

INDIGENOUS

MMIWG INDIGENOUS WOMEN

The Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG)⁶⁴ Commission reveals the intense destructiveness not only on Indigenous women but also on Indigenous people and their culture. We must remain vigilant regarding issues of violence against women and how these are particularly focussed regarding Indigenous women.

Ending violence against Indigenous women is a major concern. Indigenous women and girls are over represented among women who live in poverty and those women who are sexually exploited and trafficked. The situation of the disproportionately high number of Indigenous women incarcerated in the criminal justice system today is of momentous concern. The high level of violations to Indigenous women's basic human rights must be of concern to any new government in Ontario.⁶⁵

In terms of Restorative Justice, the relationship with Indigenous people is of particular concern, because the inmate population in our prison system continues to be disproportionately high. The Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) Commission reveals intense destructiveness of person and culture of Indigenous People.

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

The deliberations and recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) has prompted a national reflection on how we must build strong connections with Indigenous peoples in Canada and understanding how and where our common experiences intersect.

There are more than 300,000 Indigenous Ontarians. Many non-Indigenous Canadians generally have very little contact with Indigenous peoples.⁶⁶ For those who had, it was largely about missing and murdered Indigenous women (34%). While Canadians are supportive of a better relationship, more needs to be done to develop mutually respectful and beneficial relationship.⁶⁷

In terms of social services and income security reform, there is still much to do and the province's commitments to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples through the Journey Together framework must continue if we are to rebuild relationships with Indigenous peoples.⁶⁸ The income security system will have to address and guard against systemic and institutional racism and recognize the profound impact of colonialism, residential schools and intergenerational trauma.

First Nations should have the opportunity to develop and control their own social service programs. Recognize First Nations' authority to create and implement their own model of Income Assistance. They should also have the option to adopt provisions and develop models that are more fitting and applicable to Indigenous culture.

It would include areas such as broadening program outcomes to include community engagement and social inclusion, as well as supporting individuals to increase their employability. First Nations social service programs should have recognition and support for their ability to provide Income

assistance to singles, couples and families; employment and job-skills training; youth-specific initiatives; mental health and addictions referrals and early interventions; and, community-based initiatives specific to language, culture, tradition and the community's economic and educational context.

In addition, there needs to be adequate funding for First Nations to create an environment within which income security needs are better met. It will clearly bring about a positive response to the local economic and geographic circumstances of First Nations communities. It will also help ensure that Indigenous people get the help they need to maintain an adequate standard of living and are lifted out of poverty.⁶⁹

64 'Interim Report,' Our Women and Girls are Sacred, National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. 65 'Indigenous Women in Solidary Confinement: Policy Background,' Native Women's Association of Canada. Ottawa, August 2017. 66 Ontario Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation. 67 The church coalition, KAIROS, has helped raise awareness of Indigenous concerns through the interactive Blanket Exercise which has been done successfully across Canada. They have called on federal, provincial, and territorial governments to make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, as well as the historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for Kindergarten to Grade Twelve students, based on the Truth and Reconciliation's Call to Action 62.1. Many Catholic District School Boards are involved in incorporating education and educational tools for students in this regard. The Toronto Catholic District School Board, for example, has an Indigenous Education and Arts Departments that had an Indigenous Poster Competition among schools to create a poster that is inspired by the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit and the Seven Grandfather Teachings, demonstrating their mutual connections and unique understandings to recognize and celebrate the many achievements and contributions of Indigenous Peoples to Canada; an occasion to acknowledge and enjoy the narratives and wisdom of First Nation, Métis and Inuit Peoples and their Communities. 68 The Journey Together: Ontario's Commitment to Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples. Ontario's commitment toward working with Indigenous partners to address the legacy of residential schools, close gaps and remove barriers, support Indigenous culture, and reconcile relationships with Indigenous peoples. 69 'Self-Governance and Respect for First Nations Jurisdiction,' and 'Adequate Funding for First Nations,' Executive Summary, Income Security: A Roadmap for Change, October 2017, pp. 18-23