fishing, and foraging. Ex: Decline of caribou and salmon in Yukon and Northwest

Cultural erosion:

- The limited access to traditional areas in Indigenous cultures is a significant obstacle to their spiritual and environmental practices. Ex: disruption of ceremonies, language preservation, and community traditions on the land.



"Chief Ernest Alfred, Kwa̱kwabg̓las, elected council member of the 'Ng̓mgis First Nation traditional leader of the Ławitsis First Nation, at the naming ceremony for his granddaughter in Alert Bay." (Moskowitz, 2020)

Policy Gaps

Limited Integration of Traditional Ecological Knowledge:

- Indigenous knowledge systems often excluded from environmental decision-making
- Missed opportunity for culturally informed, sustained policy solutions

Indigenous Consultation Issues:

- Current policies lack meaningful engagement
- Decisions often made without free, prior, informed consent

Weak Environmental Regulations:

- Existing laws inadequately address industrial pollution and land degradation
- Lack of enforcement mechanisms and penalties

Funding Deficiencies:

- Limited community-led monitoring support
- Insufficient investment in infrastructure



“Derek Moonias transfers an air delivery of bottled water from a plane on to a truck, destined to be distributed within the Neskantaga First Nation, in Neskantaga, Ont., in 2023. Chris Young/The Canadian Press” (Casey & The Canadian Press, 2024)



Policy Recommendation 1: Indigenous-Led Initiatives

Key Proposal:

- The initiative aims to support and extend Indigenous-led environmental projects by providing financing and resources, empowering Indigenous people to develop solutions based on their cultural practices and traditional ecological knowledge

Key Benefits:

- Indigenous-led fire management in British Columbia has reduced wildfire risks and restored ecosystems, promoting self-determination and enhancing traditional practices like sustainable hunting, fishing, and agriculture, thereby strengthening cultural relevance and promoting self-governance.



“Solar panels are being installed on a ground mount outside the former bingo hall at Fort Folly First Nation. (Alexandre Silberman/CBC) (“4 Innovative Indigenous-led Clean Energy Projects,” 2024)

Policy Recommendation 2: Stricter Environmental protections

Key Proposal:

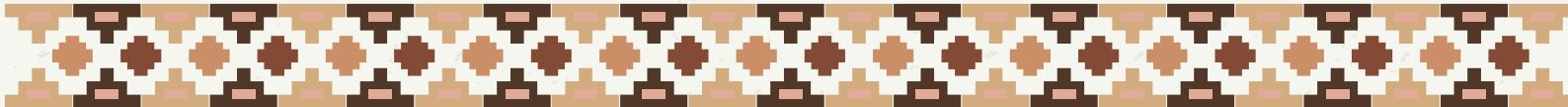
- Strengthen laws like EAA and CEPA to ensure better protection of Indigenous lands and ecosystems.

Key Benefits:

- Stricter regulations can reduce pollution from industrial activities, improve health outcomes by reducing respiratory illnesses and cancer rates, and ensure long-term compliance and remediation of environmental damage by holding corporations accountable.



Adaptive engineering to protect the Alaska–Canada Highway in a warming climate. A section that was especially prone to permafrost thawing and collapse (top; photo credit: Daniel Fortier), was rebuilt and fitted with thermosyphons to maintain the frozen state of the permafrost (bottom; photo credit: Fabrice Calmels). (Povoroznyuk et al., 2022)



Policy Recommendation 3: Food Sovereignty Programs

Key Proposal:

- Support Indigenous food sovereignty by promoting initiatives to revive traditional practices, shifting subsidies from commercial processed foods to nutritious, locally sourced, and traditional foods.

Key Benefits:

- Replacing processed foods with traditional diets can improve health outcomes, strengthen ecosystems, and support cultural preservation by reducing chronic illnesses, protecting caribou and salmon populations, and reinforcing cultural identity and community resilience.



(Sinclair, 2024)



Expected Outcomes

Key Outcomes:

- The project aims to reduce pollution levels by 20% within five years, improve health outcomes by reducing respiratory illnesses and cancer rates, strengthen traditional practices and integrate TEK in environmental policies, and enhance community resilience by improving preparedness for climate-related disasters through emergency response training, flood-resistant infrastructure, and sustainable food systems.



(Food Sovereignty, n.d.)

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* These sources pertain to the images used in this slideshow. No additional research was conducted beyond the major report and policy briefs that informed and guided my analysis*

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Climate Change and Food Security: A Crisis for Indigenous Communities

How does climate change disrupt food security in First Nations communities, and what are the resulting health impacts when viewed through the WHO Social Determinants of Health framework?



CHANGING SEASONS

Indigenous communities are facing challenges due to extreme weather patterns and longer freezing periods, which disrupt traditional harvesting seasons, reducing the availability of traditional crops and affecting their food security. (Canada, 2024)



SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

Invest in community agricultural projects, such as greenhouses and traditional farming, to reduce imports, enhance food sovereignty, and foster First Nations independence through sustainable and climate-resilient practices. (Indigenous Food Systems Community of Practice | First Nations Development Institute, n.d.) & (Native Farm to School | First Nations Development Institute, n.d.)



COMMUNITY-LED INITIATIVES

Fund initiatives run by Indigenous communities to revive and restore traditional hunting, fishing, and agricultural practices, enabling communities to regain control of their food systems. Support for First Nations-led food security programs and initiatives that help to achieve. Community connection and First Nations connection. (Dumont, 2024)



WILDLIFE MIGRATION

Climate change is causing a rapid decline in caribou and salmon populations in Yukon and Northwest Territories, impacting Indigenous hunting and fishing, food security, and cultural practices, affecting hunting practices and First Nations traditions. (Hong, 2022)



FOOD INSECURITY RATES

Food insecurity is a major concern in Inuit communities, with 32% of Inuit adults in Inuit Nunangat eating insufficiently and 27% facing hunger. In Nunavut and Nunavik, 55% of Inuit adults live in food-insecure households, while the rates are 42% in Nunatsiavut and 33% in the Inuvialuit Region. Indigenous communities experience higher food insecurity rates than the national average, highlighting the need. (Government of Canada, Statistics Canada, 2017)



ECOSYSTEM CO-MANAGEMENT

Collaborate with Indigenous communities to co-manage climate adaptation strategies that protect ecosystems essential to traditional hunting, fishing, and foraging practices.

(Leveraging Co-Stewardship and Co-Management | First Nations Development Institute, n.d.)



RESILIENT FOOD SYSTEMS

First Nations have enhanced food security through sustainable practices, promoting the establishment of programs focusing on creating resilient food systems through knowledge sharing within the community. (Wood, 2023)



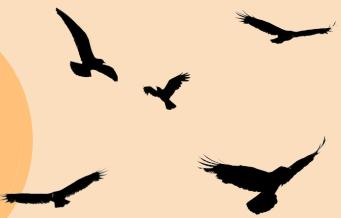
CALL TO ACTION

Federal and provincial governments must work with Indigenous communities to maintain critical ecosystems, invest in community-driven agriculture, and restructure food security programs to meet the specific needs of First Nations communities. In light of climate change, the right to access and co-manage traditional food sources is an issue of social justice and Indigenous rights.

The Erasure of Indigenous Cultures and Ways of Being



Section 10 of the Indian Act allowed Indigenous communities to self-govern, but allowed bands to **exclude children** of mothers who have **lost status due to marriage** (Yellowhead Institute, 2022)



Indigenous cultural practices like **tobacco smudging** are often **restricted** on campuses such as U Waterloo and U Victoria (UWaterloo, UVictoria, 2020)

Cultural Indigenous knowledge integrated into Nature-based Solutions can provide up to **37% of the reduction needed** to reach the climate goals in the Paris Agreement (Arctic Institute, 2021)

A translator for the **Nunavik language** earns **25c per word** while a **French language** translator makes **75c per word**. (Rosemary Cooper, 2024)

From 2016-2021, there was a **4.3% decrease** in speakers of an Indigenous Language (Stats Canada, 2024)



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Rosemary Cooper, Speech, 2024



Culture, Language, and Land

Madalyn Conway

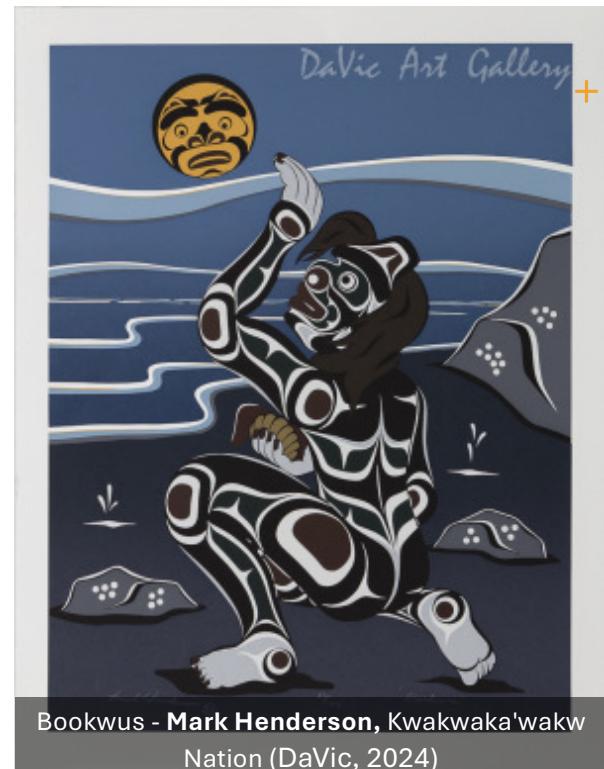


Canada Goose - Stephanie Kewistep Vancouver B.C. 1995
Sd.
Sa Seagull

Canada Goose – Stephanie Kewistep, Cree Artist
(DaVic, 2024)

Background

- The Indian Act of 1876 revoked the status of Indigenous women who married non-Indigenous men, and thus their children would also lack status
- These children were taken from their homes and forced into residential “schools” (Yellowhead Institute, 2022)
- The Canadian Constitution Act of 1982 recognized and affirmed existing treaty rights of Indigenous peoples
- However, any injustice committed before the Canadian Constitution Act of 1982 was dealt with in court and often favored the crown (Laws.Justice.Gov, 2024)



The Impact of Indigenous Cultures on the Land

The Engaging Indigenous Peoples in Climate Change Policy (EIPCCP) program engages in national climate change discussions and aims to strengthen the connection between Indigenous practices and colonial land (NWAC 2024)

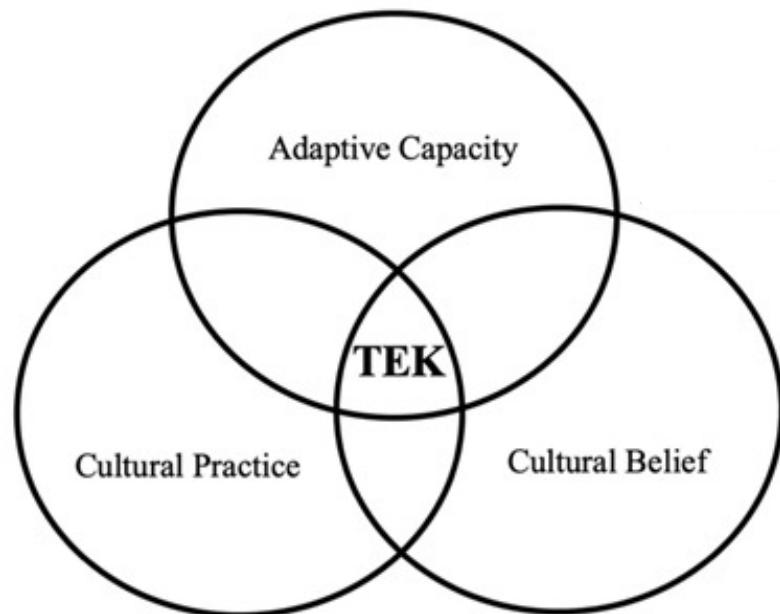
The most biologically diverse and rich environments follow Indigenous ways of being and cultural practices

Colonial practices such as large-scale farming, deforestation, and pollution have reduced land availability



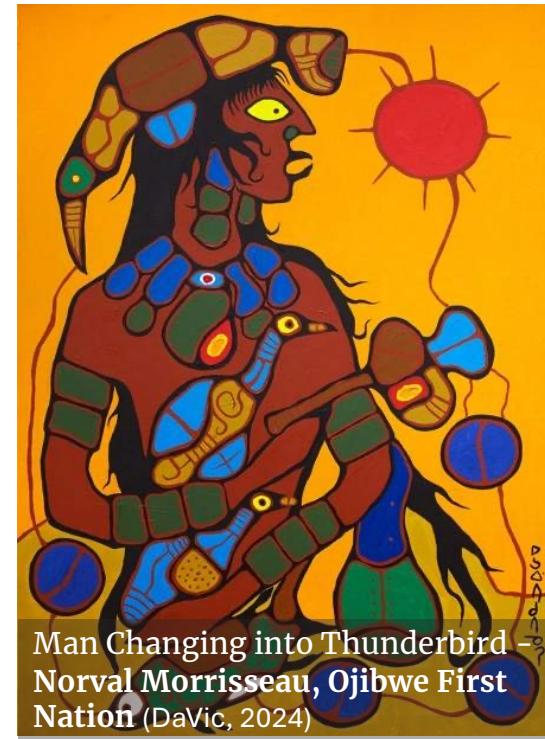
Indigenous-Led Land Management

- Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) have been used to study agriculture, pharmacology, soil, water, and many other fields of climate change (Corntassel & Bryce, 2024)
- Indigenous-led projects like this have reduced or delayed one quarter of total annual carbon dioxide emissions in North America
- Indigenous-managed lands in Canada, Australia, and Brazil are equally/more biodiverse than national conservation lands that are managed by the federal governments (National Observer, 2019)



Colonial Practices Enacted onto the Land

- Colonial remapping over the last several centuries have left place names corrupted
- They were often given English and French names that were translated from an Indigenous language such as Nose Hill and Medicine Hat in Alberta (Yellowhead Institute, 2023)
- Eight out of ten Inuit in Nunangat experience food insecurity, and hunters are often denied insurance with the excuse of “dangerous working conditions” (Rosemary Cooper, 2024)



Resource Extraction

Big banks (RBC, TD, Scotia, BMO, and CIBC) often finance resource extraction on stolen lands and do little to address this spending when called out

TD Bank invested a total of \$113 billion from 2016-2020 to the Transmountain Expansion Project, an oil pipeline in Alberta

BMO invested over \$97 billion from 2016-2020 in resource extraction (Yellowhead Institute, 2022)

This leads to health inequalities, lower incomes, and harm to ways of being for Indigenous peoples

Inuit Midwifery: Irnisuksiijiit ~ Our Right



Inuit birthers have the **RIGHT** to choose their health care provider, location, and who is present during birth, regardless of where they live in Canada



Integration of INUIT-LED midwifery services and education is an act of **SELF-DETERMINATION** and a pathway toward language and culture **REVITALIZATION**



REPRODUCTIVE SOVEREIGNTY

**RECLAIM & SUSTAIN
INUIT
MIDWIFERY**

**STRENGTHEN INUIT FAMILIES and COMMUNITIES
and REVITALIZE LANGUAGE and CULTURAL PRACTICES**

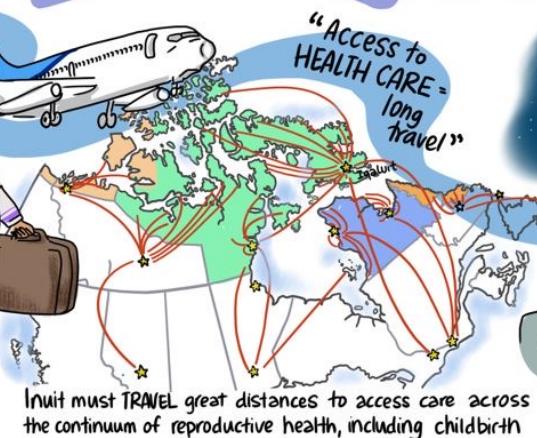


I HAD TO LEAVE
TO GIVE BIRTH

Birth evacuation policies place **UNJUST** emotional and financial burdens on Inuit FAMILIES



Children may face food insecurity and physical or sexual abuse without their primary caregivers



"Access to
HEALTH CARE =
long travel"



Inuit must TRAVEL great distances to access care across the continuum of reproductive health, including childbirth

We miss you
Hope
You're
Okay!

Inuit-led midwifery is an important part of Indigenous health sovereignty (Pauktuutit, 2024)

The Truth and Reconciliation Committee

The TRC was formed in 2008 in the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement and is now The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR)

The TRC put out 94 Calls to Action in 2015 which include:

- Aboriginal language rights to be enforced;
- The Aboriginal managing of Aboriginal language and cultures;
- University and college degrees in Aboriginal languages;
- Public Residential School monuments;
- The consultation of Indigenous sources for climate policy. (Government of Canada, 2022)



British Columbia Orange Shirt Day
Protest, 2019

Changes Advocated for by First Peoples

#LandBack is an Indigenous-led political movement started in 2016 calling for Indigenous sovereignty over land and culture (Bearfoot KQED, 2022)

The regaining of unceded and stolen Indigenous lands is often a long process where the government sells the land back to its original owners or is sought after through litigation

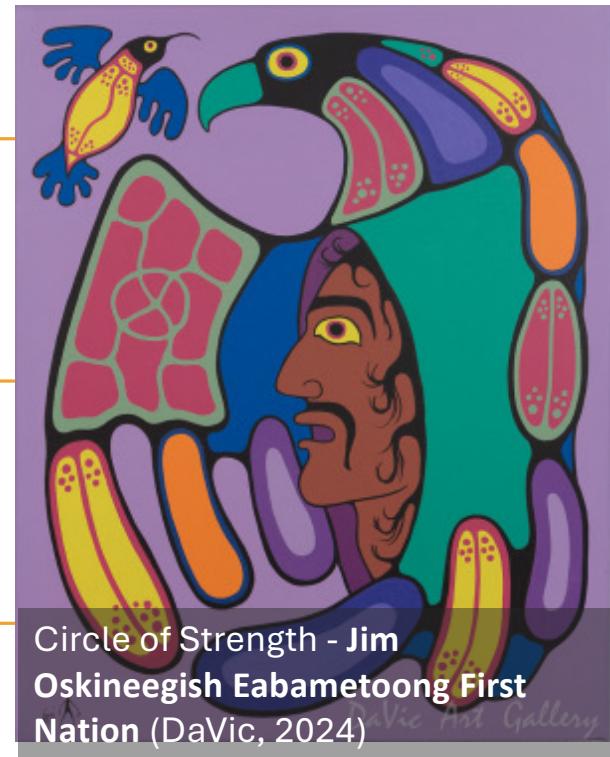
81% of injunctions filed by Indigenous groups being denied between 1970 and 2019 (Yellowhead Institute, 2022)

UNDRIP

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Canada was first adopted in 2007 to reaffirm the rights of Indigenous peoples, and the UNDRIP Act was passed in 2021 (UNDRIP, 2007)

The Federal Government was opposed to UNDRIP until 2010, and prior to that Harper's conservative government deemed the declaration "an aspirational document" (CBC, 2023)

The AFN stated that the UNDRIP Act is supposed to have Indigenous opinion and voices but that Indigenous peoples have not been consulted about decisions in the Act (AFN, 2023)



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ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS AND FIRST NATION'S HEALTH:

CHALLENGES, POLICY GAPS, AND SOLUTIONS

WHAT IS THE EFFECT OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL CATASTROPHE ON THE HEALTH OF FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITIES IN CANADA, AND WHAT DEFICIENCIES EXIST IN PRESENT STRATEGIES TO HANDLE THESE CHALLENGES CONCERNING HEALTH?



Pollution

Indigenous communities face persistent pollution of traditional food sources, including fish, game, and plants, due to industrial activities like mining and oil extraction, causing severe environmental and health consequences. (Bettens, 2024)



Water Quality

Over 60% of First Nations communities in Canada have experienced at least one water advisory in the past decade, with many still facing long-term boil water advisories due to inadequate infrastructure, resulting in unsafe drinking water and increased health risks. (Ireton, 2021)



Health Impact

First Nations communities are experiencing a rise in respiratory and gastrointestinal diseases due to poor air quality and the climate crisis, resulting in chronic diseases, respiratory conditions, mental health issues, and maternal health challenges. (Nunatsiaq News, 2021)

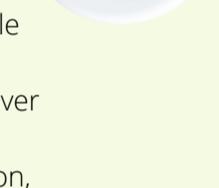


Inadequate Funding

Federal initiatives are underfunded, leaving insufficient resources to address water infrastructure and health concerns. (Stefanovich et al., 2021)

Lack of community involvement

Indigenous communities lack the authority to approve or reject industrial activity, giving them little control over their own land and health effects. (Lack of Control Over Land Leaves Indigenous Communities Exposed to Pollution, Says Activist | CBC Radio, 2017)

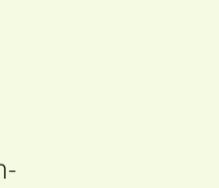


Healthcare Deficiencies

Existing healthcare systems do not adequately treat pollution-related ailments, nor are they accessible or culturally responsive to Indigenous needs. (Martin et al., n.d.)

Healthcare Improvements

Positive environmental factors can reduce disease rates in First Nations communities by increasing positive health rates. Targeted healthcare programs and community-based services for chronic disease management and mental health support can help address pollution-related illnesses. (Martin et al., n.d.)

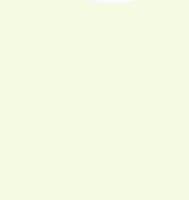
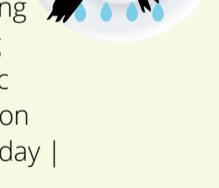


Support Indigenous Land Stewardship

Funding for Environmental Monitoring and Restoration: Empower Indigenous communities to lead land restoration, monitoring, and sustainable development programs, promoting self-determination and resilience. (Enns et al., 2018)

Boil Water Advisory Reduction Timeline: Year 1

Reduce boil water advisories by investing in infrastructure, improving monitoring systems, and providing training to staff, while raising public awareness about water conservation and pollution prevention. (TVO Today | Current Affairs Journalism, Documentaries and Podcasts, n.d.)



Boil Water Advisory Reduction Timeline: Year 2-3

Invest in infrastructure to secure long-term, clean drinking water for all First Nations communities. This investment is critical for tackling the current water crisis and protecting the fundamental human right to safe drinking water. It will also improve health outcomes and quality of life for Indigenous peoples throughout Canada. (Stefanovich & Jones, 2021)

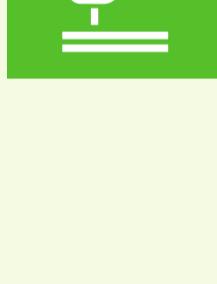
Healthcare Program Implementation

In two years, we aim to introduce culturally responsive healthcare services, with annual success reports to adapt to community needs and ensure optimal patient service. (Government of Canada; Indigenous Services Canada, 2024)



Conclusion - Call to Action

Collaboration is essential for implementing meaningful change. Governments, Indigenous leaders, and community partners must work together to address these significant health and environmental issues while protecting Indigenous rights and promoting a healthier, more equitable future. This may include developing policies that prioritize Indigenous knowledge and viewpoints and devoting funding to assist community-led initiatives. Working together respectfully and inclusively allows us to build long-term solutions benefiting all parties.



The Issue: What is contributing to the **income inequalities** faced by First Nations peoples, and how do the systemic barriers continue to **limit** income opportunities for them in Canada?

Background:

Indigenous peoples in Canada face significant and long-standing **socio-economic gaps** compared to the non-Indigenous population. These disparities are rooted in a history of **colonialism, discrimination, and marginalization** that continues to impact Indigenous communities today.

- The establishment of the *Indian Act* in 1876 disrupted **traditional social and economic structures** of First Nations people
- The **residential school system** in 1884 made attendance mandatory for children, which has directly caused **economic marginalization** and **intergenerational trauma**
- The *Indian Act* instituted a **pass system** in 1885 **restricting** First Nations people from leaving reserves **without permission** (NWAC, 2024)
- Indigenous peoples were banned from hiring legal help or becoming lawyers for their land claims in 1927 (NWAC, 2024)
- **Remote** First Nations communities lack access to **infrastructure** and **employment opportunities** due to the lack of attention to development by the federal government
- Over the past 150 years due to lack of access to quality education, there has been **chronic cases of unemployment**

“The **challenge** ahead for Indigenous people contesting the **foundations of capitalism** lies in questioning who benefits from **economic success**, and who pays the **cost of exploited land and resources.**” – (Dara Kelly, Leq’á: mel First Nation, 2017)

Update:

Income disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations **persists** throughout Canada. **Systemic racism** and **shape-shifting colonialism** continues to exacerbate these inequalities.

- **47%** of First Nations children who live on and off reserve experience **poverty (basic SDOH's not met)** through **marginalization** and **economic disadvantages** faced by their families (APTN, 2019)
- In **2020**, the **median individual income** for Indigenous groups was higher than **2015**, but **gaps continue to persist** (Indigenous Services Canada, 2022)
- In **2021**, the employment rate of First Nations on reserve was **47.1%** compared to non-First Nations being **74.1%** (Indigenous Services Canada, 2022)
- Registered First Nations on ‘reserves’ median individual income gap is **\$32,000** compared to the non-First Nations population at **\$18,000** (Joseph, 2021)
- Indigenous peoples earn **9%** less than their non-Indigenous counterparts (Indigenous Services Canada, 2022)
- Indigenous individuals with a high school diploma earn **15-19%** less than their non-Indigenous peers (Joseph, 2023)
- In **2021**, Indigenous **civil servants** filed a **class action lawsuit** against the **federal government** for **widespread systemic racism** in Indigenous agencies and departments (Public Service Alliance, 2024)

Summary: Indigenous peoples in Canada face significant income inequalities due to a combination of systemic issues such as wage gaps, high unemployment, lack of quality education, and geographic location. Addressing these issue requires federal investments into education and job training, job opportunities, greater support for Indigenous businesses, improved data collection, and policies to reduce discrimination and create equal economic opportunities.

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The Implementation of Basic Income to Address the Economic Inequalities faced by First Nation Peoples in Canada

Michael O'Flynn, AJ Magamura, Jacksen Whyte

Confronting the lack of Basic Income programs in Canada for First Nations despite the Income Inequalities

The Issue: How does the federal government's policy inaction and counteraction prevent the implementation of a **Basic Income** for First Nations Peoples in Canada, and how can **Basic Income** address **income inequality** between First Nation and Non-First Nation people?

Background:

The *Indian Act* has affected First Nation lives through **land dispossession, historic injustice, and persistent colonialism**. The **systemic racism** has led to severe income inequalities between First Nation and non-First Nation peoples. Insufficient employment opportunities, lack of basic income programs, and gaps in public policy have failed to address these inequalities.

- The roots of income inequality for First Nation Peoples in Canada are due to the **colonial legacy** of policies that undermined **sovereignty** and destroyed centuries of self-sustaining economies and cultural systems
- Reserves were placed on land with **little to no natural resources** and far from major population centres
- According to the **Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996)**, **70%** of reserves are located **50+ kms** from service centres
- In the **racialized hierarchy** of Canadian society, Indigenous peoples are continuously "**othered**" by Non-Indigenous settlers to **rationalize colonial actions** that oppress, disadvantage, and harm them
- Despite these issues, due to lack of **political will** and **policy inaction**, there has been no attempts by the federal government to combat the issues of income inequalities through implementation of basic income programs
- **Western epistemic hegemony** has **marginalized** Indigenous knowledge, leading to exclusion and has hindered policy efforts to address income inequalities

“Economic reconciliation is about restoring **balance** in financial dealings and relationships, as well as a **recognition** and **understanding** that past economic **exploitation** has led to a lack of access to economic success or ‘**miyo-pimâtisiwin**’ (the good life). – (Paulla Adamitz, Founder of Indigenous Finance Collective, 2023)

Update:

The economic inequities in the past are still highly prevalent to this date, as the income inequalities and rates of unemployment are still extremely high.

- **26.3%** of First Nations people have reported low pay compared to **18.5%** reported by non-Indigenous peoples (StatsCan, 2024)
- If a basic income had been in place **prior** to the **COVID pandemic**, income transfers could have been rolled out without people **falling through the cracks** (Basic Income Coalition, 2024)
- **Senator Kim Pate** introduced a bill in the Senate called **S-233** on 22 November 2021
- NDP Private Members **Bill C-223** introduced in December 2021 by **MP Leah Gazan** was defeated in the House of Commons in September 2024

“Poverty is a policy choice, and it’s time that the Liberal government chooses to support all people in Canada.” – Leah Gazan, NDP Manitoba MP, 2024

- **Call 4.5** from the **Calls for Justice** by NWAC is developing a **guaranteed annual income strategy** with a **150K budget** to address **economic marginalization** (NWAC Calls for Justice 2021)
- UBI Works, an organization who advocates for basic income, released a report on the economic impacts of basic income in Canada:
 - A **basic income** of **\$2000** for individuals would not only dramatically reduce poverty but contribute to **increases in employment and the Gross Domestic Product** (UBI Works, 2020)

Summary: The Income gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples has continued persist due to systemic economic inequalities faced both in the past and present. Basic income or guaranteed annual income strategies have been suggested at the federal level and by organizations such as NWAC to reduce poverty, boost employment, and contribute to economic growth, yet it has been met with policy inaction and counteraction.

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CANADA ACTION 2020. URL: <https://www.canadaaction.ca/indigenous-reconciliation-oil-sands-examples>

Addressing the Systemic Barriers Causing Income Gaps and the Employment Crisis for First Nations in Canada

Economic reconciliation is about restoring balance in financial dealings and relationships, as well as a recognition and understand that past economic exploitation has led to a lack of access to economic success or ‘miyo-pimâtsiwin’ (the good life).

- *Paula Adamitz, Owner of Adamitz Financial Solutions INC.* (2023) URL: https://chamber.ca/wpcontent/uploads/2023/06/Indigenous_History_Month_Quotes.pdf

Report By: Michael O'Flynn, AJ Magamura, Jacksen Whyte

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FOREWARD

We, the authors, are a group of students who have researched and explored the critical link between income and employment. As students at Acadia University from the POLS 2003: Introduction to Public Policy course, we have received the opportunity to research the poor Social Determinants of Health faced by First Nations Communities in Canada. This report outlines our research into the income gaps and unemployment crisis for First Nations in Canada.

Our research predominantly focuses on one of the many issues faced by First Nation communities. We would like to emphasize that we are non-Indigenous people, thus it would be unethical for us to make policy suggestions as we do NOT **fully understand** First Nations experiences. This report has been generated as a summary of our findings through our months of research and attendance of the 2024 Kesalul! ReconciliACTION events at Acadia University.

Our research has aimed to prioritize gaining information and knowledge from various First Nation voices. The First Nation sources we prioritized in our research include:

Native Women's Association of Canada, Indigenous Services Canada, First Voice Urban Indigenous Coalition, Assembly of First Nations, Sandy-Lynn Fisher, Elder Dr. Lorraine Peters-Whitman and Lara Hartman

We also focused on attaining information from Indigenous News sources, including:

APTN News, Russ Diabo on Twitter, Turtle Island News, and CBC Indigenous

In drafting this report, we have learned the importance of researching **First Nation policy options** and ensuring **First Nation voices are prioritized**.

This class has given us the opportunity to work with **Indigenous policy experts** through individual and class dialogues, as well as attending events apart of the Acadia Kesalul! Reconciliation Series.

We would like to take this chance to **THANK** the various **Indigenous policy experts** who have shared their knowledge and expertise with us students, including:

- **Elder Dr. Lorraine Peters Whitman, Darlene Peters Copeland, Lara Hartman, Sandy-Lynn Fisher, Dr. Piita Irniq, and Cole Kippenhuck**



Acadia University Kesalul! Fall Series 2024

We thank **CEWIL Canada** for their generosity through their grant that has been provided to the students and allowed for the **ReconciliACTION** events here at Acadia. We also thank **Dr. Cynthia Alexander** for her support, knowledge, and feedback throughout the semester.

This class has allowed us to **decolonize ourselves** through our research and opportunities to **listen** and **engage** throughout the term!

Executive Summary

Indigenous Peoples in Canada face significant and long-standing **socio-economic gaps** compared to the non-Indigenous population. These disparities are rooted in a history of **colonialism, discrimination, and marginalization** that continues to impact Indigenous communities today

- The establishment of the Indian Act in 1876 disrupted **traditional social and economic structures** of First Nations people (NWAC, 2024)
- The **residential school system** in 1884 makes attendance mandatory for children, which directly caused **economic marginalization** and **intergenerational trauma** (AFN, 2024)
- The Indian Act instituted a **pass system** in **1885** **restricting** First Nations people from leaving reserves **without permission** (AFN, 2024)
- Indigenous peoples were banned from hiring legal help or becoming lawyers for land claims in 1927 (NWAC, 2024)

“This nation must never forget what it once did to its most vulnerable people.”

Murray Sinclair, 2017

Indigenous people, organizations and businesses will be looking for Ottawa to deliver on core issues like clean water, housing, health care, economic development, child welfare reform and ending systemic racism (APTN News, 2021)

Low-Income populations of First Nations (StatsCan, 2023):

- **On Reserve - 31.3%**
- **Off Reserve – 19.8%**



Cross Lake Indian Residential School (Gollom, 2021)

URL: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/residential-school-records-indigenous-1.6083493>

The Indian Act, still existing today continues to act as a barrier for moving forward as the system is still rooted in colonialism and systemic discrimination

- The median individual income for people aged 25 to 64 has all Indigenous groups lower than the non-Indigenous median income of **\$50,400** (StatsCan, 2023)

The federal government has responsibility that it needs to fulfill its fiduciary duty towards First Nations policy options, such as:

- **The Truth and Reconciliation Committees 94 Calls to Action (TRC)**
- **The Native Women’s Association of Canada 231 Calls for Justice (NWAC)**

Due to **policy inaction and counteraction** by the federal government, many First Nations communities **do not** meet the Social Determinants of Health standards.

