



Congress of Aboriginal Peoples

Nearly 80% of Indigenous peoples live off-reserve in Canada today,¹ and experience widespread discrimination. Off reserve status and non-status Indians, Métis and Southern Inuit peoples are amongst the most socially and economically disadvantaged groups in Canadian society,² an unfortunate reality deeply rooted in colonialism and its impacts. There are severe and lasting damages to Indigenous peoples who are not recognized or registered. They experience poorer health, higher rates of poverty and violence, and are overrepresented in the Canadian justice and correctional system.³ Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people are the most at risk of violence in urban centers: of known cases 70% of women and girls disappeared in urban areas and 60% were found murdered in an urban area.⁴



The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP) was first founded in 1971 as the Native Council of Canada. Originally established to represent the interests of Métis and non-status Indians, in 1993, the organization was reorganized and renamed as the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples. CAP arose as a representative for the “forgotten people” in response to the structural and systemic exclusion of Indigenous peoples in federal policy. Our constituency spans coast to coast with diverse Indigenous identities. CAP works collectively with its ten Provincial Territorial Organizations (PTOs) across Canada⁵ to promote and advance the common interests, collective and individual rights, and needs of its constituents. CAP’s mandate is to improve the socio-economic conditions of off-reserve status and non-status Indians, Southern Inuit, and Métis living in urban, rural and remote areas.

In 2020 the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples held a summit and regional meetings in each PTO, bringing together representation from across Canada to review the Calls for Justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and identify constituent priorities. CAP is committed to all 231 Calls for Justice through action and policy change. The remainder of this CAP MMIWG National Action Plan Interim Report highlights the way forward toward improving outcomes for Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. As eloquently stated by one of CAP’s constituents, “*our children are looking to us to bridge the divides, look past our differences, master our fears and find a common humanity*”.

Priorities

The six universal themes that underlie the CAP MMIWG National Action Plan:

- ★ **Recognition of human rights, Indigenous rights and inclusion:** CAP agrees with the Final Report of the NIMMIWG that human and Indigenous rights are complementary and grounded in the lived realities of those who experience injustice and must be both protected and upheld through new relationships.
- ★ **Mobility of rights:** Freedom of movement is an inherent Indigenous right. However, the legacy of the colonial Indian Act system is still being experienced. Indigenous peoples have the right to access funding, services, and programming regardless of Status or residency.
- ★ **Access:** For Indigenous peoples, identity, mobility of rights and access are closely associated. Of primary concern are barriers to accessing programming in urban, rural, and northern remote settings that block the way to safety and security faced by some of the most vulnerable Indigenous populations.
- ★ **Inter-governmental coordination:** Clarification and resolution of historical and jurisdictional conflicts between governments in service delivery and responsibilities is essential for the health, wellness, and safety of Indigenous women and girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.
- ★ **Accountability:** Rebuilding trust is critical in envisioning a country wherein Indigenous women and girls can expect to live in safety and their human and Indigenous rights to be respected. CAP supports the Indigenous-informed oversight and accountability measures highlighted in the Final Report of the NIMMIWG.
- ★ **School and public education:** Canadian institutions play a huge role in the success of the NIMMIWG through the creation of opportunities for the Canadian public to develop their knowledge through the creation of a national MMIWG database, centers of study, public education, training and professional development.

The focal point of the CAP MMIWG National Action Plan is the safety and wellbeing of Indigenous women's, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. It highlights the need to ensure that the human and Indigenous rights of the urban and rural Indigenous populations are respected, regardless of status or residency. It embraces respectful, inclusive, and decolonized approaches challenging discriminatory colonial policies and practices of exclusion and inequity. It stresses that in order to guarantee a future where Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people feel safe it is important to ensure that the unique issues faced by urban and rural women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people are part of each step.

The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples asserts that a positive cultural identity provides Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people with a sense of belonging, support, purpose, and self-worth. The CAP MMIWG National Action Plan embraces the concept of substantive equality to respond to the specific needs of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people and the complex and unique diversity of Indigenous identities. It replaces exclusion, based on colonial constructed identities and discrimination, with inclusive and all-encompassing actions that benefit all women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people who identify as Indigenous.

The CAP MMIWG National Action Plan identifies remedies to the systemic issues that continue to violate the freedom of Indigenous women's, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people to live where they choose and deny their right to access the services designed to keep them safe. It recognizes the role of partnership and intergovernmental coordination at all levels of government including Indigenous organizations and communities as a key pathway to address the historical issues that have had a long-standing impact on the safety and wellbeing of Indigenous women's, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. Correspondingly, it clarifies those issues, jurisdictional and otherwise, that have resulted in barriers to adequate services and supports for Indigenous women and girls along status and residence lines. It seeks to rebuild trust and advocates for extensive oversight and accountability measures during the implementation phase. The success of the National Inquiry Calls for Justice requires the understanding and action of all Canadians, service providers, governments, and educational institutions.

Finally, the CAP MMIWG National Action Plan provides a path for collecting accurate, inclusive, far-reaching and impactful data that respects the right of CAP constituents to be counted.

Closing Statement

This interim report is presented in memory of the status and non-status Indians, Métis and Southern Inuit women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people in urban, rural, and remote who have gone missing and murdered. **The full report of the 2020 CAP Summit can be found at:**

 <http://www.abo-peoples.org/en/mmiwg/>

Membership of National Action Plan Sub working Group of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples

Chair: President & Chief Lisa Cooper, Native Council of Prince Edward Island

President Charlene Lavallee, Association of Métis, Non & Status Indians Saskatchewan

Chief and President Lorraine Augustine, Native Council of Nova Scotia

Elizabeth Blaney, MMIWG Special Advisor, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples

Richard Cooper, CAP National Youth Representative

Jessica Dawson, Executive Manager and Communications, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples

Endnotes

- 1 See Statistics Canada, "Aboriginal peoples in Canada: Key results from the 2016 Census", (Published in *The Daily*. Catalogue No 11-001-X, 2017) Online: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/171025/dq171025a-eng.htm>.
- 2 See *Daniels v Canada* (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development), 2014 FCA 101 at para 70, 371 DLR (4th) 725 [Daniels FCA].
- 3 Canada, "A Backgrounder on Poverty in Canada" (October 2016) at p 9-14. <online: <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/poverty-reduction/backgrounder.html>>; Canada, Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division, *Aboriginal Children's Survey, 2006: Supporting Data Tables* (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2006) at 137 <online: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-634-x/89-634-x2008005-eng.pdf>>.
- 4 Native Women's Association of Canada. *Fact Sheet: Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women and Girls* at https://www.nwac.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Fact_Sheet_Missing_and_Murdered_Aboriginal_Women_and_Girls.pdf.
- 5 CAP's provincial and territorial affiliate organizations include: NunatuKavut Community Council, Native Council of Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick Aboriginal Peoples Council, Alliance Autochtone du Quebec, Native Council of Nova Scotia, Ontario Coalition of Indigenous People, Association of Métis, Non and Status Indians Saskatchewan, Indigenous Peoples Alliance of Manitoba, Aboriginal Congress of Alberta Association, North West Indigenous Council.