- All SDOH's are interconnected, yet our focus will be on Income and Employment.

Executive Summary Cont.

Impacts of the Income Gap and Unemployment Crisis:

The effects of the federal governments deeply rooted colonial policies and systemic discrimination are direct causes of the income gaps and unemployment crises for First Nations people. Reconciling their impacts requires the federal government of Canada to listen and respond to First Nations policy options.

- **Low income** affects access to **nutritious food, food security, physical activity programs and health behaviours** (National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health 2024, 8)
- For remote Indigenous communities, extensive and expensive travel “**renders the healthcare costs in these communities some of the most expensive in the world**” (National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health 2023, 4)
- **Low income and unemployment** in families facing poverty are more likely to have their own children placed into **protective care** (National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health 2024, 5)
- In 2016, it was estimated the schools found on reserves receive at least **30% less funding** (Indigenous Corporate Training INC #2, 2023)

This report will explore three policy options that we found in our research of First Nations informed policy priorities:

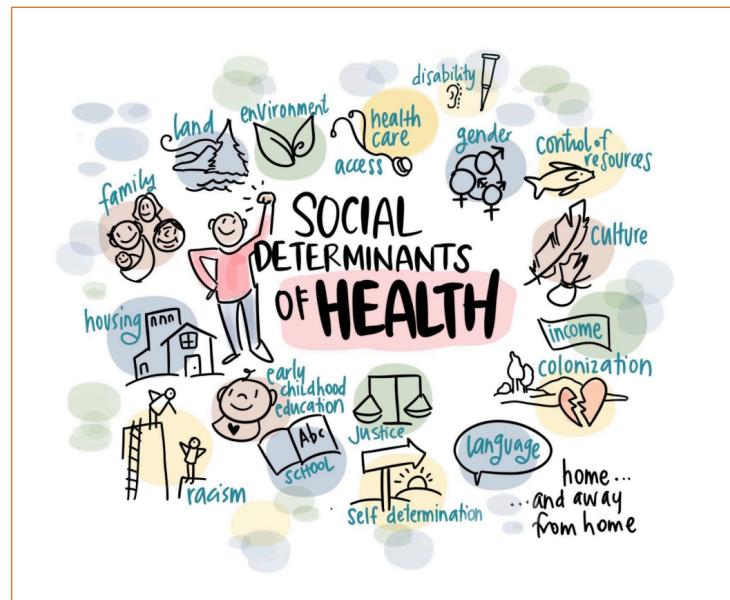
- **Youth Education Investments**
- **Equal Pay Legislation and Enforcement**
- **Implementation of Basic Income Programs**

We offer this report not as a recommendation, but as research of available options.

“It’s outrageous that in a wealthy country like Canada, folks cannot afford something as basic as food”

-NDP MP Leah Gazan, 2024

URL: <https://www.ndp.ca/news/ndp-mp-leah-gazan-urges-all-parliamentarians-support-her-bill-guaranteed-liveable-basic-income>



Gathering Wisdom –First Nations Health Authority, 2013

BACKGROUND: COLONIAL ROOTS OF THE INCOME GAP AND UNEMPLOYMENT CRISIS

“I think in order to heal, people have to realize what actually happened, what the historical wrongs were that were done to Indigenous people and really feel that. So no matter how hard it is, they have to feel the pain too.”

- Gail Standingready, Birdtail Sioux Nation – City News – 2023

The **Assembly of First Nations** has created various important **timelines** regarding Indigenous histories which precede and overlap European contact and colonization (Assembly of First Nations, 2024)

“Indigenous nations tell their own stories about the origins of the world and their place in it; all claim their ancestry dates to **time immemorial**” (AFN, 2024)

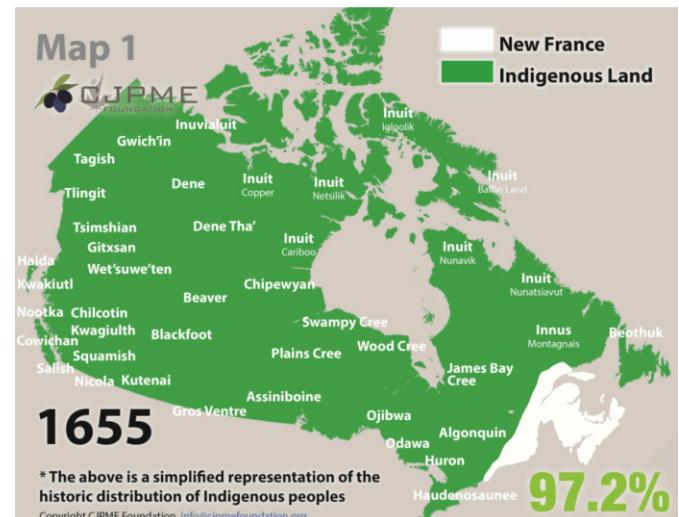
- First Nations communities have had settlements and communities almost everywhere from coast to coast since **10,000 BCE** (AFN, 2024)
- First Nations have adapted to their surroundings and established complex **religious, artistic, economic, social, and political structures** on this land (AFN, 2024)

16th Century European Colonization:

- From **1500-1530s**, there was continual contact between **European fishermen and Indigenous peoples** on the Atlantic coast (AFN, 2024)
- By the turn of the 17th century, **alliances** were formed between Indigenous peoples and early European settlements through trading of goods and knowledge

18th Century:

- The **intentional spreading of smallpox, measles and tuberculosis** devastate Indigenous communities
- **King George III** declares dominion over North America in **1756** and **limits recognition of title** to Indigenous communities (AFN, 2024)
- **Treaties** are formed between Indigenous peoples and the Crown, many of which are **still legal** today (*i.e.. Peace and Friendship*)



Indigenous Land (1655) – CPJME, 2024

‘Before the Indian Act’ 19th Century:

- The boom in European immigration to Canada in the early **1800s** saw the **Peace and Friendship treaties** ignored:
 - First Nations people were **pushed off** their traditional territories onto smaller lands
 - **Residential schools** were beginning to open up in the **1830s** to **assimilate** Indigenous children
 - Indigenous traditional lands were **exploited** for natural resources by the Crown, such as the **Robison-Superior treaty** (AFN, 2024)

The treaty that we have, and all of the treaties (in Canada) have been broken promises.” – Carl Quinn – Saddle Lake Cree Nation elder – ALJAZEERA article by Brandi Morin, 2020

The Indian Act:

- Created in **1876** to **extinguish** any **Indigenous self-government structures** that exist (NWAC, Indian Act Said What?, 2024)
- The **residential school system** created in 1884 has directly caused **economic marginalization** and **intergenerational trauma**
- The Indian Act instituted a **pass system** in **1885** **restricting** First Nations people from leaving reserves **without permission** (NWAC, 2024)
- Indigenous peoples were **banned** from **hiring legal help** or **becoming lawyers** for **land claims** in **1927** (NWAC, 2024)



Mi'kmaq girls in class at Shubenacadie Indian Residential School (ICT 2016). URL: <https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/the-indian-act-residential-schools-and-tuberculosis-cover-up>

"If anything, it (the Indian Act) has kept Indigenous people separate under different laws and under different lands."
— Bob Joseph, "Why the Indian Act must go..." Victoria News, 2021

"I was kidnapped in broad daylight by a Roman Catholic priest right in front of my parents, so that I could go to school at the Turguetil residential school." — Dr. Piita Irniq keynote on his residential school story, Acadia University, 2024

"(The Indian Act) has deprived us of our independence, our dignity, our self-respect and our responsibility." — Kaherine June Delisle, Assembly of First Nations, 2024

"At first it was 98 kilometers, but due to the assimilatory practices in place, those kilometers turned into a lifetime. A life full of tradition, and culture, love and family, taken in one swift motion." — Lara Hartman keynote on her grandmothers experience at Lejac Residential School, Acadia University, 2024

1950s & 1960s:

- Amendments made to the Indian Act in **1951** **removes** the bans on dances, ceremonies and legal claims on land. Indigenous peoples also could now attain a degree or be a doctor, lawyer, etc. (NWAC, Indian Act Said What?, 2024)
- Indigenous peoples are finally allowed the **right to vote** in **1960**
- Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau's government announces intentions to eliminate the Indian Act with the **White Paper**, however, it is abandoned by the federal government in **1969** (NWAC, 2024)

1973: The Supreme Court rules that Indigenous rights to land exists as outlined in the **1763 Royal Proclamation** (NWAC, Indian Act Said What?, 2024)

1982: The **Assembly of First Nations** is formed to promote First Nations **interests and self-government** (Assembly of First Nations, Timelines, 2024)

1985: The marrying out rules which affected Indigenous women and their rights to living on reserves in the **Indian Act** is removed as **Bill C-31** comes into effect

- Still is distinction between Indigenous men and women with certain **status rules** in relation to **Section 6 (1)** (NWAC, Indian Act Said What?, 2024)

1996: The closure of **Gordon Residential School** in Saskatchewan **marks the end** of the Residential School system, but the **trauma continues** (Assembly of First Nations, Timeline, 2024)

2008: Prime Minister Stephen Harper issues an **apology** to former Residential School students in Canada



Truth and Reconciliation
Commission of Canada Logo

“The road we travel is equal in importance to the destination we seek. There are no shortcuts when it comes to truth and reconciliation. We are forced to go the distance.”

– Murray Sinclair, 2010

“We need to understand and accept the truth even if it’s something hard for us to hear, if it makes us sad or disappointed”

- Lara Hartman keynote speech to Acadia University, 2024



November 28, 2019- Image of the Legislative Assembly of BC adopting UNDRIP into law

2015: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission issues its final report, outlining its **94 Calls to Action** policy recommendations to the federal government. As of 2023, only **13** have been addressed

2016: Canada officially signs the **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples** (UNDRIP) which is defined as it: **“recognizes Indigenous peoples’ rights to self-determination, cultural practices, land, and security.”** – Assembly of First Nations, Timeline, 2024

“Bill C-15 will be used by the government of Canada to reinforce the status quo because the Bill makes it clear that existing national laws—many of which violate Indigenous rights—will prevail over UNDRIP” – Critique by Russ Diabo (APTN, 2020)

Traditional Knowledge (TK): Indigenous Values in Addressing the Policy Issue

Indigenous Climate Hub defines traditional knowledge as:

“An evolving knowledge base as information and observations are always being added. There is an understanding that the environment is always evolving and is not static, therefore Traditional Knowledge cannot be considered static.” (2024)

Traditional knowledge exists in many forms given, diversity of Indigenous peoples all over the world that have their own epistemologies, ways of life, language, and history

TK pedagogy includes, but not limited to:

- The Seventh Generation Principle
- Two-Eyed Seeing
- All My Relations/Kinship

SEVENTH GENERATION PRINCIPLE

“To think of the 7th generation coming after you in your words, work and actions, and to remember the seventh generation who came before you.” – The Seventh Generation Website, 2024

- The Seventh Generation Principle seeks to understand the root issues in the past and the present ones, with hopes to avoid it in the future seven generations from now
- Policy making can use this as it addresses the past and present issues, and make policies to ensure such issues are no longer a problem for future generations



Image taken from Two-Eyed Seeing Camp Facebook
Page URL:
<https://www.facebook.com/TwoEyedSeeingProgram/>

TWO-EYED SEEING

“The person is interpreting the natural world and events within, with two equal types of understanding—those being the modern western scientific approach combined with the traditional ecological knowledge of the indigenous peoples” – Elder Dr. Albert Marshall (2007) URL: <https://www.uinr.ca/kluscaps-science/>

- Two-Eyed Seeing values both Indigenous and Western perspectives, which would allow for more informed and collaborative agreements on policy matters
- Ensures that all voices are heard, and knowledge is shared for actions to be a part of the greater good

ALL MY RELATIONS

- This mindset reflects upon those who are aware that everything in the universe is **connected** (Kaminski 2013)
- Reinforces that everyone and everything has a **purpose**, worthy of **respect and care**, and has a place in the ‘**grand scheme of life.**’ (Kaminski 2013) URL: <https://firstnationspedagogy.com>

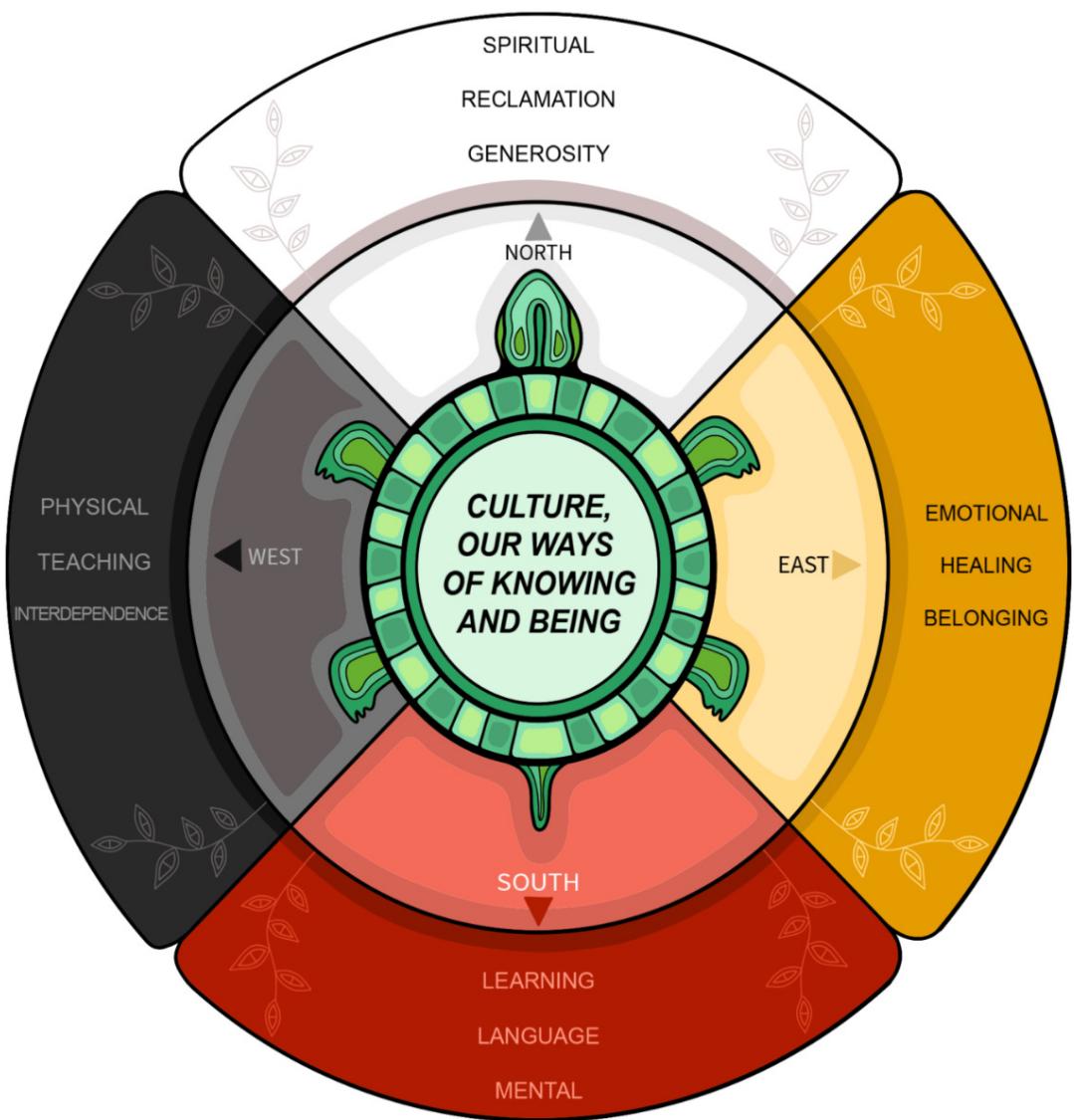


Image credit: Indigenous Primary Health Care Council, 2023

URL: <https://iphcc.ca>

The Poor Social Determinants of Health: Impact on First Nations

The World Health Organization defines Social Determinants of Health as: “**The conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, as well as the wider set of forces shaping the conditions of daily life, including economic and social policies.**” (World Health Organization, 2021).

There are 10 outlined SDOH's that all in some ways impact the lives of First Nations peoples and their health outcomes. These include:

Language and Culture: At risk due to assimilationist government policies and actions (Assembly of First Nations, 2024)

Early Childhood Development: Poverty, overcrowding, food insecurity affects physical, cognitive, emotional and psychological development (Halseth & Greenwood, 2019, 5)

Employment: High unemployment rate, inferior education, and underfunding (Indigenous Corporate Training INC, #5, 2023)

Income: High unemployment, costs of living, and wage-gaps (Indigenous Corporate Training INC, #4, 2023)

Housing: Overcrowding, unaffordability, poor quality, and availability (Indigenous Corporate Training, INC, #3, 2023)

Safety and Security: High rates of criminal victimization, discrimination, racism, high incarceration, police brutality (Assembly of First Nations, 2024)

Education: Long waitlist, discriminatory education practices, low graduation rates, and poor education (Assembly of First Nations, 2024)

Food Security: Rising food prices, lack of nutritious and healthy food (Ireland, Canadian Press, 2023)

Healthcare Accessibility: Lack of hospitals or clinics (especially remote communities) and racism in health services (Canadian Medical Association, Indigenous health, 2024)

Mental Wellness: Trauma, family violence, addictions, and suicide crisis' (Yellowhead Institute, Mental Health, 2022)



Photo taken from Indigenous Services Canada, 2022

“Social determinants of health not only directly influence health; they are also transformative – producing subsequent circumstances the further affect health.” – Loppie & Wien, NCCIH, 2022, 11

- Together, the SDOH's influence one another and drastically shape health outcomes of First Nations in Canada
- The long-standing socio-economic disparities are rooted in systemic racism, inequitable policies, and colonization

Aboriginal People's Holistic View of Health

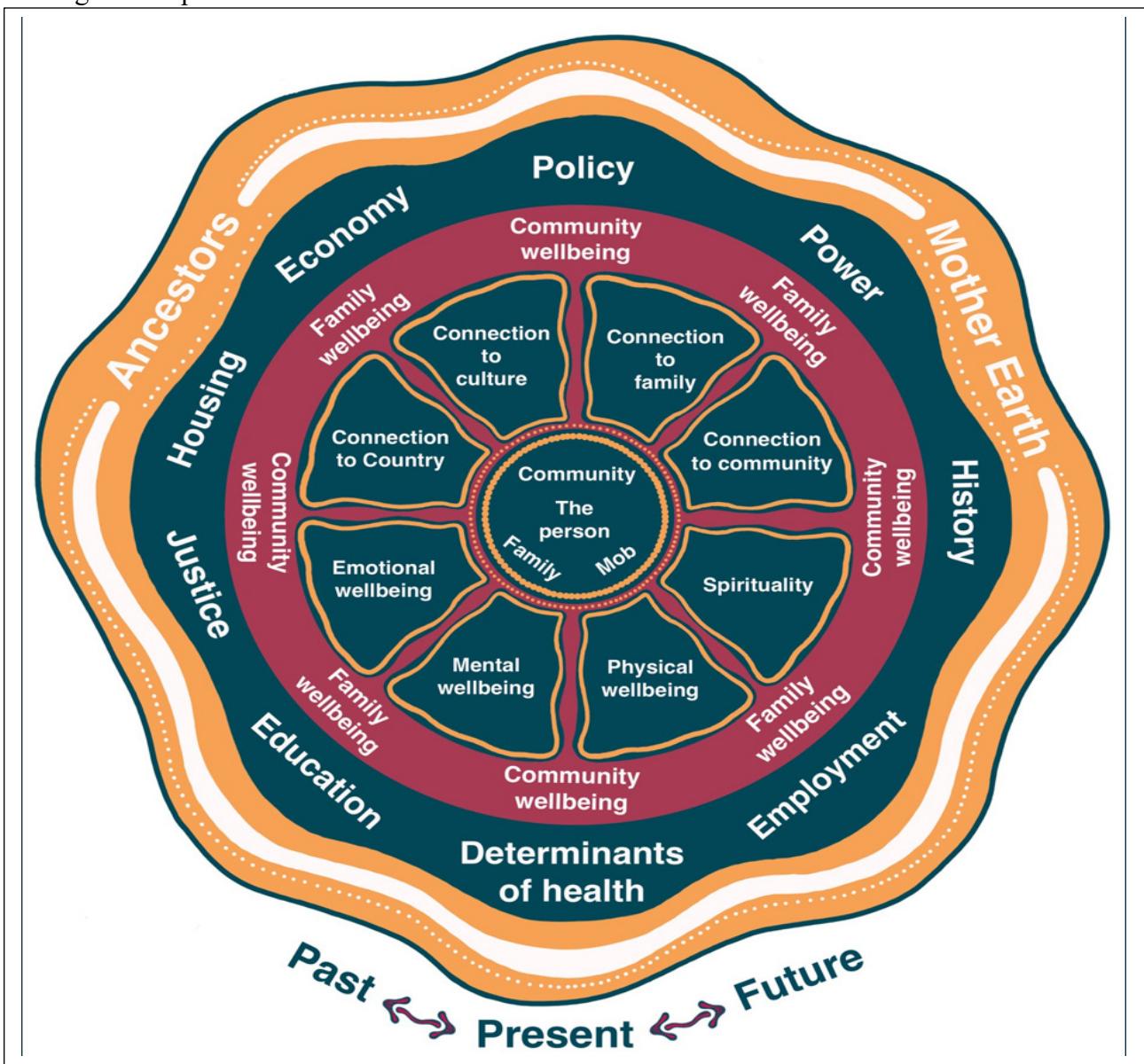


Image from YULANG Indigenous Evaluation – “Aboriginal people’s holistic view of health.” –

Artwork by Jessie Waratah, 2023. URL: <https://yulang.com.au/starburst-indigenous-evaluations/holistic-health/>

Health inequity is really about the fact that the burden that our communities experience of health issues is a result of inequities in the social determinants of health.” - Charlotte Loppie (Director of the Centre for Indigenous Research and Community-Led Engagement) The Tyee,

2020

The Income and Unemployment Crisis: Aspects and Interconnectedness

The establishment of the Indian Act in 1876 disrupted **traditional social and economic structures** of First Nations people

- The **residential school system** in 1884 makes attendance mandatory for children, which has directly caused **economic marginalization** and **intergenerational trauma**
- The **Department of Indian Affairs** employed government officials known as **Indian Agents** to implement the Indian Act on reserves
 - “They **monitored** everyday affairs on reserves, **regulated movement** of people onto and off of reserves, and were responsible for **overseeing and regulating** trade and commerce on reserves” (Kiinawin Kawindomowin Story Nations, 2024)
- **The Placement Program of 1957**, supervised by Indian Agents, through Indian Health Services
 - “Indian placement and relocation programs were **transparently assimilative**, with bureaucrats estimating that “**permanent employment would facilitate Indian integration** and thus also equality within Canadian society” - McCallum & Williams, 2016

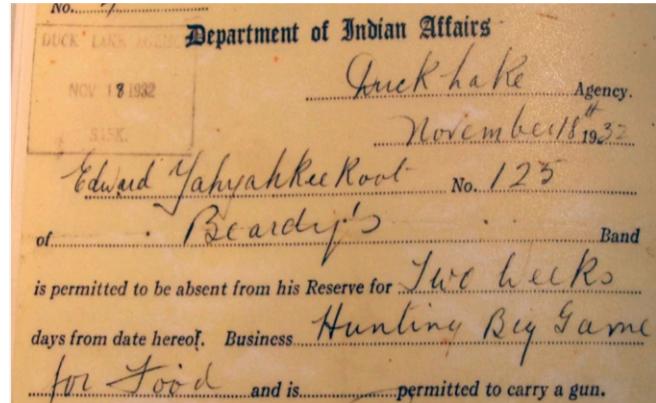


Image from: ICT INC., “Indian Act and the Pass System, 2015. URL: <https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/indian-act-and-the-pass-system>

"So many of our communities have been so poor and I'm talking about government imposed colonial poverty. And, so people turn around and they oppress other people and they oppress the people that are closest to them. And that's one of the ways that is manifesting itself" – Jennifer David, CBC News, 2017

1990: By 1990, only 28.6% of people of First Nations identity aged 15 or older received social assistance to address income disparities. 41.5% for First Nations on reserves (Noël 2009, 15)

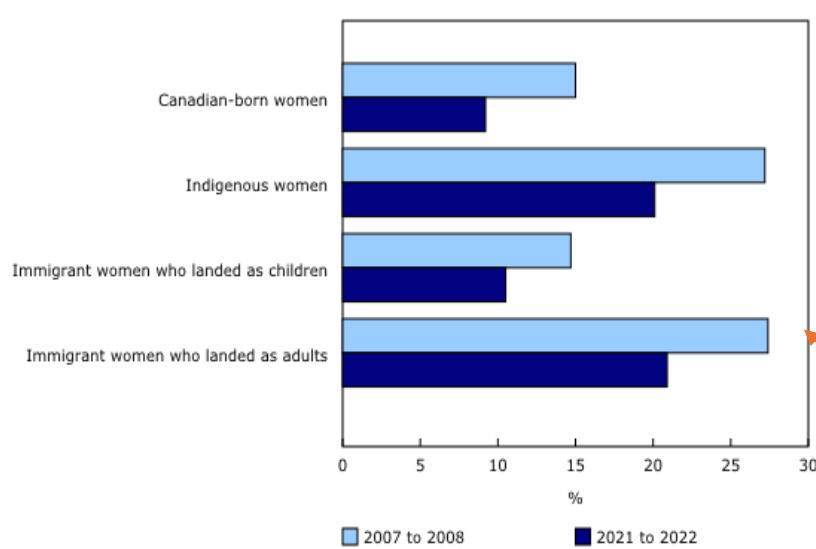
2006: As of 2006, the Median Employment Income of all Indigenous Identities remained below \$22,000 (Wilson & Macdonald 2010, 10)

“Indigenous peoples have the right, without discrimination, to the improvement of their economic and social conditions, including, inter alia, in the areas of education, employment, vocational, training and retraining, housing, sanitation, health and social security” – Article 21 (1) of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Income Inequalities

Income disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations remains **substantial** throughout Canada. The **systemic racism** and **persistent colonialism** continue to express these inequalities

- **47%** of First Nations children who live on and off reserve experience poverty through marginalization and economic disadvantages faced by their families (2019)
- In 2020, the **median individual income** for Indigenous groups was higher than in 2015, but gaps persist.
- In 2021, the employment rate of First Nations on Reserve was **47.1%** compared to non-First Nations at **74.1%** (StatsCan, 2021)
- Registered First Nations on ‘reserve’ median individual income gap is **\$32,000** compared to the non-First Nations population at **\$18,000** (StatsCan, 2021)
- Indigenous peoples earn **9%** less than their non-Indigenous counterparts (StatsCan, 2022)
- Indigenous individuals with a high school diploma earn **15-19%** less than their non-Indigenous peers (Joseph, 2023)



“The **challenge** ahead for Indigenous people contesting the **foundations of capitalism** lies in questioning who benefits from **economic success**, and who pays the **cost of exploited land and resources.**”

– Dara Kelly, Leq’á: mel First Nation, 2017

Gender Wage Gap

The **intersection of sexism, injustice, and systemic racism** has created barriers such as the **Gender Wage Gap**

- Women are **60%** less likely to move up towards executive ranks from middle management, a stat **exacerbated** for Indigenous women (CWF, 2024)
- **WG2STGD+** people are facing “**double discrimination**”
- **44%** of First Nations women work **health/social care, retail, or education services** which tend to be undervalued and paid less than male-dominated occupations (NWAC, 2023)
- Compared to non-Indigenous men, the Gender Wage Gap of Indigenous women is a **20% difference** (StatsCan, 2022)
- Indigenous women make **\$0.85** to the **dollar** for Indigenous men (StatsCan, 2024)
- First Nations women are **caretakers and leaders** in their community; thus, their **unpaid labor** contributes to income inequalities for Indigenous women

Figure I: Gap in average hourly wage compared to Canadian-born men (StatsCan, 2023) URL: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/230921/t002b-eng.htm>

Basic Income Policy

The systemic income issues caused from the past are still highly prevalent to this date, as the income inequalities and rates of unemployment faced by Indigenous peoples are still extremely high:

- **26.3%** of First Nations peoples more often reported low pay than non-Indigenous people of **18.5%** (StatsCan, 2024)
- The median individual income for people aged 25 to 64 has all Indigenous groups lower than the non-Indigenous median income of **\$50,400** (StatsCan, 2023)
- The unemployment rate of Indigenous people is **11.6%** compared to the non-Indigenous rate of **7.6%** (Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, 2021)
- The limitations of First Nations not **owning** the land on reserves due to the **Indian Act** has not allowed the real estate sector to thrive like it is for settlers off-reserve
- Policy suggestions towards a Basic Income of Guaranteed Annual Income have been made in the House of Commons and by Indigenous organizations such as NWAC to achieve income equity (*More Information on Page 17*)

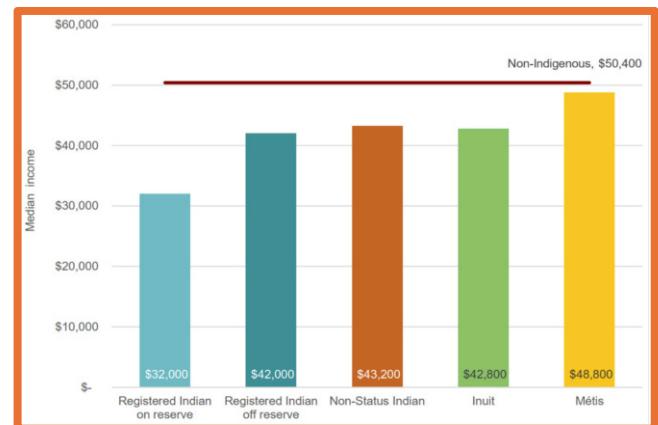


Figure II: Medium Individual Income Ages 25-64 (StatsCan, 2020) URL: <https://www.sacisc.gc.ca/eng/1690909773300/1690909797208>

“Poverty is a policy choice, and it’s time that the Liberal government chooses to support all people in Canada.”

– Leah Gazan, NDP Manitoba MP, 2024

Research and develop a basic income strategy to address economic marginalization	Policy Unit Economic Development Unit Communications	Basic income strategy developed Strategy presented to the government for implementation Public awareness campaign developed	\$150K	1.3 Prioritize Indigenous rights when developing budgets & government activities 4.5 Establish a guaranteed annual livable income, taking diverse needs into account 16.20 Support establishment of programs that support Inuit hunting & harvesting
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Image taken from NWAC's Calls for Justice on Basic Income, 2021

“A UBI combined with continued funding directly to communities, could effectively raise First Nations children and families out of poverty leading to better health and education outcomes”

(Avvenduti, 2020)

How Income and Employment Shape Other Social Determinants of Health

Health:

Poverty due to Income gaps and Unemployment effects health as:

- **Low income** affects access to **nutritious food, food security, physical activity programs and health behaviours** (National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health 2024, 8)
 - Associates with higher prevalence of **obesity and metabolic-related chronic diseases** for Indigenous adults (National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health 2024, 8)
- Contributes to prevalence of **infectious diseases like tuberculosis, respiratory ailments, and influenza** (National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health 2024, 8)
- Inadequate **housing, infrastructure, and geographic isolation**, alongside **intergenerational trauma** has deep effects on **mental health** (National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health 2024, 9)

“The colonial structure has been responsible for destabilizing health in Indigenous communities, especially through the displacement and forced relocations of Indigenous people to remote and/or rural communities” – NWAC Policy Brief, Health Inequities 2023, 1



Norway House Cree Nation Food Prices at Northmart store in Manitoba, 2024

Food Security:

- **Inflation of prices** has made it hard to afford food to put on the table
- The rate of **food insecurity** in Indigenous families is **31%**, double the rate of non-Indigenous families **15%** (StatsCan, 2022)
- Healthy food remains **two to three times** higher in rural Indigenous communities **50 kilometers** + from urban centres (NWAC Policy Brief, Food Insecurity 2023, 1)

“Residential schools morphed into the current system of child welfare, one that removes children at 17 times the rate of non-Indigenous children.”

- Cindy Blackstock, 2024

Early Childhood Development:

- **Low income and unemployment** in families facing poverty are more likely to have their own children placed into **protective care** (National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health 2024, 5)
 - Indigenous children are vastly **over-represented** in the **child welfare system**, accounting for **52.2%** as of **2019** (National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health 2024, 6)

Education:

- In 2016, it was estimated the schools found on reserves receive at least **30% less funding** (Indigenous Corporate Training INC #2, 2023)
- Poor education has led to **chronic unemployment** in many First Nations communities (Indigenous Corporate Training INC #2, 2023)
 - **44%** of First Nations 15 or older do not hold **any certificate, degree, or diploma** in comparison to **23%** of the Canadian population (Assembly of First Nations, Education, 2024)



Photo of J.R. Nakogee School located on Attawapiskat First Nation reserve, a series of portables

Access to Healthcare:

- For **remote Indigenous communities**, access to health care providers requires **lengthy travel**
 - Extensive and expensive travel “**renders the healthcare costs in these communities some of the most expensive in the world**” (National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health 2023, 4)
- Barriers like inability to provide **health care insurance coverage** and **inability to afford prescription medication** make proper health care in some cases **unattainable** (National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health 2023, 5)
- **Jordan’s Principle** has allowed for developments in **education and health care**, however, **advocates like Cindy Blackstock** believe Ottawa have **mismanaged** the program (Forester, 2024)

Mental Wellness:

- **Rates of suicide** for Indigenous peoples in Canada are **three times** the national average (McGuire, Yellowhead Institute, 2022)
- For some mental health services, many Indigenous people have to **pay out of pocket** and submit a long form for **reimbursement** (McGuire, Yellowhead Institute, 2022)
- Individuals living in poverty tend to have **less access** to health services, thus higher rates of **suicide and mental health issues** are more likely (NCCIH, Poverty SDOH, 2024)

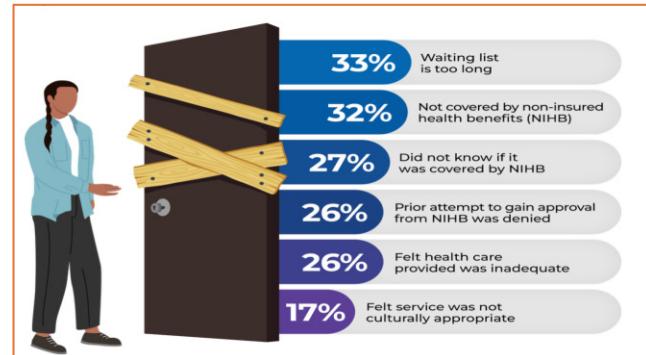
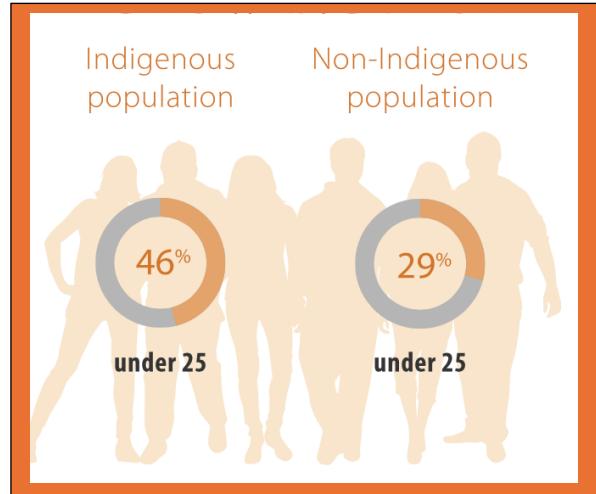


Figure III: Systemic Barriers for First Nations.
Canadian Partnership Against Cancer, 2024. URL:
<https://www.partnershipagainstcancer.ca/cancer-strategy/strategic-priorities/priorities-and-indicators/travel-access-care/>

Investments into Youth Education

Investments into the education of Indigenous youth in Canada may be one of the more important steps in addressing the income gap

- Out of the Indigenous population, **46%** of the population is **under 25** (NCCAH, Employment Infographic, 2017)
- **“Indigenous peoples are expected to comprise a significantly larger proportion of the Canadian labour market in the next decades”** (NCCAH, Employment Infographic, 2017)
- As of **2016**, **Employment Rate for First Nations** measured by educational attainment shows that it is much higher where one has a University, Bachelor, or master’s degree (Assembly of First Nations 2022, 8)



(NCCAH, Employment Infographic, 2017)

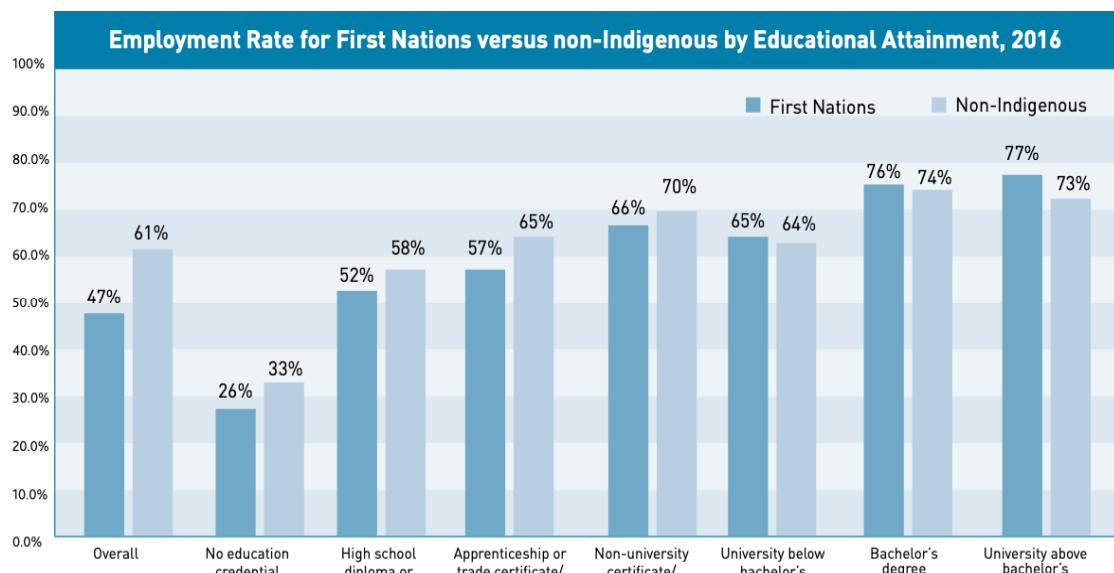


Image taken from the Assembly of First Nations 2022 Annual Report on Closing the First Nations Education Gap in Canada

- The **150 years of inferior education** has had a severe and devastating impact on the **socioeconomic outcomes** of Indigenous peoples
- Resources are so tight in most Indigenous schools that they rarely have the funds they need and deserve for **special education instructors, psychologists, social workers and psychiatrists** (Coates, Macdonald Laurier Institute, 2022)

Addressing the gap in education requires **committed leadership and collaboration by federal, provincial, and First Nations jurisdictions** (Giroux, Policy Options, 2012)

If investments were made into Indigenous education as it is for non-Indigenous peoples, an additional **\$8.5 billion** would be **earned annually** by the Indigenous population (Indigenous Corporate Training INC, #2, 2023)

- **Education Jurisdiction Agreements** have allowed Nations to step away **from Sections 114 to 122 of the Indian Act**, allowing them to take **control of education** (Indigenous Corporate Training INC, #2, 2023)



Matawa Learning Centre, Oji-Cree, Thunder Bay, ON (CBC News, 2024) URL:
<https://www.cbc.ca/news2/interactives/gradingthegap>

“Indigenous land-based education is its own paradigm based on Indigenous worldviews and beliefs and the passing on of knowledge to one another and to the next generation, it is also a form of understanding our place within, and our responsibility to, the wider universe.”

- Dr. Alex Wilson, Opaskwayak Cree Nation, 2021

Indigenous land-based education, which as defined by UNESCO (UNESCO Canada, 2021) would:

- **Provide culturally relevant education**
- **Promote opportunities for inter-generational knowledge transfer** Creates safe spaces for healing and learning
- **Change the relationship that many non-Indigenous people have with the land**

“The Canadian Centre for the Study of Living Standards calculates that \$71.1 billion will be added to Canada’s economy if Aboriginal people attain the same educational levels as other Canadians”

- Indigenous Awareness Canada Online Training, 2024

Current Approaches to Investment in Education

The Canadian Federal **Budget 2024** proposes new investments in First Nations' elementary and secondary education programming and infrastructure, including:

- \$649.4 million over 2 years, starting in 2024 to 2025, for elementary and secondary education on reserve
- \$545.1 million over 3 years, starting in 2024 to 2025, for K-12 infrastructure to build and renovate safe and healthy learning environments for First Nations students

These budgets are a great first step, and as defined in Shannen's Dream “Every child in Canada has the right to a proper education - including safe and comfy schools, quality education, and education that suits their individual and collective needs.” (First Nations Child & Family Caring Society, 2024)

Equal Pay Legislation and Enforcement

The Wage-Gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada is growing:

- The median individual income for people aged 25-65 is lower for all Indigenous groups, which compared to the non-Indigenous population bringing in **\$50,400** (StatsCan, 2020)

This issue affects all Indigenous peoples, but it is **exacerbated** for WG2STGD+ people

- Indigenous women make **\$0.85** to the **dollar** for Indigenous men (StatsCan, 2024)

“Indigenous WG2STGD+ People are **discriminated** against within the workplace, and they may be forced to leave their jobs because of that fact, ... being **discriminated** against should not be perpetuated by again being **discriminated** against because you were unable to tolerate violence in a workplace”

-NWAC Final Report, 2023

Barriers in Place:

Sexism, discrimination, and racism has made work environments unbearable for many Indigenous women, issues that are rooted in systemic colonialism:

- Women are **60%** less likely to move up towards executive ranks from middle management, a stat **exacerbated** for Indigenous women (CWF, 2024)
- **44%** of First Nations women work **health/social care, retail, or education services** which tend to be undervalued and paid less than male-dominated occupations (NWAC, 2023)

Indigenous women are faced with the concept of the “double burden,” which means that they do their days of work, then their unpaid labour at home



Retrieved from X: Office of the Pay Equity Commissioner (Government of Canada, 2024) URL: <https://x.com/FairPayCA/status/1805288050563727757>

#BeTheDrum by NWAC

#BeTheDrum is an entrepreneurial outreach and navigation program developed by NWAC. It is designed to **build the skills of Indigenous women and gender-diverse people entering the spheres of business, management, and entrepreneurship** (NWAC, 2023)

- Programs such as this target **closing the gap**, and moves toward ways of **income equality**
- The federal government must establish programs such as this to **ensure equal pay** through **empowerment of WGS2STGD+ peoples**

“NWAC believes that Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people have the right to improve their economic conditions through employment, entrepreneurship, education, and training” (NWAC, 2023)



URL:

<https://shiningthespotlight.nwac.ca/iss ue02/article-02.html>

Current Approaches to Equal Pay Legislation and Enforcement

The Canadian federal government has made two pieces of important legislation to ensure that gender equality is addressed:

Employment Equity Act (1995)

- Created to **achieve equality** in the workplace so no people can be **denied** employment opportunities or benefits for reason unrelated to ability
 - That is done to **correct** the conditions of disadvantage in employment experienced by **Aboriginal peoples, women, and minorities** (Government of Canada, Federal gender equality laws in Canada, 2023)

Pay Equity Act (2021)

- The goal is to “achieve pay equity through **proactive means** by redressing the **systemic gender-based discrimination** in the compensation practices and systems of employers that is experienced by employees who occupy positions in **predominantly female job classes** so that they receive **equal compensation** for work of equal value” (Government of Canada, Federal gender equality laws in Canada, 2023)
 - This Act does not apply to the territories or Indigenous governing bodies, as pay equity is still protected under section 11 of the Canadian Human Rights Act

Regardless of these Acts put in place, the issues pertaining to the pay gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, and more specifically the gender-wage gap still exist and were exacerbated with COVID

Implementation of Basic Income Programs

Due to lack of **political will** and **policy inaction**, there has been no attempts to combat the issues of income inequalities through **implementation of basic income programs**

“Economic reconciliation in the form of a UBI could be a policy solution that pulls First Nations children and families out of poverty and gives us a fighting chance to succeed in this country”- (Avveduti, Policy, 2020)

Most debates on Basic Income have been about eliminating welfare bureaucracies:

- Welfare bureaucracies have been a complicated system due to jurisdictional challenges
- Accessing necessary supports has been ‘tangled’ webs difficult to navigate for First Nations people

(Avveduti, Policy, 2020)

Does it Work?

Basic Income is not some new topic of discussion, as pilot programs have been experimented in Dauphin, Manitoba, known as the ‘Mincome’ experiment

What did project Mincome show?

Guaranteed sources of income in these programs led to (First Voice Urban Indigenous Coalition (2024):

- Long-term financial stability
- Better health outcomes
- Upskilling
- Social mobility and labour market participation

This social experiment “saw rates of hospitalisations fall, improvements in mental health, and a rise in the number of children completing high school” (Cox, BBC, 2020)



Basic Income Canada Network Logo

Quotes from the experiment:

Evelyn Forget- “When Mincome came along, families decided they could support their sons in school just a little bit longer, and, in some ways, I think that’s the most exciting result because we saw that investment in human capital.”

Evelyn Forget- “I wanted to see whether doing something about poverty has an impact on people’s health and these results are really interesting. An 8.5% reduction over four years is pretty dramatic.”

Eric Richardson on attending the dentist for the first time- “Normally, you didn’t get to go until you were old enough to pay for it yourself, I remember it very well because I had 10 cavities, and our dentist would drill your teeth without freezing.”

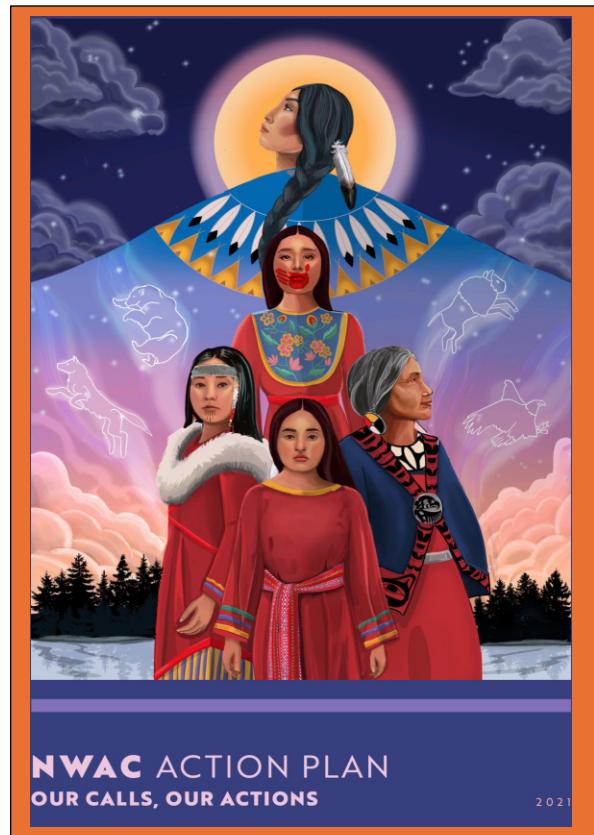
(Cox, BBC, 2020)

The Native Women's Association of Canada has made the implementation of a Basic Income one of their Calls to Justice and a part of their action plans

- **Calls for Justice 4.5:** "Establish a guaranteed annual livable income, taking **diverse needs** into account (NWAC Action Plan 2021, 25)
- Advocates state that Basic Income **prevents** Indigenous women, girls, gender-diverse people from being in **vulnerable situations** (Samson CBC News, 2021)

"If I was to have the peace of mind of having that income — knowing that my rent's going to get paid, my bills are going to get paid, I'm going to have money to get to work, get to my programs, get to school, get my kids to daycare — it would definitely be different."

- Bianca Moar, Big Grassy First Nation (CBC, 2021) URL:
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/universal-basic-income-mmiwg2s-federal-election-2021-1.6160251>



URL: <https://nwac.ca/assets-knowledge-centre/NWAC-action-plan-English.pdf>

Current Approaches Taken Towards Basic Income Programs

There has been attempts in suggestions for a Basic Income Program to be implemented in Canada, both titled "National Framework for a Guaranteed Livable Basic Income Act":

- Senator Kim Pate introduced a bill in the Senate called **S-233** (Still in Progress) on 22 November 2021, an act to develop a national framework for a guaranteed liable basic income. (House of Commons)
- NDP Private Members **Bill C-223** (introduced in December 2021 by MP Leah Gazan) was defeated in the House of Commons in September 2024
 - This bill was also an act to develop a guaranteed livable basic income, yet was defeated at second reading in the House, vote being 54 Yea, 273 Nay. (House of Commons, 2024)

"Poverty is a policy choice, and it's time that the Liberal government chooses to support all people in Canada." – Leah Gazan, NDP Manitoba MP, (NDP, 2024) URL: <https://www.ndp.ca/news/ndps-leah-gazan-its-time-guaranteed-livable-basic-income>



Top: Kim Pate -
Bottom: Leah
Gazan

URL:
<https://www.parl.gc.ca/oucommons.ca>



Challenges and Barriers to Closing the Income Gaps and Unemployment Crisis

Implementing policy options that have been raised by Indigenous voices would face the same challenges that Indigenous peoples in Canada have been facing for years, which is due to the federal government of Canada's continuous neglect of issues faced by these communities.

Federal budgets dedicated to addressing Indigenous issues in Canada seem positive, yet funding cuts are always a fear:

- The NDP cited a 2023-24 plan by the Department of Indigenous Services that estimated \$7.6 billion in spending would be cut by 2026 as programs were not renewed (Nunatsiaq News, 2024)
- Indigenous Relations were expected to see cuts of about \$416 million over the next three years to help meet commitments in the 2023 federal budget (Nunatsiaq News, 2024)

“Indigenous peoples have been neglected by Liberals and Conservatives for decades. And now the Liberals want to cut programs that ensure Indigenous children get the care they need. This is unacceptable.”

NDP leader Jagmeet Singh, March 20th, 2024



The House of Commons Chamber

As stated earlier in the report, COVID pushed the steps being taken to address income inequality back

- As of 2023, the top 40% of earners hold 64.8% of total disposable income, whereas the bottom 40% only hold 18.8% (Yassin et al., 2024)

The gaps in income are being faced by all Canadian in the bottom 40% of earners, a stat that is multiplied for Indigenous peoples in Canada in low-income situations

- Canada is undergoing a growing divide between its wealthiest and its most vulnerable citizens.

“To forge a more equitable future, immediate and targeted policy interventions are essential”

- (Yassin et al., 2024)



Assembly of First Nations Annual General Assembly in Montreal, 2024

Concluding Remarks

Our group acknowledges and respects that we are not First Nations, nor have we shared the same experiences as First Nations in Canada, therefore we are not in the position to make policy recommendations. Through our research, we three have ensured that the policy options are informed and identified as important to Indigenous communities.

As a group, the research that we have done pertaining to our policy briefs and this major report **has opened our eyes to the issues faced by First Nations people in Canada.** It has also taught us of the **systemic discrimination and colonial practices that the federal government has imposed, many of which affect the Social Determinants of Health.**

We have had the opportunity to listen to the stories of our First Nations and Inuit partners, which have left a mark on our lives. We would like to thank **Elder Lorraine Peters Whitman, Darlene Peters Copeland, Lara Hartman, Ana Martin, Dr. Piita Irniq, Cole Kippenhuck, Sandy Fisher, and Kory Wilson** for sharing your stories and history with us. Your knowledge has informed our research and opened our eyes to the persistent colonialism that is ever so present in Canada today.



The Survivors' Flag – National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation URL: <https://nctr.ca>

This major report, and in our research has furthered our understanding of the federal government's **responsibility** to address the persistent colonial issues that have affected Indigenous peoples in Canada. With only a little knowledge prior, we were able to gather an understanding of the SDOH crisis of Income and Employment. There can be policy suggestions, but there must be **policy action** taken by the federal government to **address** its failures.

Wela'lioq!

IN HONOUR OF THE LATE MURRAY SINCLAIR



January 24, 1951 – November 4, 2024

“WE HAVE DESCRIBED FOR YOU A MOUNTAIN. WE
HAVE SHOWN YOU THE PATH TO THE TOP. WE CALL
UPON YOU TO DO THE CLIMBING
- MURRAY SINCLAIR

GLOSSARY

Abbreviations:

- AFN – Assembly of First Nations
- CJPME – The CJPME Foundation
- CWF – Canadian Women’s Foundation
- ICTINC – Indigenous Corporate Training INC
- IK – Indigenous Knowledge
- MMIWG – Missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQI+ people
- NCCAH - National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health
- NCCIH – National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health
- NWAC – Native Women’s Association of Canada
- SDOH – Social Determinants of Health
- StatsCan – Statistics Canada
- TRC – Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada
- UNDRIP – United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- WHO – World Health Organization

Definitions:

Assembly of First Nations - An advocacy organization, taking direction and fulfilling mandates as directed by First-Nations-in-Assembly through resolutions (AFN, 2024)

Basic Income - An unconditional payment the government provides to individuals regularly

Economic Reconciliation - The process of making economic amends for historical injustices to Indigenous Peoples (Canadian Chamber of Commerce, 2024)

Indian Act - The *Indian Act* was created by the federal government of Canada to control and assimilate Indigenous peoples and their communities (NWAC, 2024)

Mincome Experiment – An experiment in Manitoba that attempted to evaluate the impact of a guaranteed annual income (GAI) on the work behaviour of recipients (University of Toronto)

Residential Schools – A systematic, government-sponsored attempt to destroy Aboriginal cultures and languages and to assimilate Aboriginal peoples so that they no longer existed as distinct peoples (TRC, 2024)

Two-Spirit - Two-Spirit encompasses a diverse spectrum of identities that relate to gender, sexuality, and spirituality. It serves as a means of challenging the colonial legacies of heterosexism by highlighting Indigenous worldviews, which emphasize the fluid, non-linear

nature of identity and the interconnectedness of all its dimensions— including gender, sexuality, community, culture, and spirituality. (NWAC, 2024)

UNDRIP – A critical step in recognizing, promoting, protecting, and upholding the human rights of Indigenous Peoples in Canada (Canadian Museum for Human Rights, 2024)

Wela'lioq – Thank You in Mi'kmaw

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Addressing the Gender Wage Gap and Systemic Inequality between First Nation Men and WG2STGD+ People

Michael O'Flynn, AJ Magamura, Jacksen Whyte

The Issue: How has the patriarchal nature of Canada contributed to the **Gender Wage Gap** between First Nation men and WG2STGD+ People, and how do these **discrepancies** reflect the big issues of **systemic income inequalities** faced by Indigenous Peoples in Canada?

Background:

The **Gender Wage Gap** between First Nations men and women is a product of **systemic barriers** that has been set in place due to **colonization**. The **Gender Wage Gap** is concurrent for all Canadian women regardless of race; however, the issue is much more persistent for First Nations women. **Lower pay, fewer job opportunities, and discrimination** based on both gender and Indigenous identity has deepened these income inequalities.

- Pre-colonization, Indigenous women were highly valued in their communities as many Nations were **matriarchal societies**
- The *Indian Act* targeted First Nations women by denying their rights to live on-reserve and treaty benefits
- Due to the effects of **residential schools, intergenerational trauma** is passed down through families because of the **mental, sexual, and physiological abuses** faced in these schools
- Due to **intergenerational trauma**, many women find themselves as single mothers having to support their family, adding to the **millennium scoop threat**
- In the mid-20th Century, First Nations women were forced to do the grunt work in **supervised, racially segregated** factories (i.e.. Canneries)
- First Nations women in canneries **worked hard for long hours** and were paid **low wages** based on the **number of cases** they could fill in a day (Indigenous Foundations, 2024)

“By understanding the **intergenerational** effects of colonization, we can begin to address current issues and create a better future for Aboriginal women and girls. Knowledge of past and present issues is essential to building a **better life for future generations.**” (NWAC 2024)

Update:

“**Indigenous WG2STGD+ People** are **discriminated** against within the workplace, and they may be forced to leave their jobs because of that fact, ... being **discriminated** against should not be perpetuated by again being **discriminated** against because you were unable to tolerate violence in a workplace” (NWAC Final Report 2023)

- The **intersection of sexism, injustice, and systemic racism** has created barriers such as the **Gender Wage Gap**
- **WG2STGD+** people are facing “**double discrimination**”
- As of **2019**, Indigenous women’s **unemployment rate** is **8.4%** (NWAC 2023)
- Women are **60%** less likely to move up towards executive ranks from middle management, a stat **exacerbated** for Indigenous women (CWF 2024)
- **44%** of First Nations women work **health/social care, retail, or education services**, which tends to be **undervalued** and paid less than male-dominated occupations (NWAC 2023)
- Compared to non-Indigenous men, the Gender Wage Gap of Indigenous women is a **20%** difference (StatsCan 2022)
- Indigenous women make **\$0.85** to the **dollar** of Indigenous men (StatsCan 2024)
- First Nations women are **caretakers and leaders** in their community; thus, their **unpaid labor** contributes to income inequalities for Indigenous women

Summary: The Gender Wage Gap remains a challenge for First Nations WG2STGD+ in Canada as they are facing both gender and racial discrimination. Despite progress, systemic inequalities in pay and work opportunities persist, which brings the need for targeted policies to promote wage equity and economic justice.

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Photo Credits: Paul Chiasson, The Canadian Press

The Housing Crisis of Indigenous Peoples in Canada

Jorja Trottier

Table of Contents:

Foreword...

I, the author of this report, am an Acadia University student currently enrolled in POLS 2003: Intro to Public Policy. In this course I was given the opportunity to learn about the Indigenous peoples of Canada and the effects the social determinants of health on their communities. During this class I was able to learn from Indigenous peoples and listen to their knowledge and stories. This report is on my research surrounding the housing crisis of Indigenous peoples.

I would like to acknowledge I am a non-Indigenous person. I do not possess the understanding and knowledge that Indigenous peoples do. Therefore, this report is solely on the research I have done on this topic, **I will not be offering and policy recommendations**. I value the insight I have been given on these issues and am honoured to amplify the voices of Indigenous individuals.



Photo of the POLS 2003 class

During the process of researching and writing this report, I was able to gain a deeper understanding of the impacts the housing crisis has on Indigenous peoples. I was taught the importance of gaining knowledge on these issues, and how ignorance truly harms communities.

I am grateful for the opportunity I was given and value this knowledge I have been given. I commit myself to continue to learn outside of the classroom environment.

I would like to thank our professor, **Dr. Cynthia Alexander**, for giving this class the opportunity to gain this knowledge.

I would also like to thank the people that took the time out of their day to speak with our class and allowing us to learn from them.

Thank you to **Darlene Peters Copeland, Dr. Lorraine Peters Whitman, Brooke Paul, Dr. Piita Irniq, Lara Hartman, Tom Ullyett, Barb Shaw, Ana Martin, and Cole Kippenhuck**.

Executive Summary...

Since the beginning of colonialism, Indigenous peoples in Canada have been displaced from their home and land. The houses and living arrangements they are supplied with are often in need of major repairs and are unfit to live in. Due to the neglect of this issue from government, Indigenous peoples across Canada are facing a severe housing crisis.



Photo of housing in St. Theresea Point First Nation, retrieved from Indigenous Watchdog

A History of Colonization in Canada and its Effects on the Indigenous Housing Crisis...

“We have to recognize that all people who came to Canada as settlers, as immigrants, as refugees whoever they might have been, came here with their culture intact. Came here with their religion intact, with their way of practicing intact. Indigenous people had that taken away from them.”

-Kerrie Moore, Cree Metis

The first people to settle in North America was in the 11th century. These people would go on to create the first European colony.

In the 15th to 17th century Europe would continue to expand their colonies.

From then on, settlers would continue their pursuit of conquering, while seizing the land from the Indigenous peoples of Canada.



Can You Identify This Picture?

The Indian Act

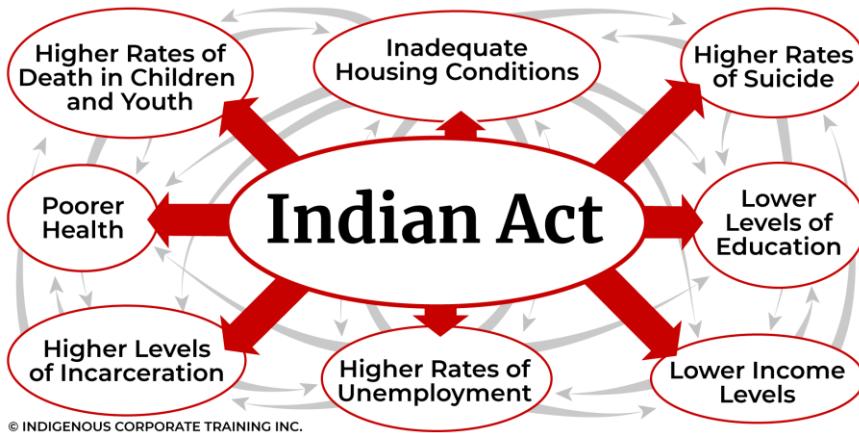
Photo retrieved from Micmac News, May 1966

The Indian Act was passed by the Canadian Government in 1876. This act was created to further control Indigenous peoples and eradicate their culture.

- 1876: Women who marry non-status men, lose their own status
- 1884: residential schools were created, forcibly removing children from their homes and families
- 1927: Indigenous peoples are banned from hiring lawyers regarding land claims
- 1960: Indigenous peoples are finally allowed to vote

“*The Indian Act has been described as a form of apartheid, a piece of legislation designed to control and tame the Indigenous population.*”

-Tanya Talaga, Journalist and Author



Centralization

An experiment on Mi'kmaq people in 1940-50. Mi'kmaq people were forcibly relocated away from dominantly white living areas. The housing they were given was in disrepair, they were given land unfit for farming, and the water was unsafe.

The Creation of Reserves

An Indigenous reserve is a set piece of land for Indigenous bands. Reserves fall under the Indian Act and treaty agreements.

"The continued existence of 'Indian reserves' serves as one of the most visible reminders of the race-based segregation of First Nations people in Canada." -Musto, 1990

Reserves are not the same as traditional lands

- They are owned by the crown, not the communities or individuals
- Reserves have borders imposed by the Indian Act

"Canada has a moral obligation to house all Indigenous people, regardless of status."

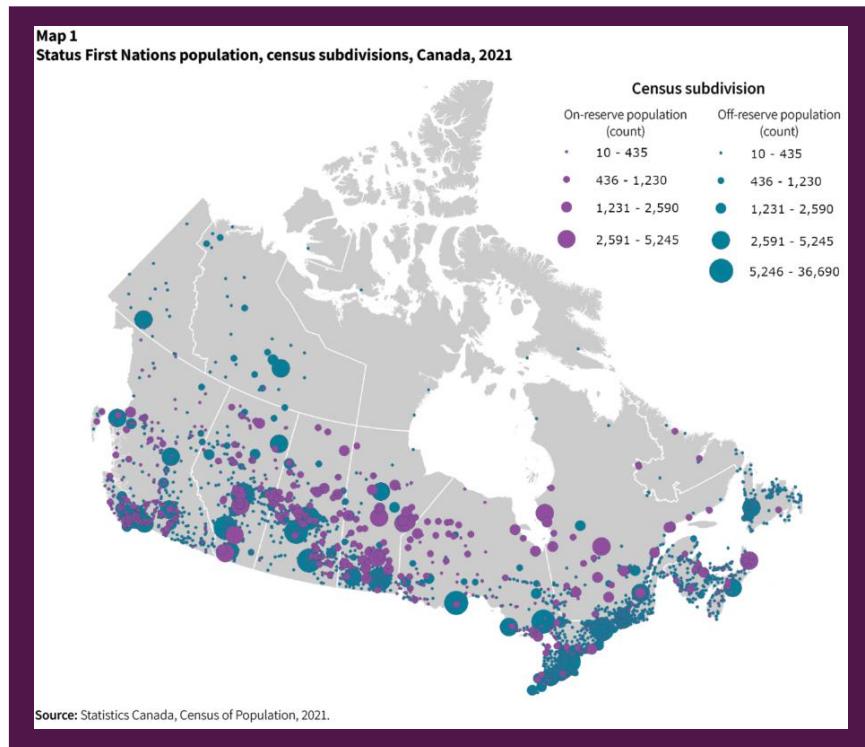
-Eden Fineday, IndigiNews

The housing crisis and its effects have become particularly visible on reserves.

Housing on reserves are often:

- Overcrowded
- Poorly constructed
- In need of maintenance

Many reserves are also placed far from amenities (groceries, healthcare, schools, work), making them less accessible.



FIGHTING FOR BETTERMENT

It's evident now that an Indian Reserve in the City of Sydney is a disgrace to the general public with the out-door toilets in sight and the conditions of the outside of some homes. Some of these homes are about 40 years old. They're old and are a fire hazard.

The chief of the Fire Department could condemn these homes

and Western Jamboree are for the Hall.

and will probably do so in the near future.

For the inside conditions, there are homes that have no inside toilets which are needed most urgently. There are several sick men and women that have to rely on the outside toilet or have other inadequate means for their use. There is a case where a man who is convalescing has to drink water from a well which has been condemned by the City be-

cause of contamination. His water has been shut off for three years because of the unpaid bill. His wife just recently came from Point Edward Hospital, they have four children. They have a very limited income What is to be done ???

This is something that should be looked into by City Hall, Indian Affairs and others who could possibly assist in overcoming these problems.

Photo retrieved from Micmac News, 1966. Describing the state of a reserve



Photo Credits: Karl Hele, Garden River First Nation



Photo Credits: Nathan Denette, Northern Ontario Reserve

The Social Determinants of Health...

The World Health Organization defines the Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) as:

“The non-medical factors that influence health outcomes. They are the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life.”
(WHO, 2021)

The National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health produced articles detailing how the SDOH affects specifically Indigenous Peoples:

Income and Social Protection:

- Pay gap (paid less than non-Indigenous peoples)

Education:

- Lack of access in communities, discrimination in school environment

Unemployment and Job Insecurity:

- Lower education completion rates, less likely to be employed

Working Life Conditions:

- Discrimination in the workplace

Food Insecurity:

- Lower income (limits what food someone could buy)

Housing:

- Indigenous housing crisis

Early Childhood Development:

- Sixties scoop and Millenium Scoop, intergenerational Trauma

Social Inclusion and Non-Discrimination:

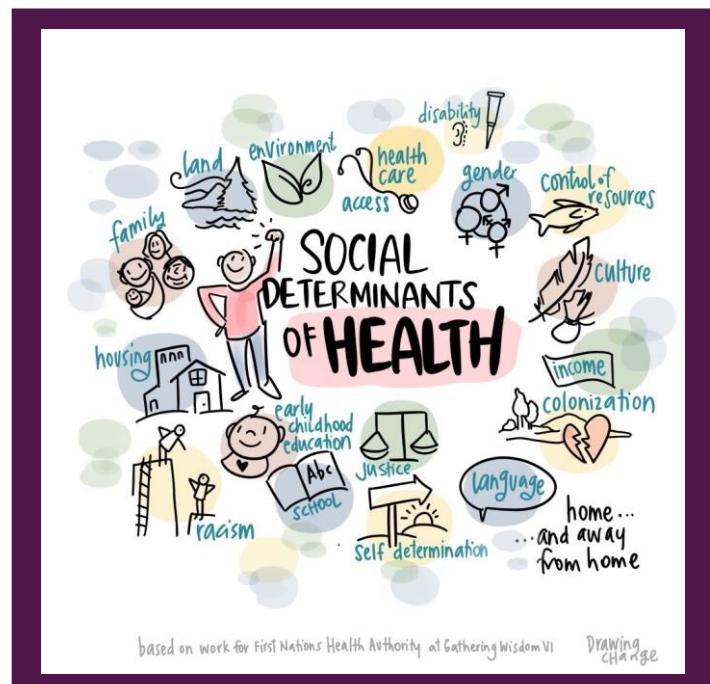
- Colonial stereotypes

Structural Conflict:

- Higher crime rates, discrimination and social bias

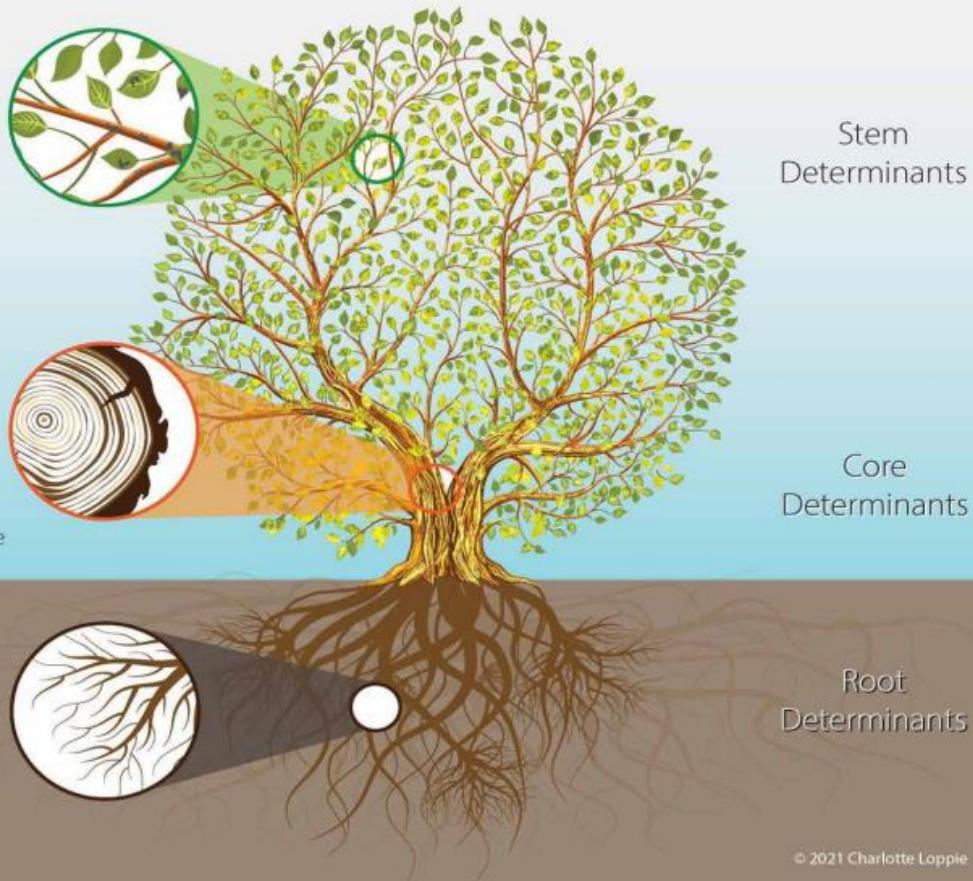
Health Services:

Lack of access in communities, racial profiling preventing adequate



SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' HEALTH

- Health Activities
- Geophysical Environments
- Employment and Income
- Education
- Food Insecurity



© 2021 Charlotte Loppie

Photo retrieved from The National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health

"It is important to note that colonization is not a singular, historical event, but a persistent and complex constellation of intersecting environments, systems, and processes intended to entrench social, political, and economic determinants that benefit white settler societies, often to the detriment of Indigenous lands, waters, cultures, communities, families, and individuals."

-Unknown, NCCIH (2021)

"[We need] less focus on people being aware of our culture, and more focused on contractual policies so that our people aren't being harmed anymore. This is something that's been happening since the start of colonization."

-Michelle Buchholz, IndigiNews (2020)

Causes and Symptoms...

Of the 150,000 to 300,000 people in Canada who are without housing each night, Indigenous peoples make up 30% of that population (Indigenous Corporate Training inc., 2023).

What are the factors that contribute to this housing crisis and the symptoms that follow?

The Native Women's Association of Canada lists some of the reasons in their housing report.



Photo retrieved from Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada, An Inuit community in Southern Canada

Shortage of Housing Units

Lack of housing that is:

- Affordable
- In living condition
- Accessible
- Available

“Many bands are currently facing a housing shortage with limited financial resources to find solutions.” (NWAC, 2018)

Stats Can states that in 2016, 331,025 people lived on reserve, and that number continues to rise.

- There is a significant gap between available housing on reserves and the population

*“Before the housing crisis hit,
Indigenous people were already
going through a housing crisis.”
-Brooke Paul, speaking to Acadia Students
(2024)*

Overcrowding

Because of the lack of available housing, people are forced to live in a household not fit to hold that number of residents

- 17.1% of Indigenous peoples live in an overcrowded household (Indigenous Corporate Training inc., 2023)

Overcrowding causes:

- Communicable diseases transmitted at higher rate in these households (Covid, Tuberculosis, neuro virus)
- Lower education achievement (lack of quiet places for children to complete homework and studying)
- Sleep problems (loud environment, sharing beds)
- Negative mental health affects (stress, relationship difficulties)

Unsafe Housing Conditions

The structural quality of these homes is often in need of repair and not safe to live in.

- Mold and asbestos
- Fire hazards
- Leaks and broken windows
- Poor Infrastructure

The Assembly of First Nations states that “First Nations urgently need 157,453 new homes as well as repairs to 55,700 existing ones.” (2024)



Photo Credits: Ollie Williams, Homes in Gamèti (2018)

“I was living in a house with mold. I was getting seven or eight sinus infections a year because of unstable houses.”

-Unknown, NWAC (2018)

Unsafe housing also includes domestic and spousal violence in the home.

The Western Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children states that:

“Indigenous women are approximately 3.5 times more likely to experience some form of spousal violence than non-indigenous women.”

“The lack of infrastructure for women wanting to leave – they don’t want to leave the community, taking their children away from their extended family”

-Unknown, NWAC (2018)



Photo retrieved from Canadian Centre from Women's Empowerment

Figure 1: Violent Victimization Incidents Reported by Indigenous (Aboriginal) People and Non-Indigenous (Aboriginal) People (By type of violent offence, provinces and territories. Rate per 1,000 population aged 15 years and older)

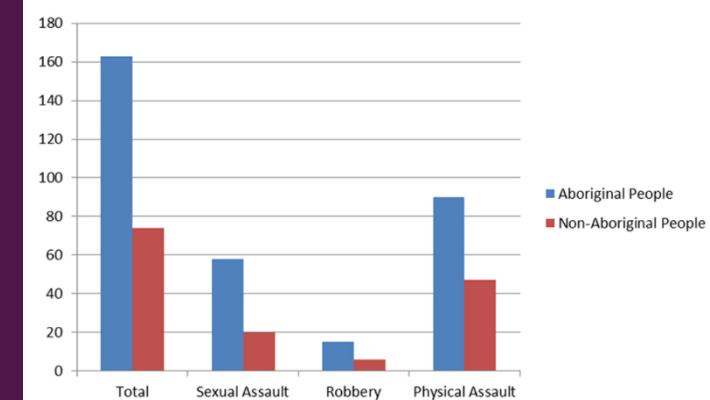


Photo retrieved from Stats Can (2014)



Photo retrieved from Toronto Star, Kashechewan community after flood (2019)

Climate Change and the Environment

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre found that in 2023 there were over 190,000 documented displacements from natural disaster in Canada. Indigenous peoples accounted for at least 30,000 of those.

Disaster displacements of Indigenous Peoples in Canada

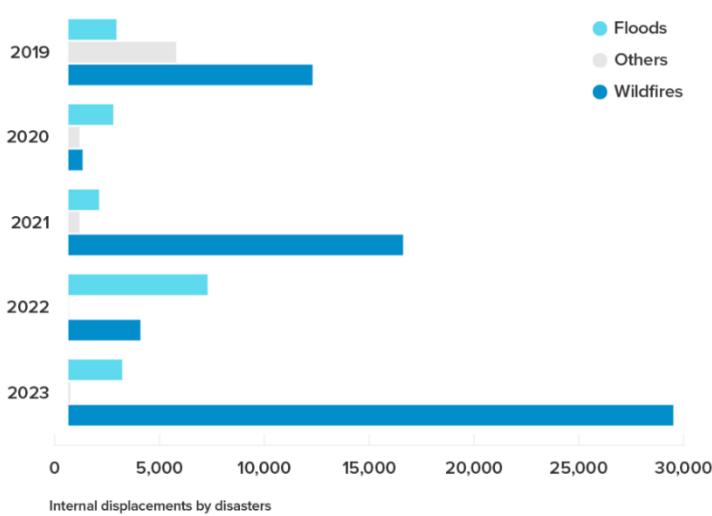


Photo retrieved from Indigenous Services Canada (2024)

Indigenous communities are known to be especially vulnerable to climate change.

- Many reserves are located on flood lands and in woods susceptible to wildfire
- When houses are destroyed it then exacerbates the already limited housing
- Many individuals rely on fishing and hunting, something they are unable to do if they are displaced or if that area is affected by disaster

"These are people who are obviously going through a tough time having to uproot themselves and their families," -Joseph Sayers, on floods in Kashechewan First Nation (2024)

Looking at an Intersectional Perspective...

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines Intersectionality as:

“The complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups.”

This is a beneficial way of thinking when looking at different issues. Many Indigenous peoples fall under different minority groups and have unique experiences within the housing crisis.

Youth

Housing shortage

- Youth living with family for longer periods of time, attributing to multigenerational homes

Education

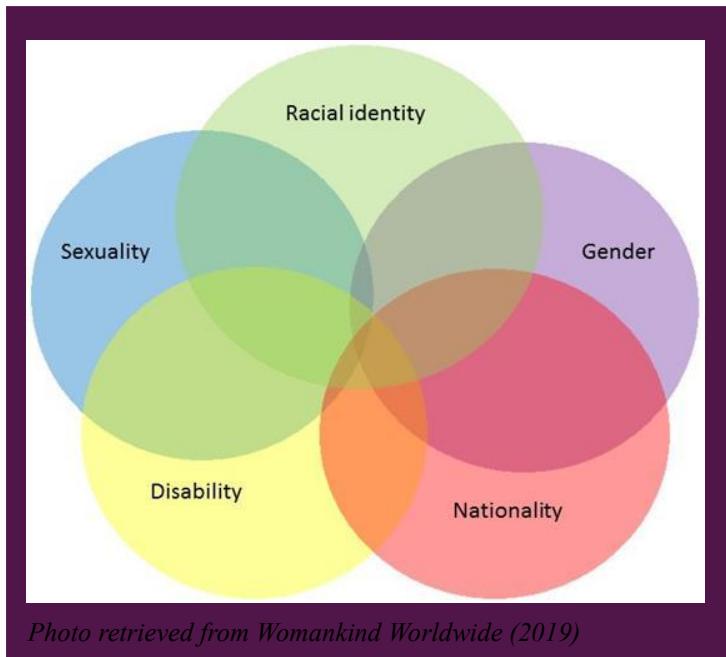
- Lack of educational establishments in or close to communities

Shelters

- Some shelters are not equipped to handle children (teenage boys being sent somewhere else)

According to the Assembly of First Nations, in 2021, 53.8% of foster children in Canada were Indigenous

- “Inadequate housing, poor community infrastructure, and limited education and economic opportunities in First Nations communities, especially on reserves, contribute to the high numbers.”
(Assembly of First Nations, 2024)



"The challenge that we're seeing is the ripple effect for these demographics. Youth transitioning out of care are highly over-represented on the streets of Victoria in the homeless population." -Ron Rice, Executive director of the Victoria Native Friendship Centre (2023)

Elders

Environment

- Elders are the most vulnerable to emergencies (no transportation, does not have capacity to protect house)

Housing shortage

- The lack of housing causes elders to live with family members, contributing to multigenerational living and overcrowding

Healthcare

- Houses are inaccessible
 - Both for the elder and for care providers to get to
- Lack of available care in or close to community (forces elders to leave communities)

“I wake up sometimes and think, ‘wow I’ve just had this horrible nightmare.’ But then I open my eyes and realize, holy no, this is a nightmare, I am living this.” -Duston Cambell, Musqueam Elder, speaking on the dilapidated condition of his home



Photo Credits: Darryl Dyck, CBC News (2013)



Artist: Kayla Bellerose, Mural of influential Two-Spirit and Indigiqueer people in local community (Photo by CBC, 2022)

Two-Spirit and Indigiqueer Peoples

‘Indigiqueer’ is a term used for people who are both Indigenous and of the queer community

According to the NWAC, LGBTQIA2 youth are at a higher risk of being unhoused compared to heterosexual or cisgender youth

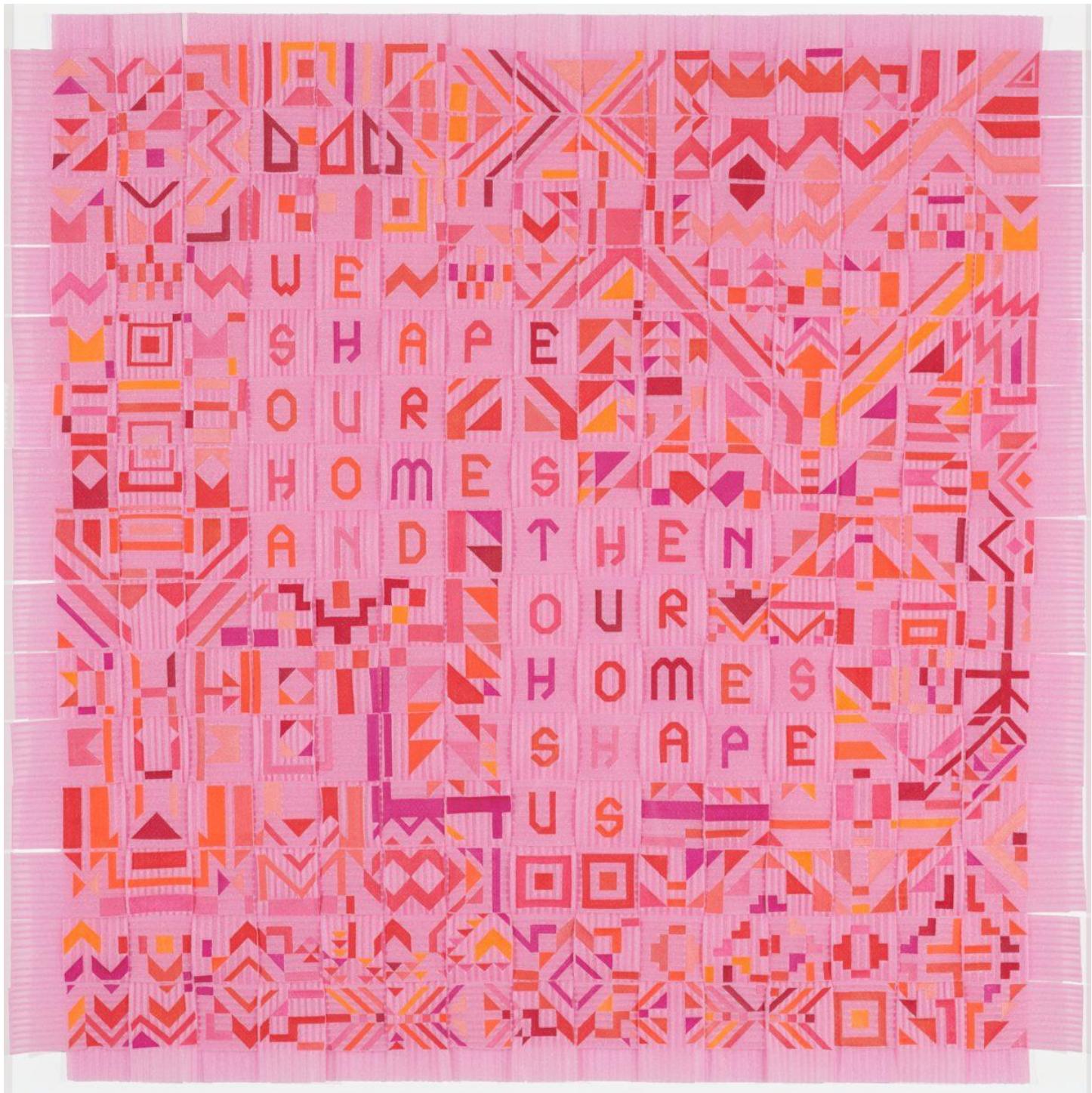
Discrimination

- Lack of knowledge around identities, especially Two-Spirit
- Many youth encounter parents that do not accept them (risking getting kicked out of their home)

Lack of Inclusive Spaces

- Many spaces are for Indigenous peoples or for queer people, not Indigiqueer peoples (shelters usually only offer binary spaces of male and female)

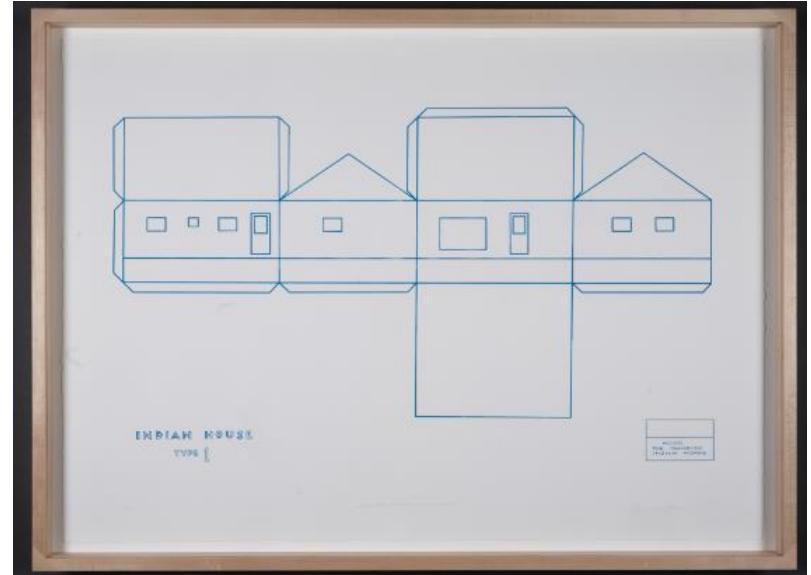
“A lot of mainstream organizations are trans-ignorant and transphobic. If you’re a young trans or Two-Spirit woman who identifies as a woman, but you’re chucked into a dorm with a bunch of men because they don’t have a special place for you, that can be very dangerous.” -Carroll Browne, NWAC (2017)



Artist: Caroline Monnet, a piece on the Indigenous housing crisis in Canada

Policy Options from Indigenous Experts...

“Overcrowded and inadequate housing means the spread of communicable diseases and other negative impacts on health. It means the lack of space for children to play and study. It means the increased family tension that overcrowding creates and the lack of safe alternatives for family members if they fear violence. Inadequate housing affects a range of human rights.” -Perry Bellegarde, Chief, Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (2014)



Artist: Frank Shebageget, a piece on his own experience growing up in a small town (2021)

NWAC Housing Strategy

What to consider:

- There is a strong connection between the quality of housing in a community and the economic situation of individuals
- The effect of residential schools on an inter-generational level, still have intense effects on families
 - It is also prevalent that Indigenous children are still being apprehended, now under child welfare agencies
- Women and children experience the housing crisis with a different level than other individuals

NWAC Recommendations

- Community infrastructure supports safe neighborhoods
- Housing is forthcoming to the needs of the people living there
- Women are supported
 - Prioritize women leaving situations of violence
 - Supports are available to secure permanent and stable housing
- Housing strategies consider the differences between Indigenous communities and their needs
- Construction be at the local level, so community members are involved within the building and maintenance of housing

Calls for Justice

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) states:

- Article 3: “Indigenous Peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right, they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.”
- Article 4: “Indigenous Peoples, in exercising their right to self-determination, have the right to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to their internal and local affairs, as well as ways and means for financing their autonomous functions.”

“The National Inquiry [into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls]’s Final Report found that funding that is insufficient, short-term or time-limited, represents a violation of inherent rights to self governance. The failure to provide funding equitably, substantively, and stably harms our communities.”

-Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres



Photo Credit: Nadya Kwandibens, photo of Rinelle Harper

“I want people to know that change starts with us.”
-Rinelle Harper

The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls listed their calls for justice. Some of these include:

- Ensure the right to health and wellness of Indigenous Peoples
- Adequate, stable, equitable, and ongoing funding for health and wellness services
- Ensure that Indigenous Peoples have access to safe housing, clean drinking water, and adequate food
- The support of Indigenous-led shelters, safe spaces, transition homes, second stage housing, and services



"Working together, among all levels of government, is essential to address the housing needs of Indigenous people living in urban and rural areas. Safe, affordable, and culture-based housing is the foundation for healthy communities...the task of building up our communities requires positive and productive partnerships to get the job done of successfully housing people in a good way." -Cora McGuire-Cyrette, Board Chair, Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services

Photo retrieved from Ontario Aboriginal Housing Centre

Indigenous Friendship Centres

Friendship centres offer resources for Indigenous peoples living in urban, rural, and remote settings

What is provided according to the National Association of Friendship Centres:

- Health: Mental health, Disability, Illness, Sports and Hobbies
- Culture: Language, Ceremony, Cultural Activities, Arts and Crafts
- Shelter: Childcare, Anti-Violence, Youth, Homelessness
- Support: Food Security, Transportation, Justice, Finances
- Develop: Education, Employment, Life Skills, Training

(National Association of Friendship Centres, 2024)

These centres create an environment that not only support Indigenous individuals, but is a place for non-Indigenous people to learn and connect

In 2021, there were 125 active Friendship Centres across Canada.

One of those being the Thunder Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre, which offers many different programs

- Community Support Program: Life skills guidance, Addiction prevention and support, Referrals for diagnosis
- Apatisiwin Employment Program: Employment counselling, Skills development, Outreach and networking

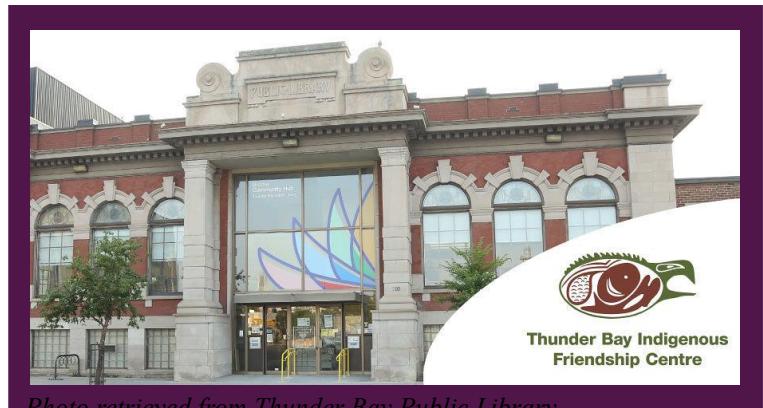
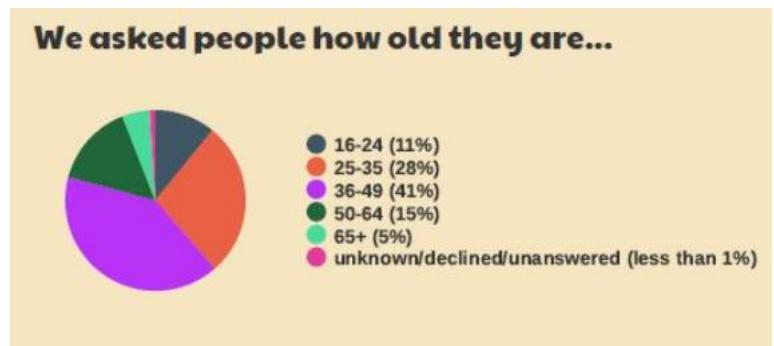
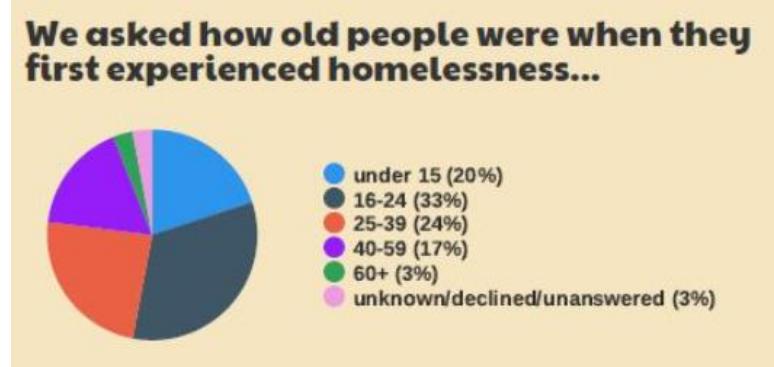


Photo retrieved from Thunder Bay Public Library

Indigenous Youth Transition Centres

Another program the Thunder Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre offers is the Indigenous Youth Transitional Housing Project

- Supports Indigenous peoples between the ages of 18-29 who are at risk or are unhoused, or are living with mental illness and/or addiction
- Supports these youth to navigate, identify, and access adult service systems that relate to their housing
- The program focuses on using a culturally focused, strength-based and trauma-informed approach



Photos retrieved from Thunder Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre, Survey based on 221 people who were unhousing in October 2021, 68% of the participants identified as Indigenous



Photos retrieved from National Association of Friendship Centres, map of every friendship centre in Canada

The Niijkiwendidaa AnishnaAbekwewag Services Circle in Ontario provides support to Indigenous youth transitioning to adulthood

- Open to youth from 16-24 years old
- Offers support to identify goals and create plans related to said goals
- Supports youth to find and navigate services that relate to their needs
- Aims to be reflective and responsive to individual needs

Indigenous Women Transition Shelters

The Transition House Association of Nova scotia describes transition housing as:

“Transition houses provide safe, temporary housing and support for women and their children who are at risk of violence, or who have experienced violence. Most transition houses are residential homes in confidential locations where women and families live together.” (THANS, 2024)

They provide:

- Safe shelter and basic necessities
- Counselling for women and youth
- Accompaniment to court and legal appointments
- Safety planning
- Outreach services
- Support with peace bonds and emergency protection orders
- Support with involvement of the department of community services and Mi’kmaw family and children services

(THANS, 2024)



Artist: Samaqani Cocahq (Natalie Sappier), Gignoo Transition House logo



Photo retrieved from the National Indigenous Women’s Housing Network, Marie McGregor Pitawanakwat, NIWHN Chair

“It doesn’t matter that my matrilineal bloodline runs deep in the North — government-run public housing dispossesses Indigenous people of their land.”

-Katljà Lafferty of Yellowknife

The Western Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children states:

- Indigenous Women are 3.5 times more likely to experience spousal violence compared to non-Indigenous women

“Woman is the centre of the wheel of life. She is the heartbeat of the people. She is not just in the home, but she is the community, she is the Nation.”

-Art Soloman, “The Women’s Part”

Need to Add/ Finish:

- Table of Contents
- Executive Summary
- Barriers that are faced
- Conclusion
- Bibliography

Addressing the Systemic Barriers Causing Income Gaps and the Employment Crisis for First Nations in Canada

Report By: Michael O'Flynn, AJ
Magamura, Jacksen Whyte



CANADA ACTION 2020. URL:
<https://www.canadaaction.ca/indigenous-reconciliation-oil-sands-examples>



Gathering Wisdom – First Nations Health Authority, 2013

URL: <https://drawingchange.com/gathering-wisdom-visuals-for-a-healthy-future/>

The Issue Question

How has **persistent colonialism** and the **systemic barriers** faced by Indigenous peoples in Canada contributed to the ongoing **income inequality** and **unemployment rates**, and what are the policy measures needed to be taken to address these **socio-economic gaps** across all areas of the Social Determinants of Health (SDOH)?

Background:

Indigenous Peoples in Canada face significant and long-standing **socio-economic gaps** compared to the non-Indigenous population. These disparities are rooted in a history of **colonialism, discrimination, and marginalization** that continues to impact Indigenous communities today.



Indigenous Land (1655) – CPJME, 2024

“I think in order to heal, people have to realize what actually happened, what the historical wrongs were that were done to Indigenous people and really feel that. So no matter how hard it is, they have to feel the pain too.”

Gail Standingready, Birdtail Sioux Nation (City News, 2023)

“At first it was 98 kilometers, but due to the assimilatory practices in place, those kilometers turned into a lifetime. A life full of tradition, and culture, love and family, taken in one swift motion.” – Lara Hartman keynote on her grandmother’s experience at Lejac Residential School, Acadia University, 2024

“(The Indian Act) has deprived us of our independence, our dignity, our self-respect and our responsibility.” – Kaherine June Delisle, Assembly of First Nations, 2024

Update:

Income disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations remains **substantial** throughout Canada. The **systemic racism** and **persistent colonialism** continue to express these inequalities

- In 2020, the **median individual income** for Indigenous groups was higher than in 2015, but gaps persist.
- In 2021, the employment rate of First Nations on Reserve was **47.1%** compared to non-First Nations at **74.1%** (StatsCan, 2021)
- Registered First Nations on ‘reserve’ median individual income gap is **\$32,000** compared to the non-First Nations population at **\$18,000** (StatsCan, 2021)
- Indigenous peoples earn **9%** less than their non-Indigenous counterparts (StatsCan, 2022)
- Indigenous women make **\$0.85** to the **dollar** for Indigenous men (StatsCan, 2024)
- The unemployment rate of Indigenous people is **11.6%** compared to the non-Indigenous rate of **7.6%** (Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, 2021)

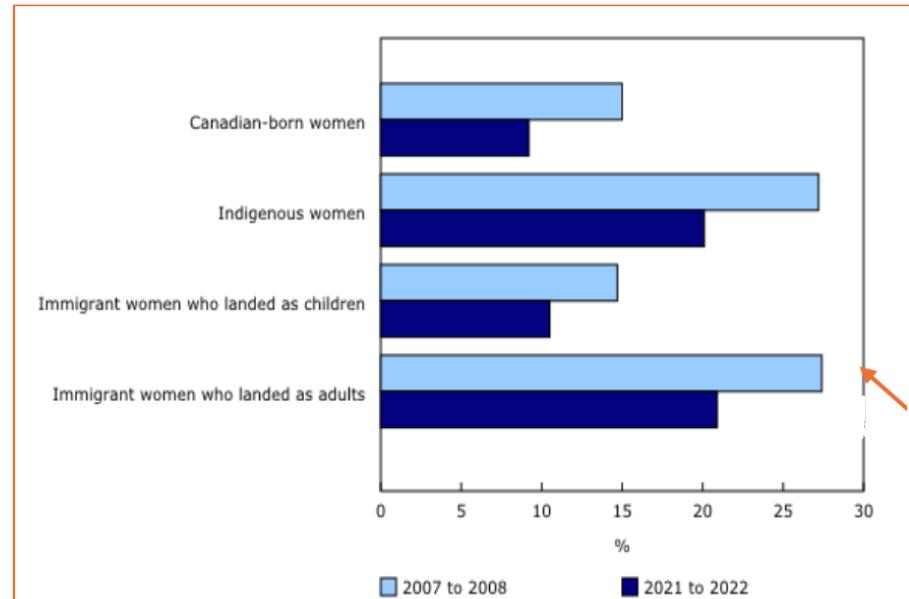
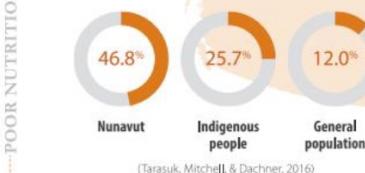


Figure I: Gap in average hourly wage compared to Canadian-born men (StatsCan, 2023) URL: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/230921/t002b-eng.htm>

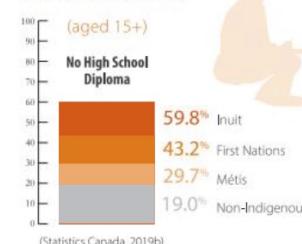
Due to the negative consequences of colonial policies and actions, Indigenous peoples experience poverty in unique ways compared to non-Indigenous Canadians

(Government of Canada, 2018).

FOOD INSECURITY

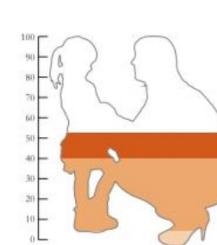


EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT



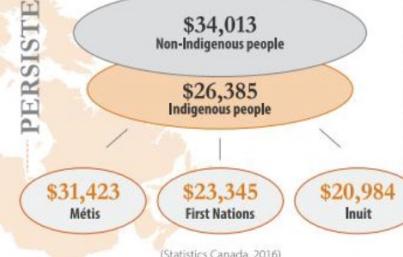
CHILD APPREHENSION

In 2016, Indigenous children were vastly over-represented in the child welfare system, representing 7.7% of all children under age 14, yet accounting for 52.2% of all foster children in this age group (Indigenous Services Canada, 2019c).



POVERTY A REALITY

2016 Median Employment Income

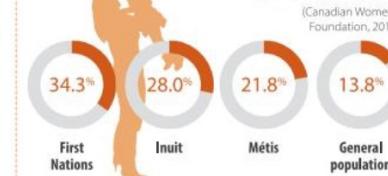


UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

Indigenous	Non-Indigenous
14.8%	2006 6.3%
15.0%	2011 7.5%
15.4%	2016 7.4%

(2016 compiled from Statistics Canada, 2018; 2011 and 2006 compiled from NAEDB, 2015)

WOMEN & GIRLS LIVING IN POVERTY



In 2014, 18.7% of Indigenous people living off reserve lived in poverty compared to 8.8% of the Canadian population

(Government of Canada, 2017).

National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health. (2020). *Poverty as a social determinant of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis health [Infographic]*. National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health.

URL:

https://www.nccih.ca/495/Infographic_Poverty_as_a_social_determinant_of_First_Nations,_Inuit,_and_M%C3%A9tis_health.nccih?id=290

Indigenous Preferred Policy Options

Our report explored three policy options that we found in our research of First Nations informed policy priorities:

1. Youth Education Investments
2. Equal Pay Legislation and Enforcement
3. Implementation of Basic Income Programs

Digging Deeper Into Basic Income



Leah Gazan, NDP MP for Manitoba, advocate for Bill C-223, “An act to develop a guaranteed livable basic income” (House of Commons, 2024)

What is a Basic Income?

- A basic income is a **periodic, unconditional cash payment** sent to individuals from the government. It ensures everyone can meet their **basic needs** and live with **dignity** regardless of their work status (Coalition Canada, 2024)

“Economic reconciliation in the form of a UBI could be a policy solution that pulls First Nations children and families out of poverty and gives us a fighting chance to succeed in this country”

- (*Avveduti, Policy, 2020*)

“If I was to have the peace of mind of having that income — knowing that my rent's going to get paid, my bills are going to get paid, I'm going to have money to get to work, get to my programs, get to school, get my kids to daycare — it would definitely be different.”

- *Bianca Moar, Big Grassy First Nation (CBC, 2021) URL: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/universal-basic-income-mmiwg2s-federal-election- 2021-1.6160251>*

Implications if no Action is Taken

“Social determinants of health not only directly influence health; they are also transformative – producing subsequent circumstances the further affect health.”

– Loppie & Wien, NCCIH, 2022, 11

- Together, the SDOH’s influence one another and drastically shape health outcomes of First Nations in Canada

“Indigenous peoples have the right, without discrimination, to the improvement of their economic and social conditions, including, inter alia, in the areas of education, employment, vocational training and retraining, housing, sanitation, health and social security”

– Article 21 (1) of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

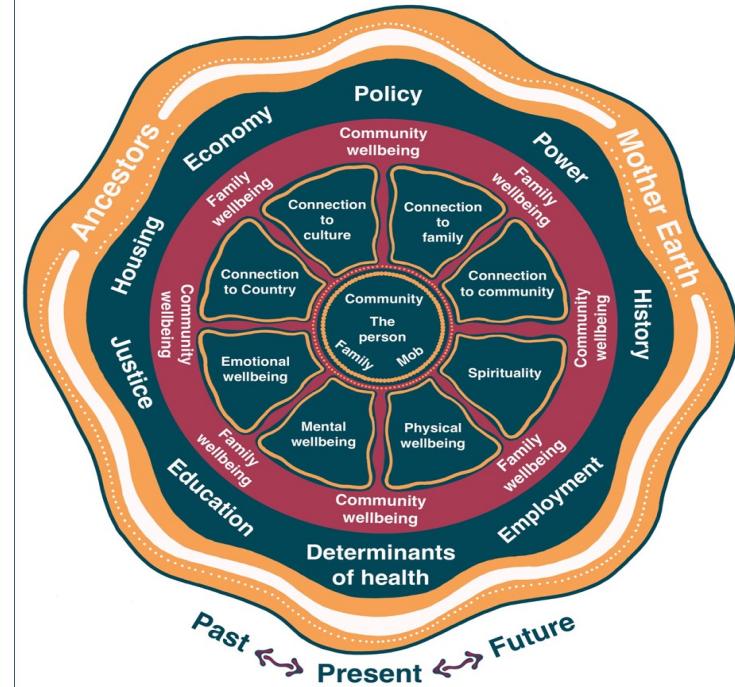


Image from YULANG Indigenous Evaluation – “Aboriginal people’s holistic view of health.” – Artwork by Jessie Waratah, 2023. URL: <https://yulang.com.au/starburst-indigenous-evaluations/holistic-health/>

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Quality and Living Standards of Indigenous Housing

Jorja Trottier

Issue: How does the **quality** of housing in **Indigenous communities** affect the emotional, physical, and cultural **well being** of the occupants?

Background:

The **lack of resources** in Indigenous communities has caused housing to be in a condition that is **unfit for living**.

- Available housing in Indigenous communities is often in need of major repairs
 - Lack of insulation, mold, leaks, broken windows
- Lack of available housing causes peoples (especially women) to stay in unsafe living environments
- Housing is non accessible to get in and out of
 - This limits access to home care services, the home deemed ‘unsafe’

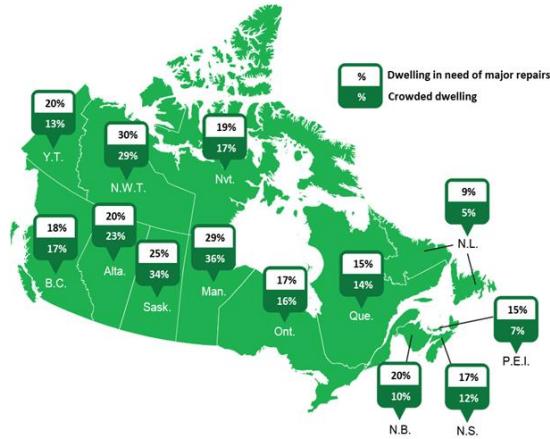
The lack of affordable housing causes **multiple generations** to live under the same roof. Often these homes are **not equipped** to house the number of residents that occupy the space.

- Overcrowding causes the spread of communicable diseases (covid, influenza, neuro virus)
- Mental health declines in these environments
 - Lack of privacy, loud environments, unideal sleeping conditions, intimacy issues.
- Children do not have space for homework, preventing them from excelling in school

Current Update:

- In 2021, 16.4% of Indigenous peoples lived in housing in need of major repairs
- **Around one in six** Indigenous peoples lived in overcrowded households
- Tuberculosis transmission is 20 times higher among Indigenous peoples than non-Indigenous people
- In 2021, 18.8% of Indigenous peoples live in low-income homes
 - Nearly a quarter of Indigenous children under 14 live in low-income housing

Figure 1
First Nations people living in Manitoba and Saskatchewan are most likely to live in crowded housing



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

“I was living in a house with mold. I was getting seven or eight sinus infections a year because of unstable houses.”

-Indigenous community member, NWAC, 2022

Summary:

Housing within Indigenous communities are often unfit for living. Many of these homes being overcrowded, in need of major repairs, or unaffordable.

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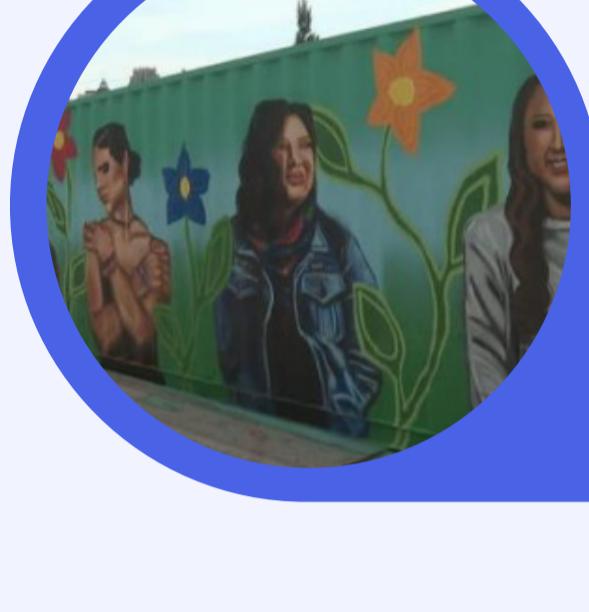
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THREE REASONS BEHIND THE INDIGENOUS HOUSING CRISIS

Social Bias

Creates difficulties for Indigenous Peoples to secure housing and employment

In 2019, 45% of First Nations peoples faced workplace discrimination



Housing Quality

Lack of resources in communities has created unfit living conditions

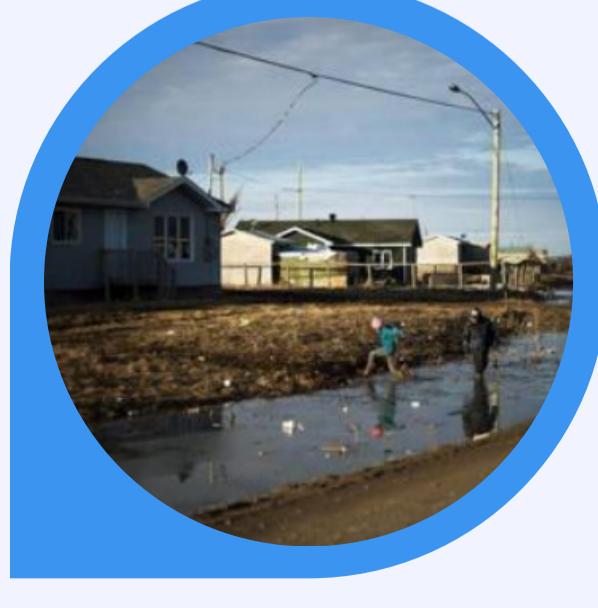
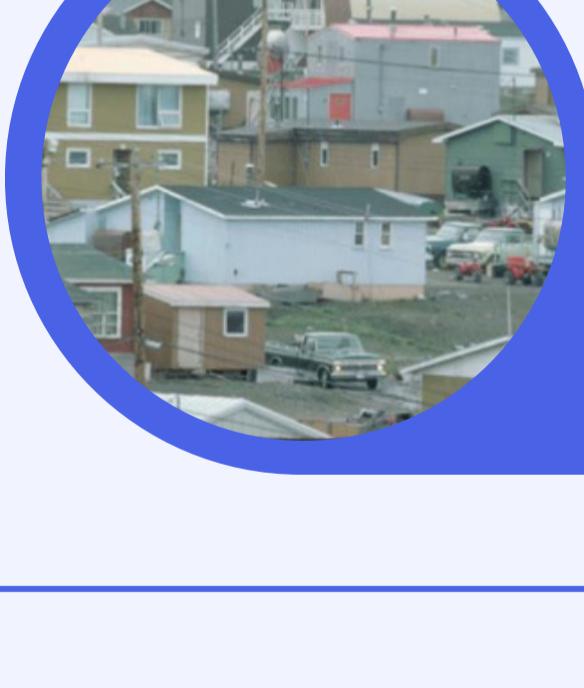
In 2022, 19.7% of Indigenous housing is in need of repair (mold, broken windows, leaks)



Location

Due to colonization and forced displacement, Indigenous communities face excessive weather disasters

Out of 190,000 weather related displacements in 2023, 30,000 were Indigenous Peoples



Conclusion

The Indigenous housing crisis cannot be summed up by these three points, however they highlight the roots of the causes, colonization and displacement, discrimination, and unlivable housing

Identity Fraud: Indigenous Cultures and Languages

Concerns Due to Self-identification

Madalyn Conway

Issue: How are Indigenous peoples **invalidated** by the *lack of structure* in the *affirmation of Indigenous identity* and Indigenous identity **theft**?

Background:

Non-Indigenous groups in Canada are claiming Indigenous status *without any form of proof* which is causing Indigenous peoples not to get the **recognition they deserve**.

- A self-identifying Indigenous group called the NunatuKavut Community has **received almost \$74 million** in federal funding for projects related to their *claims of Indigenous heritage*
- “Race-shifting” has largely **escaped criticism** as it is a grey area that *is hard to decipher from actual Indigenous identity*
- By *checking a box on a form*, people can gain land rights, fishing rights, access jobs/scholarships, and land positions of high authority
- Various First Nation, Inuit, and Metis elders and other powerful leaders have called for the Canadian Government to **crack down** on *Indigenous identity theft*
- The elders’ declaration **condemns** Indigenous identity theft and calls for the Government to *require some sort of proof*
- In November of 2021, the Affirmation of Indigenous Identity Form was presented by the Federal Public Service Commission Affiliation Form

Updates:

Groups continue to receive benefits by **falsely** claiming Indigenous status and *this leaves less funding to Indigenous communities*. This issue also becomes one of **decipherment** when comparing the *false status claims to claims of 60's scoop and Millennial scoop successors*.

- The NunatuKavut are just one group out of the countless identifying as First Nation to *receive benefits from the government*
- **Gladue**, which refers to section 718.2 (e) of the Criminal Code addresses the *overrepresentation of Aboriginal Peoples in Canadian prisons*, and requires judges to consider **other sanctions rather than imprisonment**
- There are **no tests** included in Gladue or related texts that provide a test or criteria for someone to identify as Indigenous, so *people could take advantage of this*
- Although courts can sidestep this ruling if it does not seem significant, this can be difficult for courts to continue to do as the number of questionable self-identifiers rises
- If people stop recognizing these self-identified Indigenous people, or if they have *lacking evidence of their heritage due to lack of communication from elders*, it would be as if a potentially indigenous person was **denied** the benefits they receive as **remedy for colonialism**

“Unless we **revert** to rights-holding First Nations, Inuit and Metis governments, and the decisions they make about citizenship we’re just in for another **wave of dispossession** based on non-Indigenous Canadians **choosing** to be Indigenous, to take what they feel is theirs.”

– Natan Obed, president of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami 2022

Summary: Identity fraud through self-identification is a **misuse** of the support system and can cause issues. These issues may include **loss of monetary compensation**, **lack of trust** between the Canadian Government and Indigenous groups, and policy being enacted that is **detrimental** to Indigenous people.

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Overcoming Erasure and Inequality: Advancing Inuit Cultures-Based Education in Nunavut

Madalyn Conway

Issue: How is Inuit education, specifically *Inuktut language education*, being **erased** and **treated unfairly** in Nunavut?

Background:

There has been a **lack** of *culture-based education* in Nunavut, and this is having a **negative effect on Inuit youth's cultural connection** to their language and land-based practices.

- Euro-Western traditions have been **imposed** into the Nunavut education system making it *difficult for Inuit students to identify with their culture*
- Goose hunting and fishing are **necessary** cultural practices for Inuit youth, *but often reflect a poor attendance record in Nunavut schools*
- Much of Inuit Nunavut youths' days are spent *sitting in chairs and listening to the teacher*, whereas Inuit traditional learning is a more facilitative leadership style where *leaders provide resources for children to learn*
- Lack of formal education taught in the *Inuktitut language* creates **barriers** for Inuit students that result in *higher unemployment levels, more economic burden for Inuit students, and a lower level of overall education*
- According to a 2016 study by Statistics Canada, 45% of Inuit people in Canada reported having a high school diploma compared to 86% of non-Indigenous students, and the number of Inuit diploma-carriers **drops** to 32% when closing in on Nunavut
- 100% of Inuit people over age 65 can speak *Inuktut*, while teens are *losing the ability due to lack of culture-based education*

Updates:

Due to **lawsuits** and **pressure** from protective Indigenous programs, there has been an increase in awareness of the lack of culture and language-based education. The Nunavut Land Claims Agreement Article 23 pushes for Inuit cultural education, yet *there has still been little change to the education system in Nunavut*.

- The Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI) has sued the Government of Nunavut in October of 2021 for discrimination over *the lack of Inuktut education in Nunavut schools compared to English and French*
- The Government of Nunavut passed a law in 2008 that promised Inuktut education for all grades by 2020, but then passed Bill 25 in 2020 which **changed** the law to **only require one Inuit language course to be offered**
- In 2021, the NTI claimed that section 15 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms which contains clauses about equality rights also counted towards education equality, while *the Government of Nunavut attempted to have the courts dismiss the lawsuit*
- The Government of Nunavut *motioned to have the case dismissed* on the grounds that section 15 of the Charter is **flawed** and *does not explicitly contain education*

"Rather than fitting Inuit life into schools, we need to fit schools into Inuit life"

-Marjorie Kavik Kaluraq (Nunatsiaq News, 2020)

Summary: Inuit youth **need** the education that they will use to connect with their spirit, communities, and their culture. This, however, is *difficult to execute* due to the *Euro-western colonization of the school system*. The lawsuit against the Nunavut Government shows that Inuit in Nunavut *care about their youth and culture* while the Government shows **push back and hesitation**.

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Geographical Location and Indigenous Housing

Jorja Trottier

Issue: How did the **creation of reserves** for and **displacement** of Indigenous communities create the issue of **sparse housing** and **unfit living conditions**?

Background:

Due to **colonization**, indigenous communities have been displaced into areas that are prone to **weather disasters**. Along with that they are also more **isolated**, causing limited resources and assistance

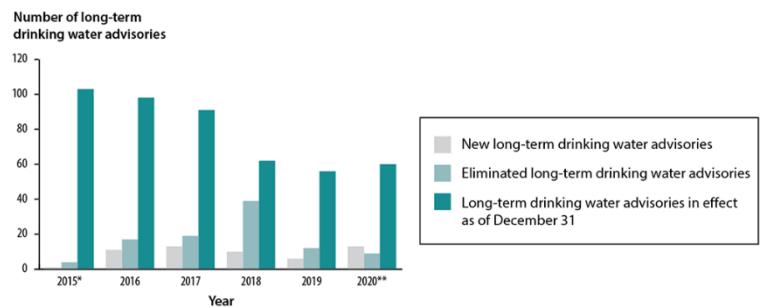
- Lack of **disaster prevention** in these communities
- Reserves are **usually remote**, having little resources and lack of transportation to receive resources
- The Kashechewan community experiences “**evacuation season**” from flooding every year since 2012
- Displacement causes a rift between Indigenous peoples and the resources they rely on for **cultural practices and lively hood**

In 1942, centralization was put into action. This displaced Indigenous peoples to unfinished and unsafe homes. This land had limited resources and unclean water

- Canadian government has **no obligation** to provide clean water to First Nation communities
- Indigenous lands are especially prone to climate change
- Lack of resources causes little opportunity for economic development

Current Update:

- In 2023, 190,000 recorded internal displacements happened in Canada due to natural disaster
 - **30,000** of those displacements were Indigenous peoples
- Nunavut’s population is **85.8% Indigenous** and the cost of living is around **\$4000/month**
- There are 3,406 reserves in Canada and 37.5% of Indigenous peoples live on a reserve
- **618** First Nations communities do not have access to **clean water**



* For 2015, the data covers the period from November 1 to December 31, which corresponds to when the commitment came into effect.

** For 2020, the data covers the period from January 1 to November 1, which corresponds with the end of the period covered by the audit.

Indigenous Services Canada

“To minimize the impact of disasters and internal displacement on Indigenous peoples, there is a need for greater cooperation and collaboration between the Canadian authorities and the communities.”

- Łíídljú Kúé First Nation

Summary:

Indigenous peoples have been displaced due to centralization, natural disaster, and the creation of reserves. Because of this displacement many Indigenous peoples cannot access resources, clean water, or safe living conditions.

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POLS 2003:
Reclaiming Food Sovereignty
In the Age of the
Wendigo Economy: A Policy
Report

Larque Law, Mikayla Smysniuk,
Esther Uhlman

In Dedication of Murray Sinclair



Murray Sinclair was a Canadian hero. At his recent memorial service, his son explained that his father was “a first” in every room he walked into. He was referring to his father’s unmatched work as a former judge, senator, and chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee.

His work was unmatched by any other Canadian. Prime Minister Trudeau called Sinclair a friend. He said, “He became to me a wise teacher, a trusted confidant, an insightful elder and, above all, a friend who challenged me to always do better.” He was always inspiring Canada to do better, especially in relation to its Indigenous communities (Hobson CTV News 2024).

This trustworthy and authentic person helped to make Canada a better place through all his work for the Indigenous peoples. His work and dedication to making life better will continue to inspire Canadians in the future.

Foreword

The authors of this policy report are students from the Acadia University class of POLS 2003: Intro to Public Policy. This report is the product of a fantastic opportunity, thanks to a nationally competitive grant and Dr. Alexander's dedication and instruction. Our class has received the opportunity to research the social determinants of health as they pertain to First Nations and Métis communities in Turtle Island. This report is the product of our group's research into food sovereignty and food insecurity in Indigenous communities.

Over the course of two months, and thanks to the grant that our class received, we have been able to hear from a variety of Indigenous experts and Elders from across Turtle Island. Their councils, stories, and wisdom are an integral part to the research done for this report, and we owe a great debt to them as settler researchers.

Since this report highlights the injustices faced by Indigenous peoples, and we are not ourselves Indigenous, it is absolutely necessary that we prioritize Indigenous voices and points of view. Indigenous people, throughout history, have long been denied the opportunity to tell their own stories and speak for themselves. Truth and Reconciliation requires that we refocus the spotlight, and that we uplift their voices.

We thank CEWIL Canada for the generous grant provided to our class which has funded this opportunity. Not only have we been able to learn so much about the Indigenous public policy process, but we are honoured to participate in a project which will aid in the creation of an open-access textbook for other students to benefit from, free of cost. Free access to quality, collaboratively created academic sources ensures the continuation of the important work done in this class and the decolonization of academia generally.



Elder Dr. Lorraine Peters-Whitman, former president of NWAC, giving a speech at the 2024 Kesalul Mawio'mi at Acadia University

Executive Summary

The Wendigo Economy

The primary threat to reclaiming Indigenous food sovereignty **is reckless industrialization and the colonial, racist policies, and institutions.**

Indigenous food sovereignty, like other social determinants health, **is largely dependent on the health of the land on which Indigenous peoples live.** Since time immemorial, Indigenous peoples have lived off the land sustainably, using traditional yet intricately spiritual food systems which rely on hunting, fishing, trapping, gathering, and foraging.



Winona LaDuke pictured with her book *To Be A Water Protector*.

Overindustrializing has resulted in polluted lands, water, and air, poisoning the traditional food systems which Indigenous peoples hold as sacred. It has also dispossessed Indigenous peoples from:

- Their traditional territories and criminalized them for protecting it.
- Have created legal barriers to accessing traditional foods.
- And established manufactured ‘food deserts’ through monopolistic policies.

This has forced Indigenous peoples to rely on heavily processed, overpriced foods to sustain themselves, culminating in staggering rates of poor health and early death.

- As industrialization continues to run rampant, the climate crisis reaches new levels of emergency, threatening the environment on a global scale.

This colonial, short-sighted system has been dubbed as the ‘Wendigo Economy’ by Anishinaabe food activist and land protector, Winona LaDuke.

- Taking after the Anishinaabe legend of the cannibalistic monster, the Wendigo Economy describes “one which destroys its mother” (Winona LaDuke, 2020).

The Wendigo economy desecrates the earth in the name of accumulation, ultimately destroying itself through its own craven desires and unchecked production.

Sovereignty, not Security

This report will be written from an angle of placing an emphasis on food sovereignty as opposed to food security.

The term ‘food security’ is described by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAOUN) as existing “**when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life**” (FAOUN, 1996). The pillars of food security, as described by the United Nations (UN), include availability, accessibility, utilization, and stability.

What is notable about this definition is that there is still an emphasis on food production and consumption, reducing it to a Wendigo paradigm. This is characterized by “**private ownership, surplus value, wage labour, and market-based commodity accumulation**” (Pawlowska-Mainville, 2020).

The individualistic qualities of the Wendigo economy and globalization stand in contrast to Indigenous economies of rebirth and regeneration.



Winona LaDuke, as pictured on her website: winonaladuke.com.

Winona LaDuke introduces us to the term *minobimaatisiiwin*:

“it means both the ‘good life’ and ‘continuous rebirth’ ... In minobimaatisiiwin, we honor one another ... Implicit in minobimaatisiiwin is a continuous habitation of place, an intimate understanding of the relationship between humans and the ecosystem and of the need to maintain this balance”

- Winona LaDuke, 2010

Due to the individualistic nature of the present colonial policies, if connection to one's Indigenous community and culture is drowned out, daily distractions only further sever the connection to one's culture, knowledge, community and presence within the land. (Gilpin and Hayes 2020).

Four Pillars of Food Sovereignty

Mekiwin: Food as a Sacred Gift

1

Highlighting the spiritual practices and the attitudes that underlines actions of hunting, gathering, trapping, and fishing

Participation

2

Participation underlines the community components of food preparation and utilization, including the passing down of traditional knowledge to younger generations.

3

Nehiyaw-Askiy: Self-Determination

All Indigenous nations must have the independence and sovereignty necessary to defend their lands and food systems without facing persecution. Additionally, All Indigenous individuals must have the health, safety, and vitality needed to contribute to the overall health of their communities

4

Policy

The collection of policies, governmental and corporate, that uphold, protect, and include minobimaatisiiwin.

A Note on Methodology

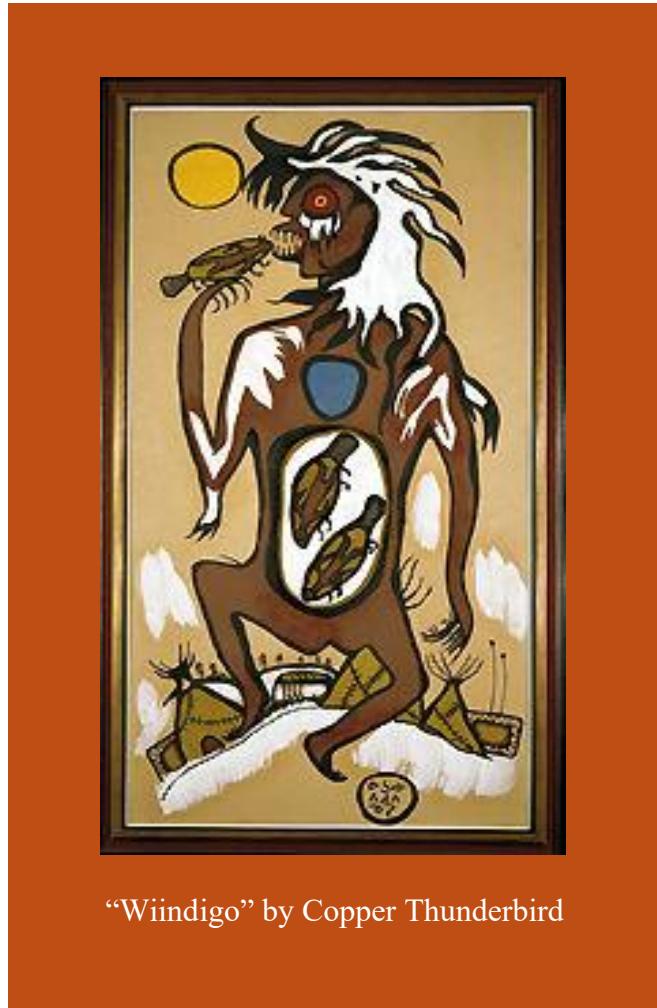
Anyone reading this report will be able to tell that, while there is a presence of data and statistics related to food insecurity in this report, it is by no means the focus.

- This is because we take it that Indigenous communities being overwhelmingly food insecure is already a well-known and established fact, but the numbers are not the point.

Indigenous ways of knowing and learning place an emphasis on the power of storytelling, testimony, and the oral passing on of histories.

- In keeping with this paradigm, this report places an emphasis on the personal stories of Indigenous peoples experiencing food insecurity, and their continued efforts to establish food sovereignty.

It is equally important that we note that, as settler researchers, it would not be appropriate for us to offer policy solutions. The purpose of this report is to put a spotlight on Indigenous voices, who are more than capable of identifying policy options for themselves that are culturally and spiritually informed.



“Wiindigo” by Copper Thunderbird

“Real reconciliation requires that truth be exposed, justice be done to make amends and then Canada’s discriminatory laws, policies, practices, and societal norms be reconciled with Indigenous rights, title, treaties, laws and jurisdiction. That process of truth, justice and reconciliation will be painful. It requires a radical change. Nothing less than the transfer of land, wealth and power to Indigenous Peoples will set things right.”

- Pam Palmater in *Warrior Life*, 2020

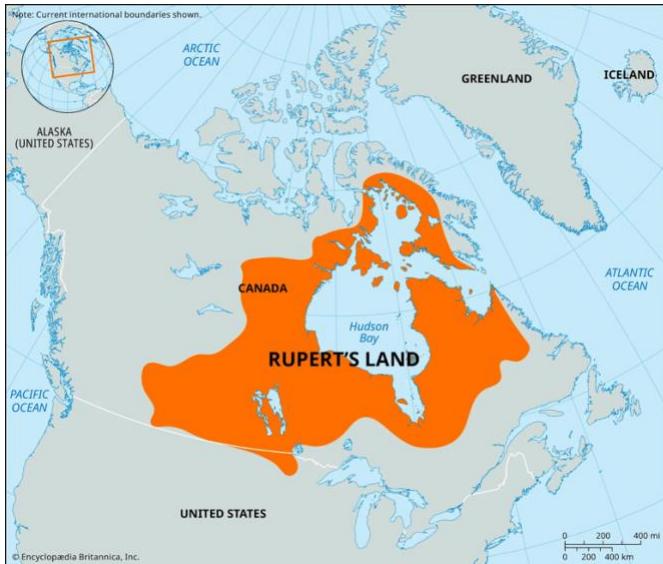
Background: How Does the Wendigo Economy Work?

“The Canadian economy is not nice to anybody. The Canadian economy is lethal to the environment of the world.” - Winona LaDuke, 2020

Like food sovereignty and minobimaatisiiwin, the Wendigo Economy is perpetuated through four pillars of its own, including **accumulation, degradation, exclusion, and assimilation**:

Accumulation:

Rupert's Land, Hudson's Bay Company, and Corporate Colonialism



Map retrieved from Britannica, 2024

The history of Canada is marked by the continual accumulation of land and wealth for settlers, while Indigenous peoples lost access to their cultural lands, homes, and food systems.

“Companies were able to exploit [the] unfair distribution of land and resources, leading to intergenerational wealth at the expense of First Nations” - Yellowhead Institute, 2021

The sale of Rupert's land:

- **Canada accumulated a total of 1.2 billion acres of Indigenous land.**
- **Canadian rail companies accrued 56 million acres** through the ‘Deed of Surrender.’
- **Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) acquired 7 million acres** (Yellowhead Institute 2021).
- The HBC oil and gas division was eventually sold at a value of **\$1.68 billion USD**.

The company which acquired it is one of the **main supporters for the Trans Mountain Pipeline**, a stretch of pipeline being illegally built on unceded Stk’emlúpsemc te Secwépemc territory (YI 2021; The Narwhal).

“A giant, well-enforced wall of laws and regulations has kept Indigenous peoples from hunting, fishing, fowling, and gathering. Our traditional economies have been criminalized to maintain non-Indigenous monopolies”

- Pam Palmater in *Warrior Life*, 2020

Indigenous peoples not only lost their lands, but hardly received the wealth and benefits that they were promised. Moreover, while the **HBC and rail companies were able to sell acres of land at rates of \$19/acre and \$45.17/acre**, Indigenous peoples were only allowed to sell reserve lands back to the Department of Indian Affairs at a rate of **\$2.60/an acre**. They were often forced and coerced into such deals (YI 2021).

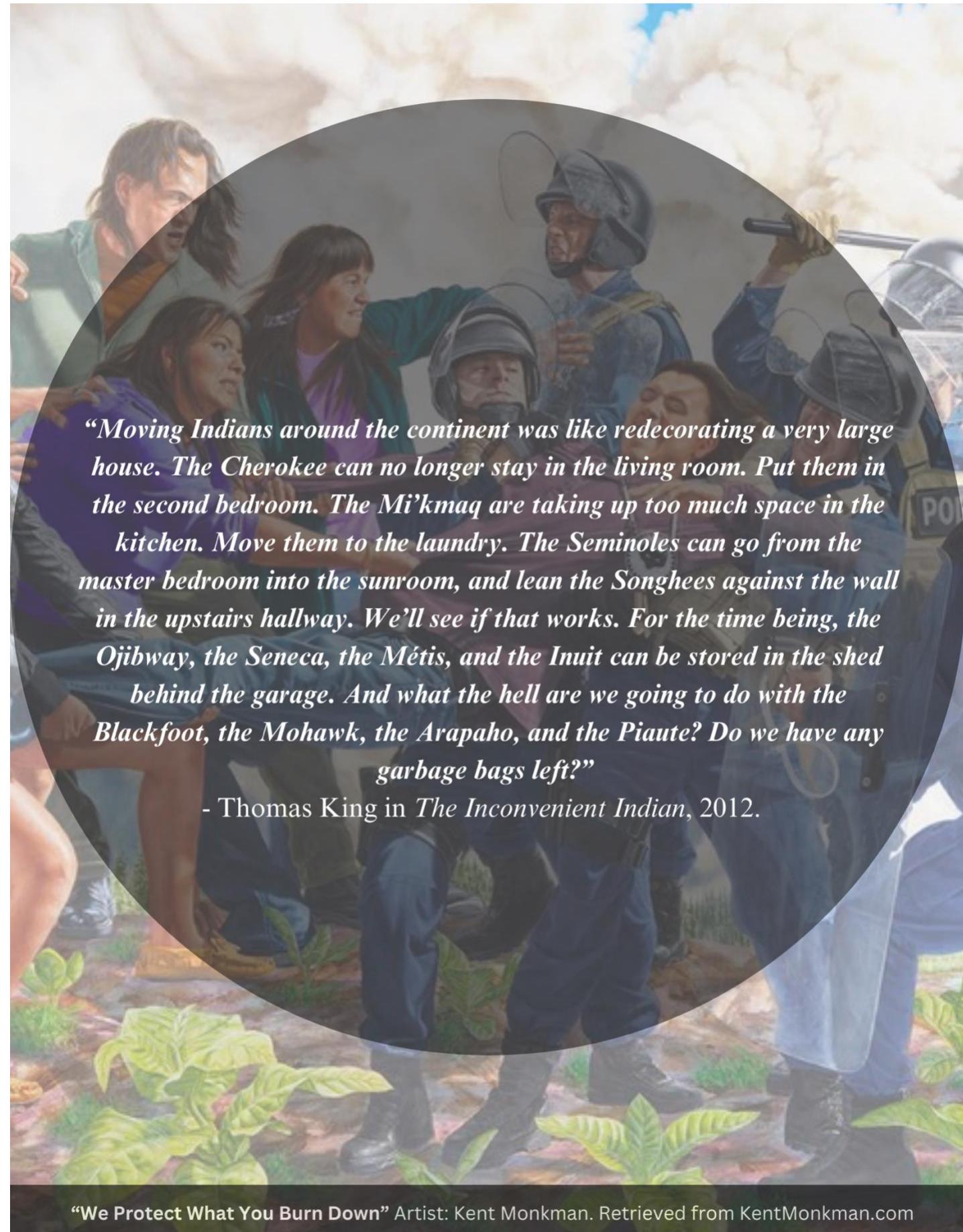
Forced Relocations:

Indigenous peoples across Turtle Island were forcibly relocated from their homelands to make way for industries and settler colonies.

- **In 1836, Governor General of Canada Francis Bond Head forced the surrender of 600000 hectares of Ojibwe territory to move Indigenous peoples further away from white settlements (King 2012).**
- **Centralization:** In 1942, the federal government displaced 2000 Mi'kmaw people across Nova Scotia from their villages (King 2012; YI 2021)
- **The 1971 James Bay project on La Grande River in Quebec forced several Innu villages to relocate after over 11500 square kilometers of land was flooded (King 2012).**
- “Over 1900 square miles of traditional Innu hunting land were flooded in Churchill Falls Newfoundland, in 1967, after construction began on a hydroelectric dam (King 2012).



Mi'kmaw Elder Shirley Anne Taylor, a victim of Centralization, living in Sipekne'katik First Nation, Nova Scotia
Retrieved from APTN 2020



“Moving Indians around the continent was like redecorating a very large house. The Cherokee can no longer stay in the living room. Put them in the second bedroom. The Mi’kmaq are taking up too much space in the kitchen. Move them to the laundry. The Seminoles can go from the master bedroom into the sunroom, and lean the Songhees against the wall in the upstairs hallway. We’ll see if that works. For the time being, the Ojibway, the Seneca, the Métis, and the Inuit can be stored in the shed behind the garage. And what the hell are we going to do with the Blackfoot, the Mohawk, the Arapaho, and the Piaute? Do we have any garbage bags left?”

- Thomas King in *The Inconvenient Indian*, 2012.

Degradation:

Grassy Narrows, Site C Dam, and the Death of the Buffalo



River Run 2024, retrieved from Free Grassy Narrows.
Photo Credit: Allan Lissner

“Corporate conquistadors rape Indigenous lands and bodies” - Pam Palmater in *Warrior Life*, 2020

Degradation is the method through which the Wendigo Economy is able to accumulate its wealth. The extractive industries which the Canadian Wendigo Economy subsists itself on – oil and gas, mining, unsustainable agriculture and greenwashed logging and forestry – destroy the lands which both it and Indigenous peoples rely on.

“90% of [Canada’s] economy is based on their petrodollar and all their heavy extraction. And don’t forget that 75% of the world’s mining corporations are Canadian” - Winona LaDuke, 2020

This destruction thus threatens traditional Indigenous food systems, as wildlife populations decrease, water sources are polluted, wild plants are sprayed with chemicals and pesticides, and access to healthy lands are highly regulated or forbidden.

Grassy Narrows

Between the 1960s and 1970s, **10 tonnes of mercury** flowed from the Dryden pulp mill into the Wabigoon River, near Asubpeeschoewagong First Nation (Grassy Narrows) (Morin 2024).

The main local food source, walleye fish harvested from the Wabigoon River, were heavily contaminated with mercury.



River Run 2024 from Free Grassy Narrows. Photo Credit: Allan Lissner

"We weren't educated enough about the mercury. So, we continued eating the fish until we started feeling all these symptoms. And a few years ago, I had a heart attack. And one of the doctors was saying it's definitely got to be from mercury."

- Mike Forbister, Ojibwe resident of Grassy Narrows, 2024



River Run 2024 from Free Grassy Narrows Website. Photo Credit: Allan Lissner

90% of Grassy Narrows residents suffer from symptoms related to mercury poisoning. The sulphate emissions from the paper mill – which is still in operation – have only exacerbated the toxic effects of the mercury.



Polluted Water Warning in Grassy Narrows.
Retrieved from APTN.

According to Cree and Haudenosaunee journalist Brandi Morin, the Government of Ontario has handed out nearly **4,000 mining claims and permits in Grassy Narrows territory without the knowledge or permission of the Nation** (Morin 2024).

"For them, it's money. For us, it's life" -
Mike Forbister, 2024

Site C Dam

“They beat us basically into submission on this. We just couldn’t fight with them anymore. We don’t have the billions of dollars that they have to fight in court on things, and it didn’t seem to matter.”

- Roland Willson, chief of West Moberly First Nations, 2024

Indigenous and other communities who live in the Peace River Valley – particularly West Moberly First Nations – have relied on this watershed for hunting, fishing, and berry picking for generations. However, the construction of the dam puts this critical ecosystem at risk.

“In their own joint environmental impact assessment, the Canadian and B.C. governments concluded that the dam would ‘severely undermine’ use of the land, [and] would make fishing unsafe for at least a generation” (Palframen 2021).



“Yellow stakes symbolizing support in the fight against the Site C dam sit on the edge of bridge construction on the Boons’ farm in the Peace River valley in northeastern B.C”

Retrieved from the Narwhal, 2022

The dam also threatens local wildlife populations, exacerbating its degrading impacts to the environment. According to a study from the University of British

Columbia, **the dam threatens over 100 species of wildlife** that are already at risk of endangerment and extinction. (Palframen 2021; Cox 2024).

Death of the Buffalo

Pre-colonial contact, Cree nations in what are now the prairie provinces lived in symbiotic relationships and lifestyles with the buffalo population.



Buffalo of Banff National Park
Retrieved from CBC

Knowing that Cree self-determination relied on the buffalo population, the colonial government carried out various policies that threatened the buffalo.

- **These policies were ultimately intended to force Indigenous nations into surrendering their lands and moving to reserves** (YI 2021).
- At the beginning of the 19th century, low estimates place the bison population at 30 million. **By 1884, less than 400 remained.** As a result of over-hunting by white settlers, **Indigenous peoples faced starvation and famine** (YI 2021).

Food Stats: JUST THE FACTS

Indigenous communities
are twice as likely to face
food shortages than non-
Indigenous communities
(Global News 2023)

**48% of Indigenous households (on
and off reserve) have difficulty
putting enough food on the table and
are considered food insecure
(NWAC 2017).**

**One in two Indigenous
women raising
children on their own
and living off-reserve
have experienced food
insecurity
(NWAC 2018)**

**56% of Indigenous peoples report
being diagnosed with some diet
related disease or condition
(NCCIH 2019).**

**20% of First Nations
people living off-reserve,
Métis and Inuit people
aged 15 and older have
lived in a household that
has experienced food
insecurity
(NWAC 2018)**

**The highest rates of food insecurity
(60%) have been reported in Alberta
and its remote communities.
(NWAC 2017).**

Exclusion:

Consultation with Indigenous Peoples, and the Right to Say ‘No.’

“We were also their treaty partner, and they mistreated us.”

- Cecilia Begg, land-defender from Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug, 2023.

Indigenous voices and paradigms are systematically excluded from decisions that directly impact their lands, food sovereignty, and bodies.

- Although there are often regulations which mandate that companies consult with Indigenous nations whose lands are the subject of degradation and ‘development,’
- These consultation processes are often treated like ‘checking off a box’ rather than a serious inquiry.
- Indigenous peoples are not well accommodated to navigate programming and policy-related barriers.
- There are few Indigenous people working in these departments, meaning that there is no one with the appropriate knowledge and cultural context who can talk to them about their concerns.



Neskantaga First Nation, a people without water.
Retrieved from Global News, 2020

“We’re looking to these people for support, and they’re just providing support based on a checklist or a standard that’s the same for all First Nations ... It kind of feels like it comes down to our word against theirs. And they’re the higher power”

- Unnamed participant
in a Yellowhead Institute report, 2023

Insiders from within the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food Affairs note that **there’s a growing culture of blatant anti-Indigenous racism** within the ministry.



Military Police Raid the Blockade at Camp Unist’ot’en, 2019, retrieved from APTN News

“I recall very clearly where we were reviewing applications to projects and the project analyst who was presenting the proposal from an Indigenous community said, ‘No, we don’t need to give them money; they get enough money already from [the] government.”

- Unnamed Participant in YI report, 2023

The Ontario government has given out thousands of mining permits to companies to develop the ‘ring of fire.’ They did not receive consent from the First Nations communities in the area (APTN 2020)

“The ring of fire is something that’s being fast-tracked without the involvement of our people.”

- Chief Wayne Moonias of Neskantaga First Nation, 2020

Assimilation

The Indian Act, Residential ‘schools’, and the Loss of Traditional Knowledge

The Indian Act

The *Indian Act* is responsible for creating the foundation through which the exclusion of Indigenous communities and worldviews in the policy making process is possible.

- The *Indian Act* (1880) **banned the sale of agricultural products by Indigenous peoples to non-Indigenous peoples** (YI 2021).
- The *Indian Act* also oversaw the invention of the controversial band and council system:

“The Indian Act election system ... has displaced or attempted to displace our inherent authority as leaders and has eroded our traditions, culture, and belief systems.”

- Lawrence Paul, Mi’kmaw Elder and Co-chair of the Atlantic Policy Congress, 2009 (Joseph, 2018).

In the case of the Wet’suwet’en Hereditary Chiefs:

- TC Energy, the company which owns the Coastal Gaslink pipeline, insists that it received permission from the Wet’suwet’en chief and band council .
-

But these are not the same as the **Hereditary Chiefs**, who maintain jurisdiction and stewardship over their **unceded lands**, as upheld by the **Delgamuukw Case** (BC Treaty Commission)



Four of the five Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs, 2020, retrieved from APTN News

Residential ‘schools’

Residential schools were expressly built to assimilate Indigenous peoples into white Canadian culture.



Fort Albany (St. Anne's) Residential School, retrieved from Canadian Geographic

Many punishments at residential schools were food based, resulting in lasting trauma which still prevents some Indigenous people from reclaiming traditional food practices.

- Some schools used physical labour such as gardening as punishments, where children were subjected to long hours of weeding, digging, and other arduous activities.
- Other food-related punishments included forcing children to eat rotten or spoiled food if they refused to eat the meals that were given to them. Meals often made children sick because of their condition, and some survivors recount being forced to eat their own sick



Students reading at Fort Albany, retrieved from Canadian Geographic

“The removal of children and the use of food-procuring activities as forms of punishment undermined their sufficiency and served to sever the intergenerational transmission of ecological knowledge that could only be learned through observation and practice.”

(Leblanc and Burnett 2017).

“I saw in person how the children eat their vomit. When they happened to be sick. And they threw up while eating.” - Bernard Sutherland, Fort Albany residential ‘school’ survivor, 2015

Children at residential schools were also used as research subjects in federally funded nutrition research. Some students would be given nutritious foods, while most would be left without, to study the effects of malnutrition.

“Our children were literally lab rats for the most horrific tests. These are stories we know – what's important is that Canada is beginning to understand”

- Shawn Atleo, former National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations

These cruel and unusual punishments threatened the passing down of knowledge of food preparation and utilization.

Loss of Traditional Knowledge

“Removed children were prevented from observing their relatives acting as self-sufficient and productive members of communities and they did not witness how people took care of each other” (Leblanc and Burnett 2017).

Remote Indigenous communities are especially at risk of food inaccessibility. For instance, **Marten Falls First Nations, in Northern Ontario, does not have a store for in-person shopping** (Law 2023).

Groceries are impossibly overpriced in remote Indigenous communities — **a 10kg bag of flour in Neskantaga First Nations costs between \$40-\$70** (Law 2023).



A collection of Native American utensils and weapons. Retrieved from JSTOR Daily, 2019.

Due to these high costs, **Indigenous communities are twice as likely to face food shortages** compared to non-Indigenous communities (Global News 2023).

These communities often rely on gas stations and convenience stores for local food purchases due to large distances from grocery stores. This means that **the most available food is also the unhealthiest** (NWAC 2018), resulting in very **high rates of diabetes and heart disease** (Leblanc and Burnett 2017; NCCIH 2019).

Assimilation policies force Indigenous communities to depend on the Wendigo Economy for access to food.

- Communities continue to buy price gouged and processed food as nothing else is available to them.
- The loss of traditional knowledge – and the high cost associated with the tools necessary to harvest country foods – ensure that people remain dependent on the Wendigo Economy.

This is true for Indigenous peoples living off-reserve as well, who have even less access to land and traditional knowledge.

“I'm raised in urban locations far from my home territories and do not know how to skin a caribou or gut a whitefish” - Anonymous participant in an NWAC engagement report, 2018.

Mekiwin: Food as a Sacred Gift



Lusknikn - Mi'kmaq Bannock From Big Red's Kitchen (2021)

"Food to sustain life is created by the Great Spirit. It comes in the form of a gift – *mekiwin* [in Cree] – or something that is freely exchanged and shared between a donor and recipient" - Métis Elder, Elmer Ghostkeeper (Jobin 2020)

The sacred gift of food is regarded as **one of Indigenous food sovereignty's guiding principles.**

Food is a gift given to humanity from the 'Creator/Great Spirit.' It fuels knowledge and understanding in our responsibilities and relationship between ourselves, the land, water, plants, and animals that provide us food (Morrison 2020).

Traditional Indigenous food systems throughout Canada are **vastly diverse** in diet structure, of which varies depending on geographical location, seasonality, distinctive culture, and historical context (Pawlowska-Mainville 2020).

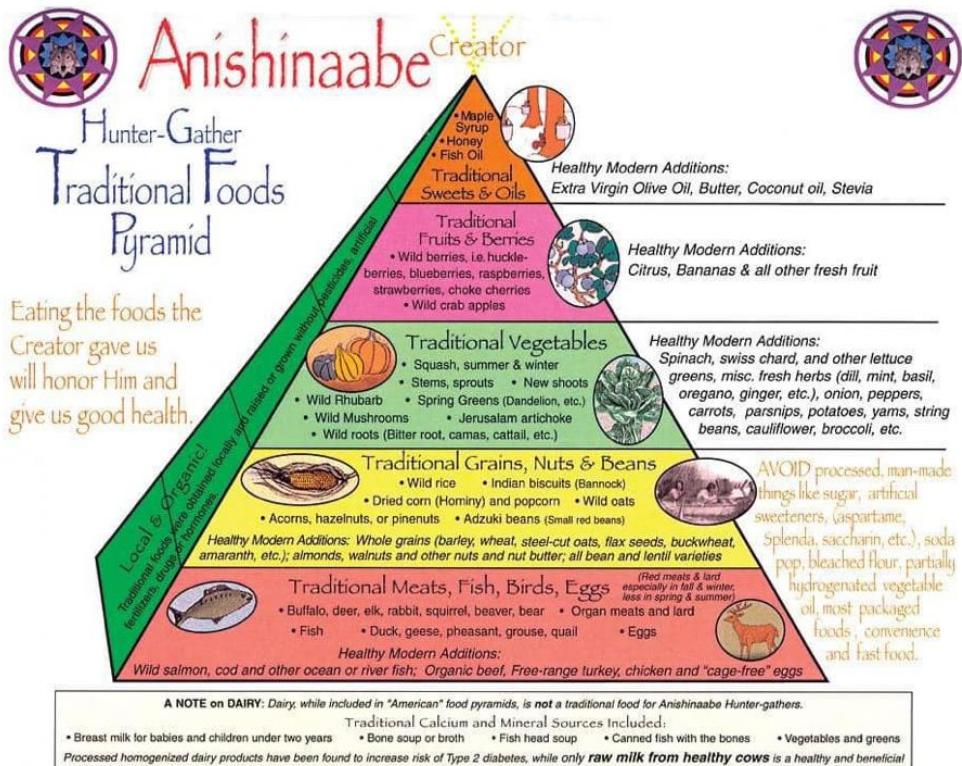
Within the various First Nations communities across Canada, distinctiveness between cultures is reflected through different

forms of harvest, gathering, and hunting inside of these food systems.

Northern communities, **due to colder climates and unreliability of farming, would focus on harvesting a variety of animals** on land and water **compared to Southern communities with access to richer soils** (Alexandra Post 2016).

Hunting and gathering are a means of paying respect to the Creator's gift. If these processes were to be stopped, "**this would suggest they no longer need or respect the creator's gifts and might lead to the declining availability of those gifts**" (Pawlowska-Mainville 2020).

"In the most profound and intimate way in which food connects us to the ultimate life force that makes our hearts beat, our lungs breathe, and the seeds sprout involuntarily, Indigenous food sovereignty is guided by the higher intelligence of nature, which transfers regenerative life-giving energy through the forests, field, and waterways" (Settee and Shukla 2020)



Eat According to the Seasons & the Land



2006 Created for the DEFEAT DIABETES PROGRAM, Anishinaabe Center, Detroit Lakes, MN www.anishinaabe.org 218-846-9463

Tribal Food Sovereignty Collaborative, 2022
Traditional food pyramid demonstrating eating according to the seasons and local geography.

Active Land-Based Participation

Indigenous food systems, especially those that are distinctive and reflective of specific regions, requires “active land-based participation”, and is “integral to community and individual well-being and development” (Pawlowska-Mainville 2020).

Participation from all age-ranges of youth, parents, elders and knowledge keepers allows for a constant flow of knowledge to be shared and remembered throughout the entire community.

WJOLELP Tsartlip First Nation Garden Project

Education, with an emphasis on teaching the youth and connecting to older members, in projects such as the ‘WJOLELP Tsartlip First Nation Garden Project’ which was made in response to increasing rates of poverty within Indigenous communities.



Tsartlip First Nation
Retrieved from tsartlip.com

Engaging in workshops like the garden project, “[reconnects] people with the environment and revitalizing our traditional survival skills and knowledge” (Gilpin and Hayes 2020).

The garden project gives an opportunity to reengage or learn traditional methods within the community’s local food system.



Tsartlip First Nation – Saanich Territory,
Vancouver Island
Retrieved from tsartlipgoc.com

Contemporary Colonialism is a process that “attempts to disconnect Indigenous people from their collective and individual roles and responsibilities to land, culture, and community” (Jeff Corntassel 2013).

“I am in school right now to learn how to open a greenhouse. I’m upgrading to get into commerce. I need mentorship and learning resources and possible partnerships” (NWAC Agridiversity Pilot Project, 2021).



Through reclaiming of traditional land and participation in rediscovering cultural practices and knowledge however, resurgent Indigenous communities “*become credible threats to the future survival of the colonial system*” (Jeff Corntassel 2013).

Reintegration into one's culture can present them with the tools necessary to feed their family and community through traditional “Land-based teachings”, regaining a sense of community and belonging through “*re-establishing meaningful and loving relationship[s] to home Lands and Waters*” (Gilpin and Hayes 2020).

Nehiyaw-Askiy: Self-Determination

"I live in a place where I would say we have a pretty sustainable economy. So, you could harvest wild rice on the same lake for 10,000 years. That's pretty good, huh? And all you have to do is take care of the lake"

- Winona LaDuke, 2020

- Indigenous self-determination depends on Indigenous peoples having control over their own lands and territories.
- The majority of land which makes up ‘Canada’ is unceded territory.
- This means that legally, Indigenous peoples did not surrender control over their lands, which are still under their jurisdiction.
- However, Indigenous sovereignty is constantly contested in the Supreme Court by the Crown, and a variety of legal technicalities allow the government to infringe on Indigenous treaty rights.

R. v. Sparrow

How does Canada justify infringing treaty rights?

The Sparrow Test:

1. The Nation must demonstrate that an impugned law interferes with an existing Indigenous right, as set out by Section 35 of the Constitution Act 1982 (Center for Constitutional Studies 2021).
2. The Crown must justify the infringement by showing that the law has a “valid objective,” or that it is justified according to the principle of the “honour of the crown.”

This test was devised in 1990 after Ronald Sparrow was arrested for using a fishing net larger than regulations allowed.

R. v. Van Der Peet

The Van Der Peet Test:

“To constitute an Aboriginal right, an activity must be an element of a custom, practice or tradition forming an integral part of a distinct culture of the Aboriginal group that claims the right in question” (Beaudoin 2006). Indigenous peoples must prove that the practice they claim is cultural was integral to ancestral life pre-contact. If the Crown can argue it wasn’t, then they may have the ability to infringe on their rights.

This test was devised in 1996 after Dorothy Van Der Peet was charged with selling salmon without a commercial fishing license.

R. v. Gladstone

The Gladstone Test, 1996:

The test elaborates on the “doctrine of priority” outlined in **R. V. Sparrow**, which put “conservation of stocks as a first priority” (RAVEN 2020).

“The doctrine of priority only requires that the government demonstrate that they have allocated the fishery in a manner respectful of the prior interest of Aboriginal right; it does not require that Indigenous nations be given an exclusive right to the fishery after conservation goals have been met” (RAVEN 2020).

25 years after the Marshall Decision, Mi'kmaw fishers are still being persecuted.

"The Mi'kmaw have a right to express their treaty rights, and that includes fishing, and hunting, and gathering ... to earn a livelihood without license, as per the Peace and Friendship treaties."

– Jane McMillan, life and fishing partner to Donald Marshall Jr,
in an interview with the CBC, 2024.

Then

Section 35 of the Constitution Act 1982 protects the treaty rights of Indigenous peoples.

"...It is agreed that the said Tribe of Indians shall not be hindered from, but have free liberty of Hunting and Fishing as usual..." (Peace and Friendship Treaty, 1725).

In 1993, Donald Marshall, a Mi'kmaw man who had been fishing eels and selling them to provide for his family, was arrested for fishing without a license from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (Decembrini 2020).

The Marshall Decision 1999: The Supreme Court of Canada affirmed that the Mi'kmaw have a **constitutionally protected right to fish and hunt for a 'moderate livelihood'**. (Decembrini 2020).

Now

"I want my children to be able to go out and fish whenever they want, and have the right to make a moderate livelihood, right? So it's not for us. It's for the future" – Terence Augustine, Mi'kmaw Fisher, 2020.

On September 17, 2020, Sipekne'katik, a Mi'kmaw community in Nova Scotia, started a lobster fishery according to the regulations outlined by their constitutional rights.

Non-Indigenous fishers responded by cutting Mi'kmaw lobster traps, setting Mi'kmaw boats on fire, and making threats towards Mi'kmaw fishers to stop them from fishing for lobsters (APTN 2020).

The Crown is attempting to persecute the Sipekne'katik fishers on the grounds of **conservation concerns, one of the only legal defences for violating treaty rights.**

"We have 50 traps, right? Compared to their 375 in the commercial season."

– Terence Augustine, Mi'kmaw fisher in an interview with APTN, 2020.

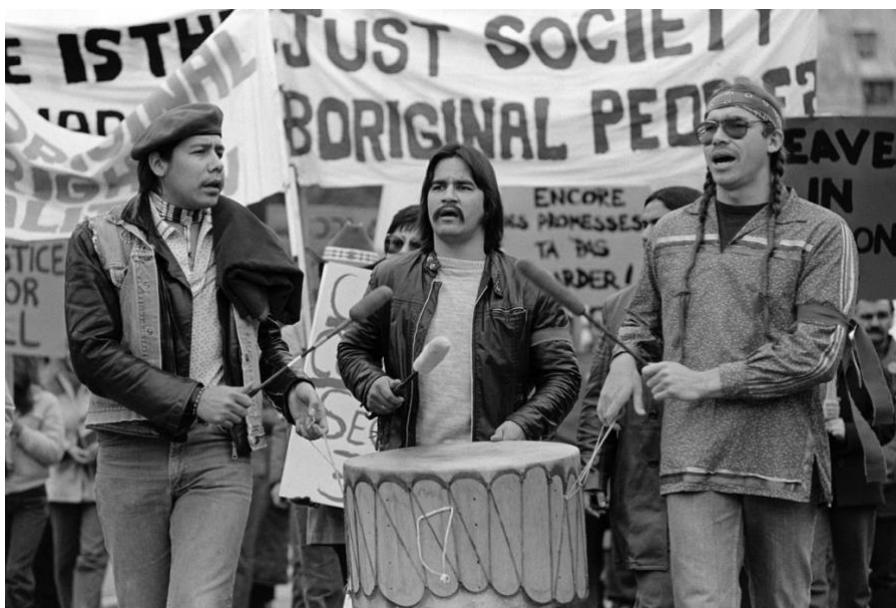
Photo: Young Donald Marshall Jr. in handcuffs for fishing eel without a license, retrieved from the *Globe and Mail*, 2009.

Reclaiming Self-Determination

Subjecting the land to legal technicalities ensures that land is still not formally within the hands of Indigenous peoples, but merely *informally* within their control until the government decides to challenge them.

- As demonstrated by the ring of fire, the Wet'suwet'en, and the Site C Dam, when Indigenous peoples say 'no,' governments do not listen.

"What legal value is the federal government's constitutional obligation to consult, accommodate and obtain the consent of First Nations before taking actions that would impact our rights and title if 'consent' is interpreted as the right to say yes but excludes the right to say no?" - Pam Palmater in *Warrior Life*, 2020



March on Parliament Hill to protest the elimination of Aboriginal rights in the proposed Constitution, November 16, 1981.

Retrieved from The Canadian Encyclopedia, 2006.

However, Indigenous communities across Turtle Island have created a variety of community-led initiatives to reclaim self-determination over their food systems:

- **Muskeg Lake First Nation** developed a 2.5-acre **food forest**, a self-sustaining "multifunctional agricultural system that provides fruits, vegetables, other edibles, medicines and cultural resources" (Muskeg Lake Cree Nation 2020).

"We struggle with availability of fresh fruit, vegetables, and reasonably priced, nutritious foods. The good news is that there is a resurgence of interest in rebuilding the connections to the land and to traditional practices around growing, gathering, fishing, hunting, and preserving food. These are what have sustained us for thousands of years. These are what people feel are essential to regain food sovereignty." - Glenna Cayen, Muskeg Lake resident and Community Program Coordinator, 2023.

Indigenous Women’s Cultural Connection to Food

The key to revitalizing Indigenous food systems and participation **will not be found in Canada’s mainstream agri-business.**

- **One must look for the Knowledge Keepers, who in many communities are women** (“The Agridiversity Pilot Project Final Report.” 2018).

Indigenous women note that they require **avenues of support which can allow them to nurture and foster their community’s knowledge of:**

- Harvesting medicines.
- Processing animals after the hunt.
- Understanding the importance of all animal by-products.



Retrieved from Native Women’s Association of Canada

“If one knows how to use the ‘gifts of the Creator’ [they] will provide for the people”- Elder Abel Bruce (Pawlowska-Mainville 2020)

The Danger of “Man Camps” to Indigenous Women

“Man Camps” is a term for provided housing for primarily men on resource projects.

- They are often in close proximity to First Nations communities. (Gonzales 2022).
- These camps give rise to additional layer of violence towards Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirited people.
- **“We are being treated the same way the land is being treated.”** – Unnamed participant in an NWAC engagement session, 2021.

“Man Camps” can therefore be recognized as a colonial tactic of intimidation, since these industries rely on ignorance of what territory they operate in, **“we are seeing colonialism in action”**(Gonzales 2022).

“Part of the reconciliation process in Canada must be an acknowledgement of the damage that the introduction of western processed foods and ongoing environmental degradation has caused to Indigenous communities.”
- NWAC Food Policy 2018



Native Women (2002) - Jerry Whitehead of Peter Chapman First Nation

As Winona LaDuke describes in questioning the role of development and Native American women, “*...I would argue that native women and communities should not have to pay the price of ecological and cultural devastation to have running water*”.

“*...women are central to traditional ways of life, to indigenous economic power, and to the resistance of so many native peoples to large-scale development projects.*”
(Winona LaDuke 2010).

Indigenous women are regarded as central figures and the physical representation of land based traditional societal values of fertility, birth, and rebirth:

“the centerpiece of their cultural practices, with obvious implications for agricultural, harvesting, and religious institutions”

- Winona LaDuke 2010



‘Harvesting the Hair of Mother Earth’ – 2019

Retrieved from Resilience Project, 2019.

The price of implementing Eurocentric industrialization and Wendigo economic systems inside Indigenous communities means retroactively replacing or abandoning Indigenous economies, declining the economic and social value of native women’s work and their roles within them
(Winona LaDuke 2010).

“From the earliest days, Indian agents, often assisted by the police, would withhold food rations from young Indigenous women and girls to extort sex from them. Children were literally ripped from the arms of Indigenous mothers and forced into residential schools where thousands were starved.”

- Pam Palmater in *Warrior Life*, 2020

Policy

To address the various issues listed above, it is crucial that Indigenous voices guide the policy to fix the problems surrounding food sovereignty in their communities.



Native Women's Association of Canada
L'Association des femmes autochtones du Canada

Retrieved from Native Women's Association of Canada

Indigenous peoples have identified multiple solutions for restoring minobimaatisiwin:

- Respecting Indigenous jurisdiction over the land.
- Dismantling epistemological hegemony by restoring traditional knowledge.
- Holding corporations accountable.
- Healing the land

Respecting Indigenous Jurisdiction:

- Indigenous peoples must have the right to **“hunt and fish at any time of the year for sustenance while following the conservation rules”** (NWAC Food Policy).

“It’s a system of justice. You must negotiate how far you can hunt in one direction before it becomes the jurisdiction of another nation” - Kory Wilson, in a talk with the POLS 2003 class, 2024.

- Companies and government agencies have a duty to consult Hereditary Chiefs as well as elected chief and band council.
- Supreme court decisions on the sovereign rights of Indigenous peoples, such as the Delgamuukw case and the Marshall Decision, must be upheld.
- Most importantly: **no means no.**

Restoring Traditional Knowledge:

- **93.9% of respondents** in an NWAC survey say they would access teachings and time on the land and harvest their food **given the opportunity.**

Thirdly, it is necessary to have research, industry, and business development to help achieve food sovereignty in Indigenous communities.

- This means that the National Food Policy must be updated to include information on **“how to help Indigenous farmers and information should be specifically provided to Indigenous people on how to start a business.”**



“Pauline Shirt (Nimikiiquay)” - Kent Monkman 2021
Retrieved from KentMonkman.ca

“The right to say no is the core of any future relationship with Canada and its citizens. It’s a basic right — one that is grounded in our sovereignty as individuals and nations to decide for ourselves the life we wish to live.” - Pam Palmater in *Warrior Life*, 2020

Finally, the government must address the needs of Indigenous women specifically.

- For this to be achieved, **the National Food Policy for Canada must be reformed** to address the specific needs of Indigenous peoples from an Indigenous lens, while also addressing different regions specific issues with food sovereignty.
- It must also address the specific issues with “**the way traditional food practices are disrupted and include solutions that enhance the ability of Indigenous women and gender diverse people to practice and transmit their cultures to their children.**” In other words, it must **address the importance of participation in food sovereignty** and in transmitting culture and the close connection between these things.
- Research must also be done on the impact of having wild game in one’s diet and focus on the nutritious benefits of this.

“The Food Guide for First Nations, Inuit and Métis must be updated along with the launch of a new Canada’s Food Guide.”

Two-Eyed Seeing in Policy

Two-Eyed Seeing



Two-Eyed Seeing Method
Retrieved from livinglakescanada.ca (Peck 2022)

It is integral to look at solutions, policy and to see the world through two lenses: and Indigenous lens with one eye, and through a Western lens with the other. **This approach is known as Two-Eyed Seeing.** Each has its own strength:

- Indigenous knowledge systems: **lived knowledge, is place-based, holistic, connected to legal traditions, and has an extended oral archive.**
- Western knowledge systems: **scientific method, common principles, highly specific, repeatable, and measurement tools.**

Two-Eye Seeing was developed as a tool that “integrates cultural understanding and awareness” (Peck 2022).

Together, these lenses form a coexistence that develop key strengths:

- Mutual research interest
- Research co-development
- Shared recognition & co benefits
- Wider set of tools and archival data
- Holistic conception of success

Concluding Statement

Two-Eye Seeing is a method that “incorporates place-based practices, recommendations, and [takes] significant actions to harmonize Indigenous Knowledge with Western science” (Peck 2022)

In conclusion, our group acknowledges that we are not Indigenous, thus we will not suggest policy solutions to Indigenous food insecurity. We have tried our best to communicate Indigenous solutions to help the Indigenous peoples regain their food sovereignty which was robbed from them by colonialist policies.

Writing this report has given us the opportunity to gain perspective and a deeper understanding of Indigenous culture and thoughts surrounding food sovereignty. We have tried to communicate the problems that exists with this, using Indigenous knowledge taken from many Indigenous elders and other scholars. The opportunity to hear these firsthand the accounts of the real-life consequences of Canada’s colonial system are both heart wrenching and disappointing. It shows us how little we have achieved in what is supposed to be our journey towards reconciliation.

Although the stories of Indigenous food insecurity due to our colonial system is sad and discouraging, it gives us a challenge. Indigenous expert Kory Wilson explained that we, must not just be allies to the Indigenous communities, we must be accomplices. This gives us a challenge to be better and advocate for change. Indigenous communities must be in control of their own lands, and the government must take accountability for the wrongs which it has committed against them.

“I feel greatly empowered being able to select/forage for food. My desire is to pass this knowledge on to others. Knowing where this comes from and the efforts made to harvest teaches us appreciation for the community and its gifts.” - (NWAC Food Policy).

Glossary

Abbreviations:

- APTN - Aboriginal People's Television Network
- FAOUN - Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
- HBC - Hudson's Bay Company
- LRAD - Long-range acoustic device
- NCCIH - National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health
- NWAC - Native Women's Association of Canada
- NWMP - Northwest Mounted Police
- OMAFRA - Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs
- UN - United Nations
- YI - Yellowhead Institute

Definitions:

- **Aki Miijim:** The Anishinaabe word for gift
- **Anishinaabe-bimaadiziwin:** The Anishinaabe term for ‘the Anishinaabe way of life.’
- **Asubpeeschoewagong First Nation (Grassy Narrows):** A remote Anishinaabe community in Northern Ontario
- **Coastal Gaslink Pipeline:** A pipeline which runs through unceded Wet’suwet’en territory
- **Delgamuukw Case:** A supreme court of Canada case which asserts the sovereign right of the Wet’suwet’en Hereditary Chiefs to maintain jurisdiction over their unceded lands

- **Food Security:** Per the UN, food security is defined as ‘when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.’
- **Food Sovereignty:** returns the control of health and food back into the hands of Indigenous peoples, according to their cultural needs and philosophies.
- **Hereditary Chiefs:** Chiefs of the Wet’suwet’en nation who achieve their title through traditional Wet’suwet’en practices of governance, as opposed to gaining it through the election process imposed by the *Indian Act*.
- **The Indian Act:** First enacted in 1876, it is an enduring piece of legislature which maintains federal control over Indigenous lands and life
- **Mekiwinn:** Cree word for gift
- **Minobimaatisiiwin:** An Anishinaabe term which, although doesn’t have an exact English translation, translated roughly to ‘the good life’ or ‘continuous rebirth’
- **Nehiyaw-Askiy:** Cree word for self-determination
- **Rupert’s Land:** A large swath of land which was ‘owned’ by the Crown and then illegally sold to the Hudson’s Bay Company – it was major location for the fur trade and the historical industries which built Canada
- **Site C Dam:** A hydropower dam constructed in Peace River Valley in so-called British Columbia
- **Stk’emlúpsemc te Secwépemc:** An Indigenous Nation in so-called British Columbia
- **Trans Mountain Pipeline:** A pipeline running through unceded Stk’emlúpsemc te Secwépemc territory
- **Turtle Island:** An Indigenous term to describe so-called Canada
- **Two-Eyed Seeing:**
- **Wendigo:** A cannibalistic creature from Anishinaabe legend that destroys itself through unchecked consumption and degradation
- **Wendigo Economy:** Equitable to capitalism or western economies – economies which depend on the accumulation of wealth, degradation of land, exclusion of Indigenous voices, and assimilation of Indigenous peoples
- **Wet’suwet’en:** An Indigenous Nation in northern so-called British Columbia

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The Embrace Daphne Odjig, Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory

Roots of Resistance and Resilience: Expanding on
Indigenous Cultures, Languages, and Land-Based Education

November 14, 2024 By Madalyn Conway

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Dedication

This report is dedicated to the Honorable Justice Murray Sinclair, who passed on to the spirit world on November 4, 2024. Murray was a former senator, judge, Lawyer, chair of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and an activist who fought for the rights for Indigenous peoples. He was Manitoba's first Indigenous judge and won the Order of Canada medal in 2022, the Meritorious Service Cross in 2022, and was appointed a member of the Order of Manitoba in 2024.

“Murray Sinclair was a great Canadian, a great Manitoban, a great Anishinaabe. His career stands as a **legacy** of public service and a **deep commitment to truth, fairness and dignity for all people.**”

- Wab Kinew, Premier of Manitoba (2024)

“People felt a sense of trust and **authenticity** around him, that they could be who they are without judgment.”

- Mary Sinclair, Governor General (2024)

“Truth is hard. Reconciliation is harder.”

- Murray Sinclair, 2017 Speech at CCPA

Background: How Cultures, Languages, and Land Have Been **Stolen** from Indigenous Peoples

Yellowhead Institute's Red Paper titled "*Land Back:*"

- Colonization in North America is brief with “**cataclysmic consequences extending into the present**” (Yellowhead Institute, 16)
- When Indigenous peoples resisted colonization, the colonizers used **force** and **violence** to claim Indigenous lands and jurisdiction (Yellowhead Institute, 16)

*“Sovereignty is the supreme right to govern yourselves, to rule yourselves. Indians used to be able to control and exercise that right, **now we have to work to get that right back.**”*

- George Manuel, Secwepemc leader and president of the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs, 2022
<https://yellowheadinstitute.org/2019/10/08/reclaiming-indigenous-place-names/>

Reported Connectedness to Land by First Peoples

Table 15: Connection to the Land

% of adults reporting on progress in renewing the relationship of First Nations persons to the land	%
Good progress	11.1
No progress	45.5
% of adults reporting that they often consume traditional foods	%
Protein-based foods such as game and fish	59.3
Berries and other types of vegetation	21.8
Other First Nations foods such as bannock, fry bread or corn soup	42.2

Source: First Nations Centre, 2005 (141), pp. 147 and 99.

[Health inequalities and the social determinants of Aboriginal peoples' health](#)

Treaties and Legislation that Silenced Indigenous Peoples:

- Under the Indian Act of 1876, Indigenous women who married non-Indigenous men **lost their status**, and thus their children also did not have status
- These children who did not have status were not allowed to go home and were often **abducted** from Indian reserves through residential schools
- These children “suffered extremely high rates of **abuse**, creating legacies of **street involvement**, cultural **alienation**, and **imprisonment**” (Yellowhead Institute 2022, 16)
- Despite not alienating their lands, indigenous bands who did not signed treaties were *forced to live under Canadian law on Crown lands*

Update to the Canadian Constitution:

- The Canadian Constitution Act of 1982 granted Canada full authority to make changes without Britain's approval
- Section 35 of the Constitution Act states "*The existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed*"
- Any land taken or injustice committed **before** the implementation of Section 35 was dealt with on a case-by-case basis in court and *often favoured the crown*

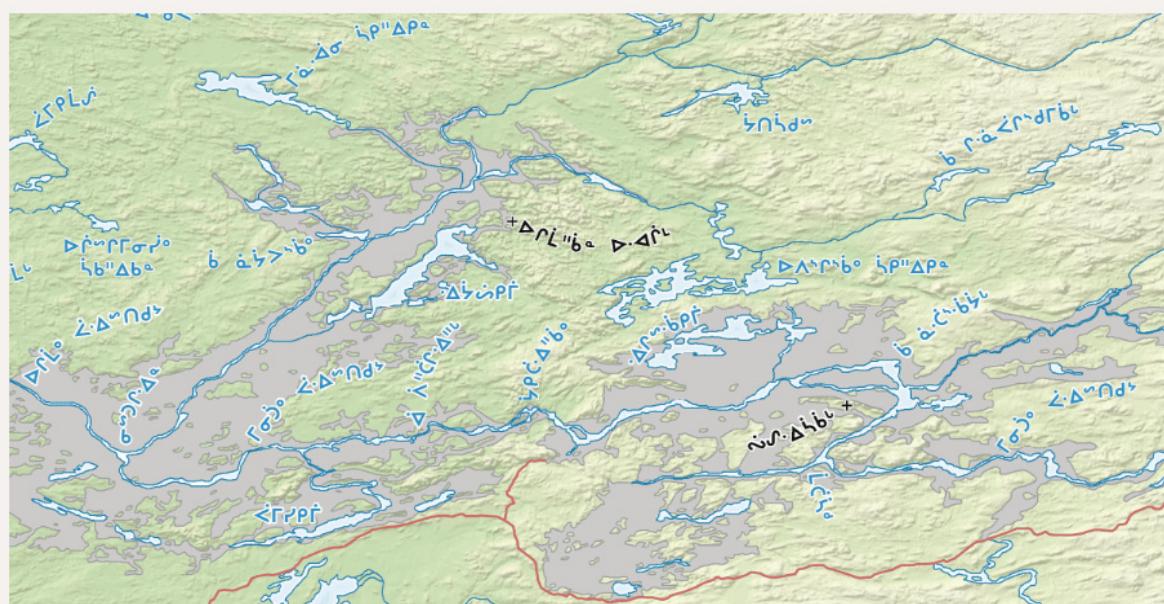
Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries:

- Indigenous peoples were **uprooted** and stuck into reserves which the colonizers identified as their "new land"
- These actions were **justified under colonial treaty**, legislation, and informal policy
- When indigenous peoples tried to live off-reserve, or even tried to travel off-reserve, *they were faced with high surveillance rates, policing, and violent attack* (Yellowhead Institute 2022, 16)

"'Give it back' means to restore the livelihood, demonstrate respect for what is shared – the land – by making things right through compensation, restoration of freedom, dignity, and livelihood."

- Sylvia McAdam Saysewahum (Nationhood Interrupted: Revitalizing nêhiyaw Legal Systems)

Flooding in the Eeyou Istchee Region of Quebec



An excerpt from a regional map published by the Eeyou of Eeyou Istchee in 2017. Shaded sections represent areas flooded due to hydro-electric development. The map thus visually distinguishes natural and artificial waterways in a way that maintains historical memory of the land.

“The revival of our **culture**, our **language** and **tradition** is so important to our healing, and these were things that the Hydro developments took away from us. 28 I know it may seem hard to understand and make the connection of how Hydro took this away, *but if you sit with us and listen with your hearts, the stories of our people’s homes being bulldozed to make way for Hydro, the sexual assault on our women carried out by the workers, the violence and the crime left 18 years undocumented, you will understand.*”

- Fox Lake Cree First Nation, Manitoba Clean Energy Commission Meeting 2018, [red-paper-report-final.pdf](#)

Maqamigew (Land): How Indigenous Cultures and Languages Impact Land

Colonialism and the Climate Crisis:

- Indigenous leaders claim that the root of the problem is **colonialism**
- Biologically rich environments are sustained by Indigenous values and relationships to the land
- *Colonial processes reduce land availability:*
 - Such as deforestation;
 - desertification;
 - freshwater depletion and pollution;
 - and reduction of biological diversity (Corntassel & Bryce 2024, 152)
- Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) is a set of Indigenous values that can be used to analyze the land and the **adverse effects of colonialism**
- Versions of TEK have been used to study agriculture, pharmacology, soil, water, and many other fields of climate change



Carrie Napash with her son Darren Napash-Sam during a traditional Cree walking out ceremony (Indigenous People Atlas of Canada, 2020)

EIPCCP Program:

- Engaging Indigenous Peoples in Climate Change Policy is a funding program launched in 2016 to *strengthen the connection between Indigenous practices and the land*
- The EIPCCP program works with organizations like the NWAC (Native Women's Association of Canada 2024)
- EIPCCP engages in national climate change-related discussions, **works to find a middle ground with the government**, and conducts research/surveys

"Every language is an old growth forest of the mind, a watershed of thought, an ecosystem of social, spiritual and psychological possibilities. Each is a window into a universe, a monument to the specific culture that gave it birth, and whose spirit it expresses."

- Wade Davis, Canadian Anthropologist and Language preservation worker, <https://www.nationalobserver.com/2019/04/26/news/ten-thousand-year-old-indigenous-libraries-are-society-s-best-hope->

The Truth and Reconciliation Committee's 94 Calls to Action include:

- 14 (ii). Aboriginal language rights are to be reinforced by the treaties
 - 14 (iv). The preservation and strengthening of Aboriginal language and cultures are *best managed by Aboriginal communities*
 - 16. Post-Secondary institutions to create university and college degrees in aboriginal languages
 - 81. The federal government collaborates with survivors and their organizations to commission and install *a public Residential School monument*
- (Government of Canada, 2022)

"Pick one of the 94 TRC Calls to Action and do whatever you can as an individual to make that happen for all of Canada."

- Murray Sinclair, 2016 (CBC News)

Significance of Land to First Nations:

- The health of the land and water is central to their culture, it is their mother and gives them the responsibility to take care of it
- The **removal** of Indigenous peoples from their land leads to *loss of language and culture*
- It is difficult for Indigenous peoples to connect to their culture when they live in a colonized country and area
- Aboriginal peoples are sustained **spiritually, physically, and culturally** by the land through their practices

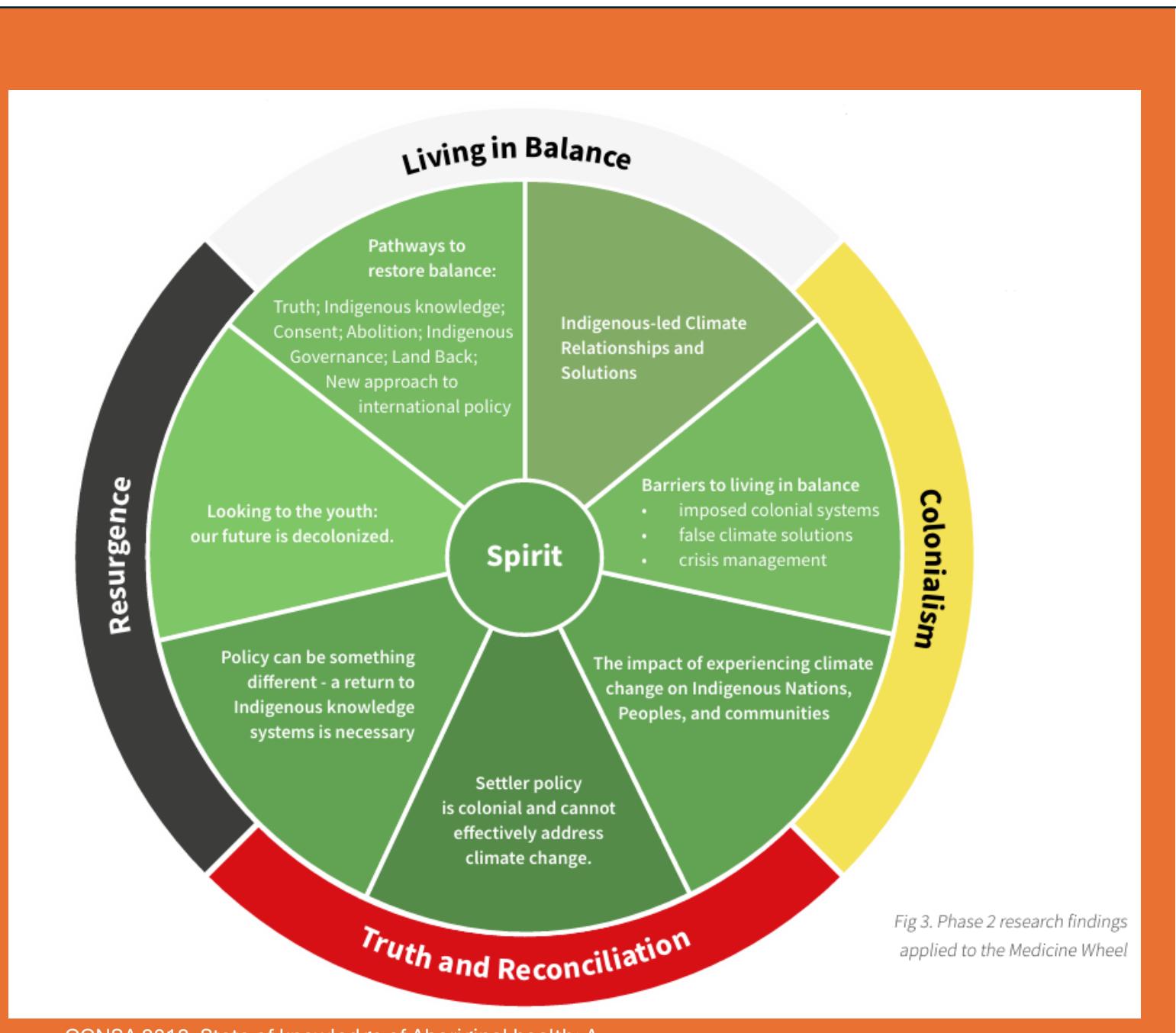
"For Aboriginal peoples, country is much more than a place. Rock, tree, river, hill, animal, human – all were formed of the same substance by the Ancestors who continue to live in land, water, sky.

Country is filled with relations speaking language and following Law, no matter whether the shape of that relation is human, rock, crow, wattle.

Country is loved, needed, and cared for, and country loves, needs, and cares for her peoples in turn. Country is family, culture, identity. Country is self.

- Ambelin Kwaymullina from the Palyku tribe in Australia, CNSA 2023 <https://www.cnsa-nccah.ca/docs/context/RPT-StateKnowledgeReview-EN.pdf>

Indigenous Findings from *Indigenous Climate Action* Applied to the Medicine Wheel



Brooke Paul: The Effect of Displacement on Women in Shelter

Brooke Paul, the Program Coordinator of the Mi'kmaw Family Healing Centre in Millbrook First Nation (an Indigenous women's transition house), came to *POLS 2003 Introduction to Public Policy* on October 29, 2024 to discuss Indigenous women who have been displaced. In response to the question "How do you think the displacement of women affects their connection to culture and land?" Brooke told a story about an Inuit woman who came into her shelter. The woman was with her child and could not speak any English. When she was helping the woman into her car, Brooke told the woman that everything would be okay, *and the woman just kept repeating her*. When Brooke asked her colleague why the woman did this, her colleague said that she does this to learn English better. Her colleague explained to Brooke that the woman thought that "everything will be okay" was *the place that they were going*. The woman was in a place where she could not communicate with others, could not practice her cultural ways of getting food and water, and *did not have the support* of her Indigenous community. Brooke explained the incredible impact that language and culture have on a person and how **displacement** and **disconnection** from land has an impact that goes beyond being in an unfamiliar place.

"Learn their language and put them in a safe place. When they are in their safe place they will open up and tell you how you can help."

- Brooke Paul, 2024



Brooke Paul, Program Coordinator of the Mi'kmaw Family Healing Centre



Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs Showing a Banner During Their Closing Ceremonies (MMIWG Final Report 2022, 28)
<https://www.mmiwg->

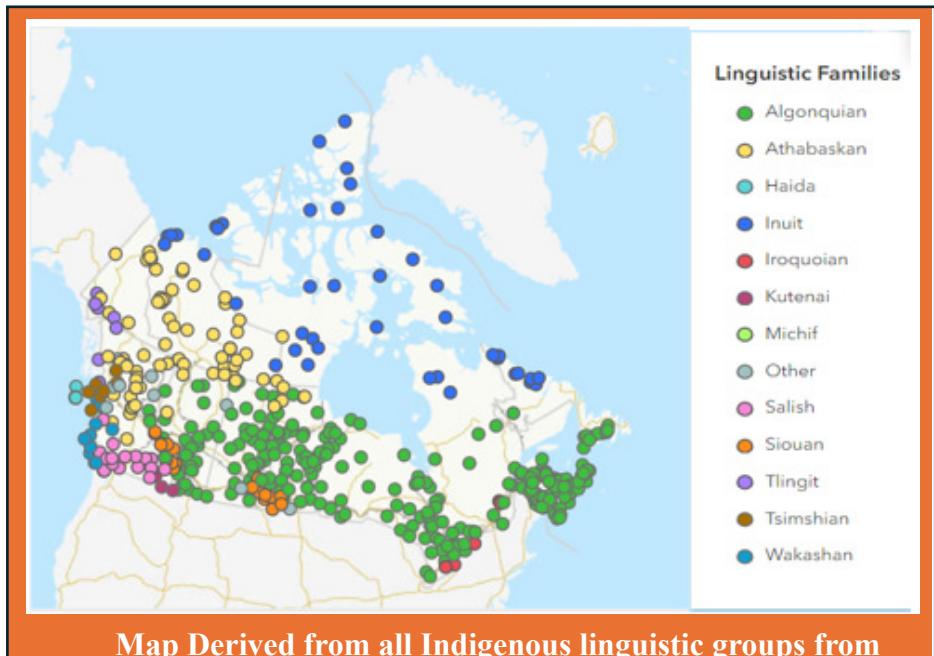
Colonial Practices Enacted onto the Land

Colonial laws and policies **eradicated and changed** Indigenous place names during the remapping and political changes during the last several centuries

- Wetaskiwin, Alberta is a *renamed version of the land*, derived from the Cree word Witaskiwihk, meaning “the hills **where peace was made**”
- Nose Hill and Medicine Hat in Alberta were given English and French names translated from Indigenous language

*“Just as colonial place names and naming practices have helped to construct colonial stories about the land and its inhabitants, Indigenous place names are also **powerful vehicles** for narrating history and inscribing the landscape with meaning.”*

- Yellowhead Institute “Reclaiming Indigenous Place Names”



The Resource Extraction Industry:

- The “Big Five” Banks (RBC, TD, Scotia, BMO, and CIBC) have played a large role in financing **resource extraction** in North America
- Though RBC partnered with the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation in 2020, they have *done little to address financial commitments to extraction processes*
- TD Bank invested \$113 billion between 2016 and 2020 to the Transmountain Expansion Project
- BMO is the only bank of the five that quantifies Indigenous investment, although these investments only amount to 6.7% of their total business
- Between 2016 and 2020, BMO invested around \$97 billion in resource extraction

“Misdirection and misinformation continue to be the main tools for resource extraction companies and their funders to distract from how their projects may *negatively impact Indigenous traditional territories*. Adding to these tactics is the sheer volume of resources and money at their disposal, those which far *outweigh Indigenous land protectors and communities*.”

- Robert Houle *Redwashing Extraction*, 2022
<https://yellowheadinstitute.org/redwashing-extraction/>

HISTORIC TREATIES AND TREATY FIRST NATIONS IN CANADA



364 of 617

First Nations are Treaty First Nations (59%)

Total Population of Treaty First Nations (2006)

542,817

Historic treaties are located in nine provinces and three territories, covering nearly 50% of Canada's land mass



14

Douglas Treaties
(1850-1854)

11

Numbered Treaties
(1871-1921)

2

Robinson Treaties
(1850)

2

Williams Treaties
(1923)

30

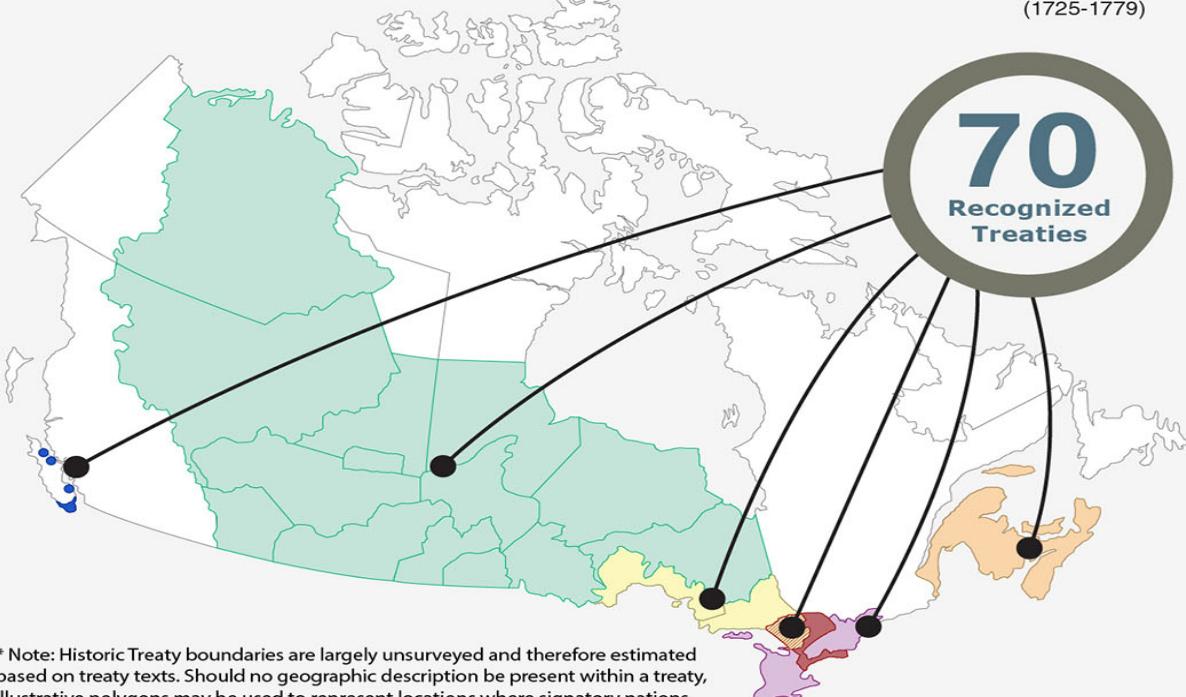
Upper Canada Land Surrenders
(1781-1862)

3

*Peace & Neutrality Treaties
(1701-1760)

8

Maritime Peace and Friendship Treaties
(1725-1779)



* Note: Historic Treaty boundaries are largely unsurveyed and therefore estimated based on treaty texts. Should no geographic description be present within a treaty, illustrative polygons may be used to represent locations where signatory nations assert and/or exercise Section 35 rights. These polygons should not be considered definitive in terms of the specific location of treaty rights. The Peace and Neutrality Treaties do not currently have a geographic representation.

Rosemary Cooper

On November 14, 2024, Rosemary Cooper came to a *POLS 2003 Introduction to Public Policy class* to engage in a discussion about Pauktuutit, an organization that advocates for Inuit women in Canada. Rosemary is the President and CEO of Pauktuutit and outlined some areas where cultural Inuit practices are being met with institutional pushback.

Indigenous Translators:

Rosemary stated that for each French word translated would earn a translator \$75 but for each Nunavik word translated a translator **would only make \$25**. This makes the Nunavik language inaccessible to younger generations and causes a disconnect, which furthers the intergenerational trauma faced by Indigenous peoples.



Rosemary Cooper, CEO of Pauktuutit

The percentage of Inuit peoples who could hold a conversation in Inuktut decreased from 2001 at 91.5% to 2016 at 89%. This number significantly dropped in 2021 to 81% which was more significant when analyzing people aged under 55 years old.

(Statistics Canada, 2024)

Traditional Hunting:

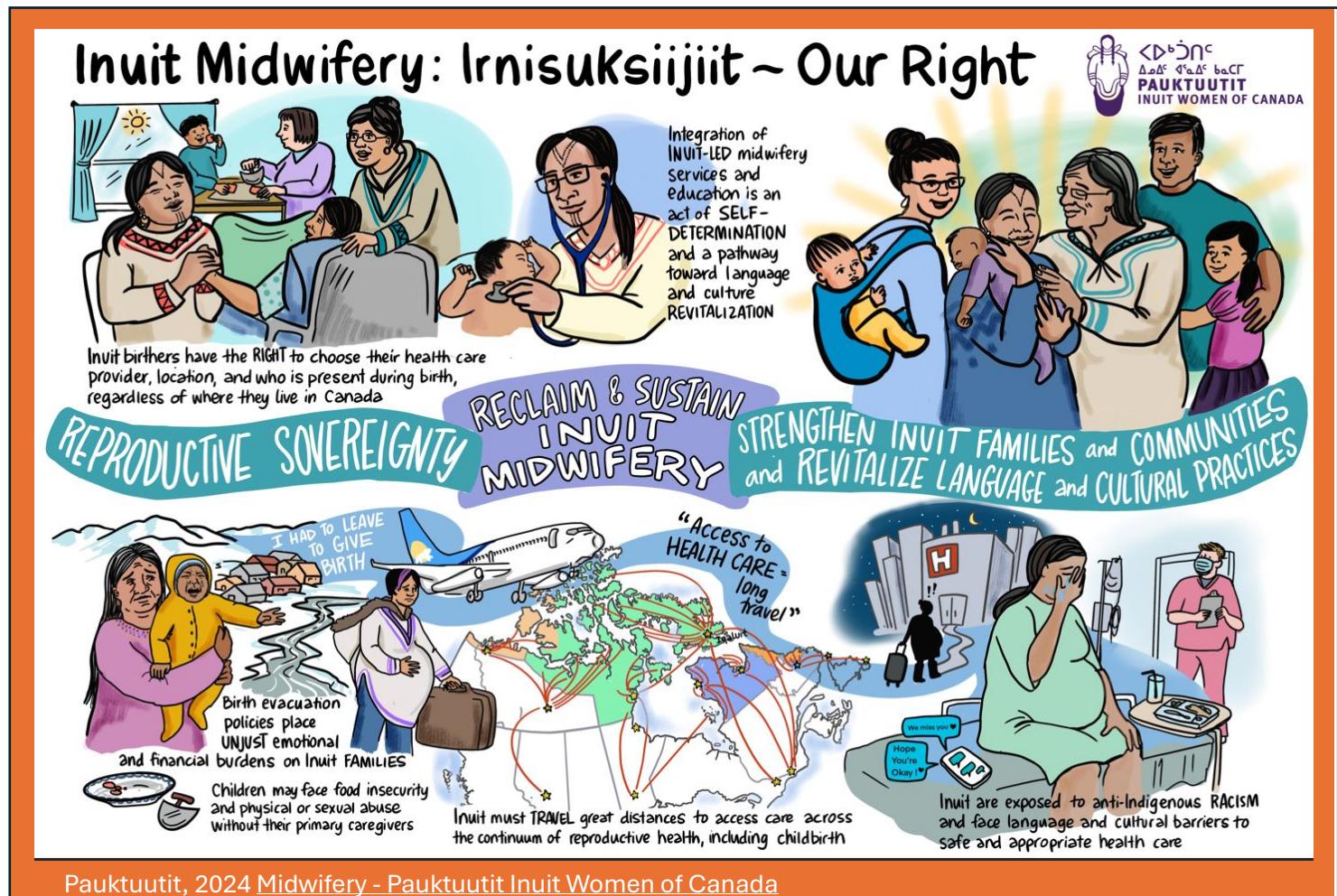
Pauktuutit asserts that *eight out of ten Inuit in Nunangat experience food insecurity*, which could be due to decision-making that reduces cultural practices of Inuit peoples. Upon applying for Workers' Safety Compensation, Inuit hunters were told that their jobs were too dangerous and too injury-prone to cover, despite farmers and non-Inuit workers receiving the same compensation. This inaccessibility to compensation for work leads to Inuit hunters **losing food sovereignty** and needing to feed more people with less food.

Indigenous (Inuit) Midwives:

Inuit-led midwifery is identified by Pauktuutit as a primary health and cultural right and assert that this should be met with legislative and funding commitments. Midwifery is an act of Inuit self-determination and without this reproductive right, Inuit women are forced to travel long distances in seeking health care. In this search they are often met with anti-Indigenous racism and face language and cultural barriers in colonial healthcare spaces.

“The absence and inaccessibility of midwifery services to Inuit women is an **infringement and violation of their sexual and reproductive health rights**, to which the government is obligated to respect, protect, and fulfill. The return of midwifery services and education programs to Inuit communities will help bridge the gap in the disproportionate sexual and reproductive health outcomes and will reduce the anti-Indigenous racism that many Inuit women experience in Canada’s health care systems.”

- Gerri Sharpe, former President of Pauktuutit, 2024 [Midwifery - Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada](#)



Tobacco Smudging in “No Smoking” Areas

Tobacco smudging is a cultural practice that Indigenous peoples have been doing *since the beginning of time*. Though this right to smudge is **protected** under human rights codes in various areas, such as the Ontario Human Rights Code, Indigenous practices are often **restricted in areas**.

In University of Waterloo, the smudging of tobacco is *restricted to a list of rooms that are pre-approved*. In other areas, Indigenous peoples *require a permit to practice their cultural traditions*. (Ontario Federation of Labor 2018)

In University of Victoria, the smudging of tobacco is also *restricted to a list of rooms on campus*, but it is permitted anywhere outdoors “*as long as it takes place away from open windows, doors and building air intake units.*” (Uvic 2024)



Example of Outdoor Smudging used by University of Waterloo in their Office of Indigenous Relations [Smudging Information, Resources, and Request Form | Office of Indigenous Relations | University of Waterloo](#)

Example of Indoor Smudging used by University of Waterloo in their Office of Indigenous Relations
[Smudging Information, Resources, and Request Form | Office of Indigenous Relations | University of Waterloo](#)



Land Back: The Cultural Changes Advocated for by Indigenous Peoples

#LandBack: An indigenous-led political movement that includes environmental and cultural shifts to give Indigenous land back to Indigenous communities.

- #LandBack began trending on social media during various *protests for pipeline construction on Indigenous lands* in 2016 and 2017
- In 2020 a protest was held at Mt. Rushmore and a formal Land Back campaign was launched by the Indigenous group *NDN Collective* soon after
- Key Goals of Land Back include:
 - Sovereignty over stolen lands;
 - Languages and ceremonies;
 - Food and housing security;
 - And equitable access to healthcare and education (Bearfoot KQED 2022).

- *Indigenous-managed land in Brazil, Australia, and Canada are equally, if not more, biodiverse than national conservation lands that are managed by the federal governments*
- Indigenous-led projects that work against fossil fuel in North America have reduced or delayed one quarter of total annual carbon dioxide emissions (National Observer 2019) <https://www.nationalobserver.com/2019/04/26/news/ten-thousand-year-old-indigenous-libraries-are-societys-best-hope-environmental>

The Re-Purchasing of Indigenous Land: There are two options for Indigenous peoples to regain their lands; they can go through the Additions to Reserve process, or they can purchase their land as fee simple.

- Over 20 NWT Indigenous governments are signing a deal expected to unlock \$375 million in Federal and private investment to protect the land
- This Northwest Territories Our Land for the Future Agreement is one of the largest Indigenous-led conservation initiatives in the world

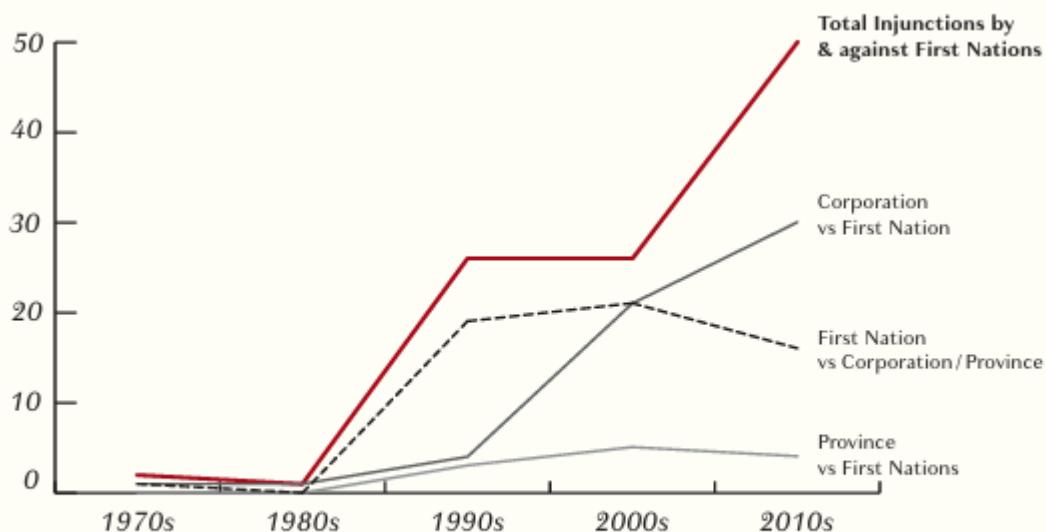


Protesters in Wisconsin, April 2022 (wpr.org)

Injunctions Against Indigenous Actions:

- Indigenous groups often contest the Western legal processes, the government fails to acknowledge this lack of consent
- After reviewing 100 cases of injunctions, Yellowhead Institute found that *76% of injunctions filed against First Nations groups were granted, while 81% of injunctions filed by First Nations against the government were denied*
- These injunctions are used to gain access to Indigenous communities to benefit oil and gas companies who wish to work on their land but have not gained permission
- In December of 2018, Coastal GasLink Pipeline Limited served an injunction to the Unist'ot'en clan to gain access to their land to build a new pipeline transport in Northern British Columbia

Injunctions Filed Involving First Nations from 1970-2019



Yellowhead Institute, 2022 <https://yellowheadinstitute.org/wp->

“For decades, Indigenous women have been reporting cases of sexual assault by men imported into their homelands to work in resource sectors, but these reports have been largely ignored.”

- Hayden King and Shiri Pasternak (Yellowhead Institute) *Land Back: A Yellowhead Institute Red Paper*

Truth and Reconciliation: Steps in the Right Direction

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada:

- During the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement in June of 2008, the TRC commission was granted a \$60 million budget
- The Residential school settlement was between survivors, their communities, their families, and anyone impacted by these schools
- This committee was switched over to the National Centre for truth and reconciliation in 2015
- The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation put out their **94 Calls to Action** in 2015 which included policy and mandate changes they wished to see for the benefit of Indigenous peoples (NCTR 2015)

Red Dress Day:

- A day for awareness on May 5th for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and Two-Spirit Peoples
- May 5th is a day to honour and bring awareness to the heightened violence shown to Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit Peoples
- Inspired by an art installation titled REDress Project by Jaime Black, a Metis Woman
- Red dresses are hung to represent the missing women, girls, and two-spirit peoples

Orange Shirt Day:

- This Remembrance Day was one of the Truth and reconciliation's 94 calls to action, where they called for a national holiday to commemorate their lost souls
- Orange Shirt Day began in British Columbia in May 2013 when an orange shirt was presented as a symbol for **Residential School suffrage**
- The day has changed to September 30th and is now a national holiday, declared by the federal government in June 2021, for remembrance and solidarity

“Every Child Matters.”

- Orange Shirt Day Slogan (Canadian Encyclopedia, 2022)
<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/orange-shirt-day>



Photograph from Jaime Black's REDress Project (Jaime Black, 2020)

UNDRIP: The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Canada was first adopted in 2007 to “Reaffirm that Indigenous peoples should be free from discrimination of any kind ... and reorganize the urgent need to respect and promote inherent rights of Indigenous peoples.” (UNDRIP, 2007 UNDRIP_E_web.pdf) Articles in UNDRIP include:

- 2. Indigenous peoples and individuals are free and equal to all other peoples and individuals.
- 8 (1). Indigenous peoples and individuals have the right not to be subjected to forced assimilation or destruction of their culture.
- 14 (1). Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages.
- 32 (1). Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the development or use of their lands or territories and other resources (UNDRIP 2007)

Criticism of UNDRIP:

- The Federal Government was opposed to UNDRIP until 2010, and prior to that Harper’s conservative government deemed the declaration “an aspirational document”
- Once UNDRIP had been implemented for one year, B.C. Indigenous governments presented a report that stated the most First Nations did not see a draft of the Action Plan and had no input into it (CBC, 2023).



UNDRIP Act 2021: This act was intended to “provide a framework for reconciliation, healing and peace, as well as harmonious and cooperative relations based on the principles of justice, democracy, respect for human rights, non-discrimination and good faith” (Justice.gov, 2021)

- In 2023, the AFN made note of section 6(1) of the UNDRIP Act which states “The Minister must, in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous peoples and with other federal ministers, prepare and implement an action plan to achieve the objectives of the Declaration.”
- The AFN stated that Indigenous peoples need to be consulted and accommodated pursuant to this section, or it shall be amended (AFN, 2023)

Concluding Reflections

I acknowledge that I am not Indigenous, and I am a settler who lives on unceded Mi'kmaq territory. Therefore, I am not in the position to make policy recommendations about policy changes relating to the Cultures, languages, or lands of Indigenous peoples.

My research is based off recommendations and talking points from Indigenous experts who gave POLS 2003 students the opportunity to learn firsthand about Indigenous policy issues. I would like to thank **Dr. Lorraine Peters Whitman, Darlene Peters Copeland, Lily-Beth Fisher, Sandy Fisher, Lara Hartman, Gerald Gloade, Melissa Sue Labrador, Todd Labrador, Cole Kippenhuck, Brooke Paul, Dr. Piita Irniq, and Rosemary Cooper** for sharing useful information with me, all of which had an impact on this report.



In completing this report, I have become more knowledgeable in Indigenous cultural struggles and how to be a useful ally and acquaintance to First Peoples. To be an ally we must question unethical policies and commit to not only understanding Indigenous peoples but also ensuring that they thrive in their own cultures, languages, and lands.

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Piamglu'lq Gina'masuti: Advancing Culturally Appropriate Early Childhood Education for Indigenous Children in Canada

Piamglu'lq: "Better"

Gina'masuti: "Education, lesson, knowledge, learning" - Mikmaqonline.org

Addressing **severe quality & supply issues** of culturally appropriate Indigenous early childhood education.

Issue: How does the failure to provide culturally appropriate & rich education opportunities continue to undermine the well-being and identity of Indigenous peoples, individually and collectively?

Background:

In 1920, the Indian Act made attendance at residential "schools" compulsory for Treaty-status children ages 7 to 15, ripping them from their families. The goal of these schools was to erase Indigenous culture, language, teachings, and life. The last Residential "school" only closed in 1996, and the Canadian government has done little to reconcile the intense intergenerational trauma and loss of knowledge faced by Indigenous peoples in the past & today.

- "Our objective is to continue until there is not an Indian that has not been absorbed into the body politic, and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department." Duncan Campbell Scott, the Canadian Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs (1920)
- The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) issued Calls to Action #6 to #12 specifically on education in 2015. These calls to action followed the following categories:
 - Eliminate educational and employment gaps
 - Develop & maintain culturally relevant curricula
 - Establish and fund ECE programs
 - Indigenous education legislation

These focus on addressing historical inequities and respecting and celebrating Indigenous knowledge in education (TRC 2015).

However, these have NOT BEEN MET.

Summary:

The TRC has declared culturally appropriate Indigenous education essential in prioritizing the well-being of Indigenous children that needs to be addressed by the Federal Government of Canada in a way that prioritizes the **needs & experiences** of Indigenous people. Low funding, inappropriate curricula, lack of Indigenous (speaking) educators, and access issues are damaging the **health and well-being** of Indigenous peoples.

Current Update:

There is an urgent need for funding to develop and implement culturally appropriate early childhood education (ECE) that the Federal government is not meeting.

"Education has gotten us into this mess, and education will get us out."
-Murray Sinclair (2016)

- **Funding Gaps:** Indigenous early childhood programs on reserves receive approximately **40% less funding** per child than provincial counterparts - limits the availability of culturally appropriate resources and staff.
- **Culture:** **Only 25%** of early childhood programs for Indigenous communities incorporate culturally relevant curricula. - **Less than 15% of early childhood educators in these programs are Indigenous**, & Fewer than **20%** of early childhood programs on reserves **offer Indigenous language instruction**.
- **Access:** **50% of Indigenous children** in remote areas have limited/no access to ECE programs, according to the Assembly of First Nations (AFN).

Table 2.6. Barriers to learning or improving a First Nations language among children

FNREES (2016)

Barriers	%
No First Nations language classes available	41.6
No one available to teach the language	41.3
No one to practice with	39.9

Wi'kipaltimk:

Food Security and Adequate Nutrition in Indigenous Children: Direct Educational Consequences

Wi'kipaltimk: "Feast, gather with love and purpose" - TreatyEducationNS-FB2024

Addressing the impacts of **food insecurity** & **supply issues** with accessing traditional "country" Indigenous food on education outcomes.

Issue: How are Indigenous families disproportionately affected by food insecurity, especially in Northern communities, and how does this further hurt educational outcomes?

Background:

From the 1940's to 1960's, the Canadian Government forcibly relocated Inuit communities and slaughtered over 10,000 sled dogs. They made policies that created significant dependencies on southern Canadian goods, leading to the **loss of traditional food sources**, hunting territories, and the means to access them independently.

- The RCMP **killed over 10,000 sled dogs**, eliminating Inuit ability to navigate their land autonomously, forcing a **reliance on expensive market foods** brought in from the south.
- Country food is incredibly healthy - ex. Seals contain ample Iron, protein, and vitamins A,B,C & D.

70% of Inuit adults were found to be living in food insecure households (**40% in Ind.**)

This is 6x higher than the National Average & highest food insecurity prevalence rate for any Indigenous population residing in a developed country.

- Indigenous children are more likely to be obese or develop type 2 diabetes due to limited access to healthy foods and reliance on non-traditional, processed foods.

25.6% of Inuit children aged 6 to 14 are **obese**, with even higher rates of up to **48.7%** in younger Inuit children (ages 3 to 5) in specific regions such as Nunavut.

Current Update:

There is an urgent need for supports in accessing traditional food and nutrition/food programs in education systems that the Federal government is not acknowledging.

- Chronic hunger adversely affects **cognitive development** and **academic performance**.

ITK Call for Action: They have announced they need 1.6B \$ to start a nutrition program across Inuit Nunangat.

- **What:** The program would provide breakfast and lunch with a focus on **healthy, culturally appropriate food**, tailored to local needs.
- **Why:** **Improved educational outcomes** and **better mental wellness** for Inuit students.

The Inuvialuit Settlement Region has an established meal program.

- **Successes:** Breakfast in the schools in the ISR are both more reliable and improved in quality (is a more balanced meal).
- **Challenges:** High staff turnover (lack of funding).

"If you think of land as just vegetation and an aesthetic notion of what belongs, you're going to have very different approaches... than if you see that land as a food system" (Grenz, 2024).

Summary:

With the highest food insecurity prevalence in any Indigenous community in a developed country, the lack of access to healthy, traditional foods is compounded by reliance on expensive, nutrient-poor imports. The federal government must prioritize initiatives that support **sustainable, culturally relevant** food systems to improve both **health and education** for Indigenous youth in a way that prioritizes the needs and experiences of Indigenous peoples.

Jajige'g Ugjigsu'g:

Impact of Caregiver Mental Health on Indigenous Early Childhood Development

Jajige'g: "Healthy" Ugjigsu'g: "Family"

Addressing the need for early childhood education to provide **healing opportunities** for families to **reduce harm on Indigenous children**.

Issue: How does the failure to provide mental health supports in ECE for caregivers encourage the continuation of intergenerational trauma and negative outcomes on Indigenous children?

Background:

Many Indigenous caregivers experience **poor mental health and trauma** due to the lasting impacts of colonialism, intergenerational trauma, and ongoing discrimination within healthcare systems. These caregivers often **lack access to culturally appropriate services** that respect traditional healing practices, and jurisdictional issues, especially for Métis and non-status First Nations caregivers, **limit their eligibility** for certain services available to those on-reserve.

- The Assembly of First Nations found **70%** of First Nations people felt that healthcare providers **did not understand their cultural needs**, resulting in poor mental health outcomes and reluctance to seek care.
- The TRC says **Systemic racism** in healthcare is a critical barrier that affects **mental health access and outcomes**.
- The suicide rate for Indigenous youth (ages 15-24) is **5 to 6 times higher** than among non-Indigenous youth, with some Inuit communities experiencing **rates up to 40 times higher** than the national average. (2018)
- 1/4 of First Nations people have experienced **thoughts of suicide in their lifetime**, which is much higher than the 11% of non-Indigenous Canadians who report similar experiences (2022).

Current Update:

There is an urgent need for ECE programs to take a family wellness approach and provide mental health services for caregivers, that the Federal government of Canada is overlooking.

- Programs like Kognaasaowin ("Parenting in a Good Way") focus on **holistic, culturally grounded support for caregivers and children**, recognizing the importance of strong familial and community bonds in child development.
However, this program is in Toronto. What about rural communities?
- **60%** of First Nations communities are **located in remote regions**, making it difficult for families to access essential mental health care and ECE programs.
- Services for Indigenous communities are **underfunded and face constant challenges** in maintaining staffing levels and infrastructure (AFN,2023).

"It is crucial that service providers acknowledge the impacts of colonialism... in order to establish healthy relationships and create safe environments for clients" (NWAC, 2023).

Summary:

Mental health care is a basic human right, and Indigenous peoples in Canada face **higher rates of mental illness and barriers in accessing care** than non-Indigenous Canadians. This needs to be addressed by the Federal Government of Canada in a way that prioritizes the **needs and experiences** of Indigenous people. Low funding, cultural insensitivity, and access issues has contributed to this widespread mental health crisis in Indigenous peoples.

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The Wendigo Economy: Industry Impacts on the Sacred Gift of Food in Indigenous Communities

"Indigenous foods are the natural foods, and they are gifts from Creator" - Kaya Hill, Haudenosaunee writer

POLS 2003: Mikayla Smysniuk, Larque Law, Esther Uhlman

Key Issue: How has corporate colonialism (the Wendigo Economy) affected the Sacred Gift of Food in Indigenous food systems?

Background:

The guiding principle of *Mekiwinn* (food as a sacred gift) within Indigenous food systems teaches that food is a gift to humanity from the 'Creator/Great Spirit' (Jobin 2020).

- Connection to the Creator is understood as being present throughout every action and natural object in life.
- The spiritual connection to food is integral in understanding the relationship between ourselves, the land, water, plants and animals in Indigenous way of life.
- Sharing and gifting food is a fundamental form of respect towards the Creator and connectedness amongst the communities (Pawlowska-Mainville 2020).
- Restricting access to traditional food systems would mean disrespect to the Creator, and might lead to further decline of availability of those gifts (Pawlowska-Mainville 2020).
- Historic colonial policies have aimed to disconnect Indigenous peoples from Mikiwin, by forcibly relocating them to polluted and contaminated areas:
 - Imperial oil contaminated a river with 'tailing ponds,' waste from Kearl Mine containing dangerous levels of arsenic and heavy metals, upstream from Fort Chipewyan First Nation (APTN 2023)
 - Chemical valley, ON: Aamjiwnaang First Nation declared a state of emergency after high levels of benzene – a dangerous carcinogen – were detected from the air. The chemical is likely coming from a nearby plastic manufacturing plant (Graf 2024).
 - Pictou Landing, NS: For over 50 years, a paper pulp mill in Pictou Landing has poisoned Boat Harbour, a now toxic marine wasteland which was once teeming with life and food (Harris 2019).

The Wendigo Economy further disconnects and erases Indigenous communities from collaborative exchanges of food and its history (NWAC Food Policy 2018).

Update:

- Canada's Wendigo Economy is built around private property, destruction of land, and building pipelines
- The destructive nature of Wendigo Economies impedes on Indigenous people's ability to engage with the Creator's gifts.
 - "When we can feed ourselves, we can be mentally, and physically strong, we can fight back" (Settee and Shukla 2020)
- Recovery from the erasure of traditional Indigenous food systems through Residential Schools is still being processed in Indigenous communities.

Food Stats: Just the Facts.

- 20% of First Nations people living off-reserve, aged 15 and older, have experienced food insecurity (NWAC 2018).
- 17.8% of First Nations adults have chosen not to eat when hungry due to a lack of money
- Indigenous communities are 2x more likely to face food shortages than non-Indigenous communities (Global News 2023)
- In 2017, 48% of Indigenous households (on and off reserve) were considered food insecure (NWAC 2017).

Specific food processes are particular to the land and location of a First Nations community.

- Sharing and gifting food is "one of the most fundamental cultural structures in hunting societies" (Pawlowska-Mainville 2020).
- Many Indigenous communities are taking their food systems back into their own hands:
 - Tsartlip First Nation has a community garden project to encourage reconnecting with the land.
 - Muskeg Lake Cree Nation has a community planted food forest, which is self-sustaining and will feed the community for generations (APTN 2018).

Summary:

The Wendigo Economy actively restricts and erases Indigenous food systems, the relationships between people, the land, water and animals. The Sacred Gift of Food is impacted by the destruction of traditional Indigenous land and harms the health of First Nations communities.

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The Wendigo Economy: Industry Impacts on Indigenous Self-Determination

"The Wendigo Economy, or the economy of a cannibal, one which destroys its mother."

- Winona LaDuke, Anishinaabe Economist and Activist

Larque Law, Mikayla Smysniuk, Esther Uhlman

Key Issue: How does corporate colonialism (the Wendigo Economy) affect the self-determination of Indigenous peoples?

Background:

Nehiyaw-askiy is the Cree term for self-determination, and directly translates to “people of the land” (Jobin 2020), indicating that Indigenous autonomy – and food sovereignty – can’t be separated from stewardship and control of traditional territories.

- **The health of the land is deeply connected to the health of the people and the communities.**
- Individual health is necessary for people to be able to take care of their communities in turn.
- This leads to a complex system of self-governance, characterized by **minobimaatisiiwin** – the good life through **continuous regeneration** – which ensures the health of lands and peoples **over many generations** (LaDuke 2010).

“I live in a place where I would say we have a pretty sustainable economy. So, you could harvest wild rice on the same lake for 10,000 years. That’s pretty good, huh? And all you have to do is take care of the lake”

- Winona LaDuke, 2020

- Newhiyaw-askiy depends on Indigenous peoples **having control over the policy process**, specifically as it pertains to the allocation of wealth and the use of land by extractive industries.

“They have a duty to consult. We will force them to listen to us. We are a nation that signed a treaty with Canada.”

- Joe Forbister, Grassy Narrows Resident, 2024

Update:

Industries and pollution:

- **29%** of federal contaminated sites are in Indigenous communities (Chong and Basu 2022).
- Everyday, **11 million liters of waste from tar sands leaks into the Athabasca River** (Indigenous Environmental Network).
- These leaks have contaminated the waters of **Fort Chipewyan**, who use the water for drinking and fishing. The government failed to notify them that it was contaminated (Connors 2024).
- **Coastal Gaslink Pipeline:** In unceded Wet'suwet'en territory, sediment from the construction of the pipeline

spills into the Wedzin Kwa (Morrice River). The sediment clogs fish habitats and suffocates salmon smolts (Simmons 2023).

- **Grassy Narrows:** 50 years after the dryden paper mill dumped **10 tonnes of mercury** into the Wabigoon River, **90% of residents in Grassy narrows still suffer from mercury poisoning** (Morin 2024).

Food costs and food access:

- With a lack of access to country foods, Indigenous communities are **forced to depend** on the overwhelmingly available processed foods in their communities.
- Food in Indigenous communities is exorbitantly expensive. For example, **one bag of flour in Neskatanga First Nation costs \$40** (Law 2023).

Policy:

Duty to consult Indigenous communities:

- **Sipekne'katik:** Non-Indigenous fisheries continue to challenge **the treaty rights of Mi'kmaw fisheries**, who rely on fishing rights to sustain traditional food practices (MacDonald 2020; Decembrini 2020).
- **New Brunswick:** Premier Blaine Higgs has explicitly told the press that he would pursue fracking projects regardless of whether First Nations communities give consent.
- **Ring of Fire:** The provincial government has granted thousands of mining claims in this area of northern Ontario with the free, prior, and informed consent of four First Nations (APTN 2023).
- **Peace River Valley:** West Moberly First Nation was **coerced** into agreeing to a settlement that would allow for the construction of the Site C Dam, **which flooded farming lands and cut off access to hunting grounds** (Gilchrist 2022).

Summary:

By restricting their access to land, excluding them from the policy process, price gouging food, and criminalizing them for defending the land, corporate colonialism actively threatens Indigenous self-determination. In order to uphold Indigenous food sovereignty, Indigenous peoples must have the power and right to uphold their connections to their unceded lands.

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Social Bias of Indigenous peoples and the affect on housing

Jorja Trottier

Issue: How does **racial profiling, discrimination, and social bias** lead to issues of unemployment and lack of housing for Indigenous peoples?

Background:

Because of the social bias Indigenous peoples face, it becomes difficult to **secure housing and employment**. This is fueled by stereotypes, misinformation, and racism.

- People are still influenced by **colonial stereotypes** of Indigenous peoples
 - Stigma around single mothers, living on a reserve, or being on government assistance
- Lack of or inaccurate **education** about the history of colonialism and the history of Indigenous peoples
- Reserves have **lower access to education**; this becomes a challenge in the work force

Taking an **intersectional** approach, it is found that two-spirit and gender diverse individuals face extra layers of this discrimination, based on their intersecting identities.

- Gender diverse and Two-Spirit individuals are at a higher rate of experiencing **hidden homelessness**
- These youth face having no home based on the discrimination that was given to them by their care givers
- Barriers to **access documents** accurately stating one's gender, creating challenges around housing and employment

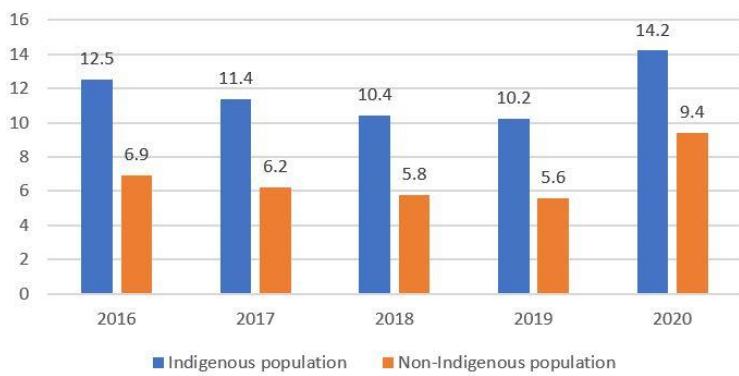
Summary:

Indigenous peoples are experiencing discrimination and social bias in the workplace and in their housing. This is because of the effects of colonialism, the stereotypes and history it created.

Current Update:

- A survey in 2021 found that **60%** of Indigenous peoples feel **psychologically unsafe** in the workplace
- 30% of First Nation individuals who live off-reserve, report "serious problems" around their housing
- In 2019, it was found 45% of First Nations individuals experience **discrimination in the workplace**
- 7 in 10 LGB Indigenous peoples experience discrimination in the workplace

Figure 1: Unemployment rate, 15 y/o and over



Unifor, 2021

"I didn't have the same privilege as non-Indigenous people, and I was aware of it."

- Krystal Abotossaway, CTV

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THE HOUSING INEQUALITIES OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Jorja Trottier

A BRIEF HISTORY...

The Indian Act:

- Displaced many Indigenous communities
- The millennium and sixties scoop is still separating families
- Creation of First Nation Reserves
 - Reserves often have, limited housing and poor land quality



Can You Identify This Picture?

Photo retrieved from *Micmac News*, 1966,
<https://beaton.cbu.ca/atom/newspapers/micmacnews/MicmacNews-1966-09.pdf>

CAUSES AND SYMPTOMS...

- Shortage of Housing Units
 - 17.1% of Indigenous Peoples live in an overcrowded home
- Unsafe Living Conditions
 - Housing is often in need of repair (mold, broken windows, poor infrastructure)
 - In 2022, 54% of Aboriginal Women reported some form of familial violence
- Climate Change
 - Many Indigenous communities are vulnerable to natural disaster



*Photo retrieved from Toronto Star, Kashechewan community after flood, 2019,
<https://projects.thestar.com/climate-change-canada/ontario-eco-anxiety/>*

YOUTH...

- Housing shortage leads to youth living in multigenerational households
- In 2021, 53.8% of foster children in Canada were Indigenous
 - Emergency shelters for youth are not well equipped, leading to youth without housing
 - Educational establishments are not accessible, leading to lack of education and unemployment

"The challenge that we're seeing is the ripple effect for these demographics. Youth transitioning out of care are highly over-represented on the streets of Victoria in the homeless population."

-Ron Rice, Executive director of the Victoria Native Friendship Centre, 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/victoria-indigenous-youth-housing-1.6848473>

ELDERS AND INDIGIQUEER PEOPLES...

- Lack of available healthcare
- Housing shortage
 - Contributes to multigenerational households
- Elders most vulnerable to emergencies
- Discrimination
 - Lack of knowledge
 - Parents not accepting youths' identities
- Lack of inclusive spaces
- Many spaces not made for people who are Indigiqueer



Artist: Kayla Bellerose, Mural of influential Two-Spirit and Indigiqueer people in local community (Photo by CBC, 2022, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/two-spirit-indigiqueer-mural-calgary-1.6558187>)

POLICY OPTIONS FROM INDIGENOUS PEOPLES...

The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls' Suggestions:

- Ensure the right to health and wellness of Indigenous Peoples
- Adequate, stable, equitable, and ongoing funding for health and wellness services
- Ensure that Indigenous Peoples have access to safe housing, clean drinking water, and adequate food
- The support of Indigenous-led shelters, safe spaces, transition homes, second stage housing, and services



*Photo Credit: Nadya Kwandibens, photo of Rinelle Harper, MMIWG, 2019,
https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Calls_for_Justice.pdf*

INDIGENOUS FRIENDSHIP CENTRES...

Friendship Centres offers resources such as:

- Health
 - Mental Health, Disability, Illness
- Support
 - Childcare, Housing, Anti-Violence
- Shelter
 - Food Security, Transportation, Justice, Finances



Photo retrieved from National Association of Friendship Centres, map of every friendship centre in Canada, 2024, <https://nafc.ca/friendship-centres/find-a-friendship-centre>

WOMEN'S TRANSITION SHELTERS...

Indigenous women are 3.5 times more likely to experience spousal violence than non-Indigenous women

Supports offered at Transition Shelters:

- Safe shelter, necessities, counselling, accompaniment to court and legal appointments, childcare

"Woman is the centre of the wheel of life. She is the heartbeat of the people. She is not just in the home, but she is the community, she is the Nation."

-Art Solomon, "The Women's Part" 2017

CONCLUSION...

Due to:

- Colonization and displacement
- Lack of education and knowledge surrounding Indigenous communities
- Discrimination and social bias
- Little resources given

Indigenous Peoples and their communities have been facing a housing crisis for decades.

"We don't want anything more than any other Canadian wants. We want to have good water, a good home, a safe home."

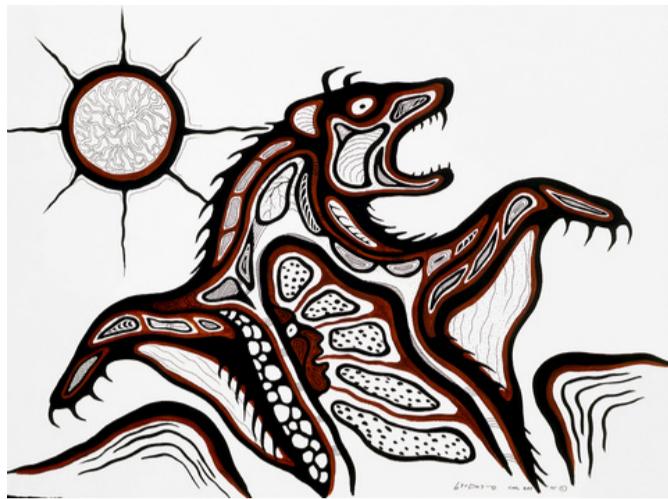
-Cindy Woodhouse, The Canadian Press, 2023

<https://halifax.citynews.ca/2023/08/19/federal-underfunding-indigenous-housing-leads-to-years-long-wait-lists-frustration/>

Understanding Wendigo Economy: Pillars of Indigenous Food Sovereignty

What is Indigenous Food Sovereignty?

Sovereignty, not security. Food sovereignty rejects that the current economic systems (Wendigo) are suitable in meeting the nutritional needs of Indigenous people, but they neglect the foundations of Indigenous food systems. Indigenous food sovereignty has its own four pillars



“Bang-Wa-Jusk the Man-Eater of the Underworld” - Carl Ray 1975



“Conflict Between Good and Evil” - Carl Ray 1975

2

Participation

Education, with an emphasis on teaching the youth and connecting to elders and knowledge keepers, participation keeps a culture alive and lights resistant against invasive colonial indoctrination.

1

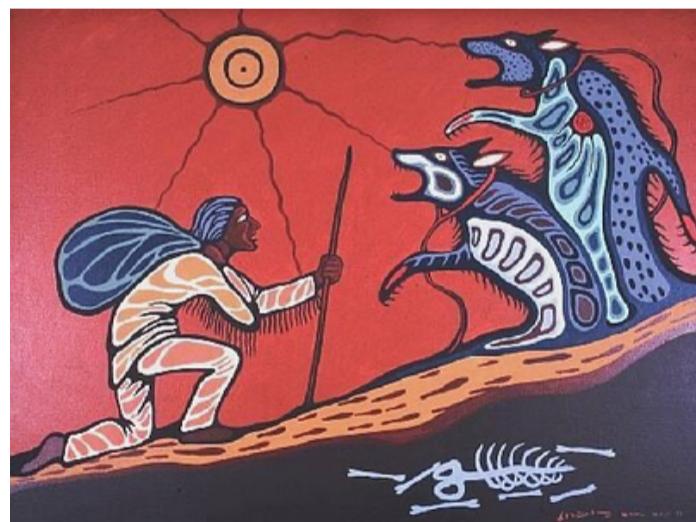
Mekiwit: Sacred Gift of Food

A guiding principle.

Food is a gift given to humanity from the ‘Creator/Great Spirit’, fuels understanding between our responsibilities and relationships to the land.



“Artist and Friend” - Carl Ray 1975

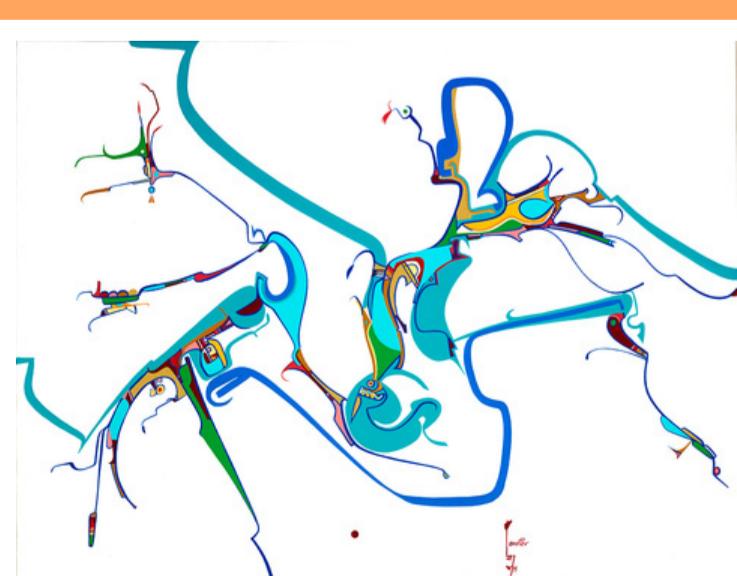


“Man Trying to Reach Heaven” - Carl Ray 1975

3

Nehiyaw-askiy: Self-determination

Independence and sovereignty of all Indigenous nations is necessary for the defense of their land and food systems, without facing persecution. Indigenous peoples are entitled to health, safety, and the vitality needed for continued health of their communities.



“The Bureaucratic Supremist” - Alex Janvier

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Policy

Indigenous policy (governmental and corporate) in Food Sovereignty are enacted to uphold and protect Indigenous communities ability, right, and relationship to their traditional lands.