

Honouring the children ^[1]

Author: First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada & KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives

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AVAILABILITY

[Executive summary](#) ^[2]

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Excerpts from the executive summary:

A poignant example of failure to uphold the honour of the Crown is the state of schools on reserves. The dream of safe and comfy schools and equitable education for Indigenous children remains largely unrealized in Canada. Many schools are condemned, others lack running water and heat, or are in want of basic supplies. Less than half of First Nations schools are in good condition, and Government effort to build new schools is declining. Also, many reserves do not have high schools, which results in a twofold problem - children either end their formal education at Grade 8 or are compelled to move to cities far from home, which severs ties to their families, communities, and cultures.

First Nations child welfare is seriously underfunded. Some studies indicate that the federal government underfunds child welfare by 22% compared to what other children receive. The absence of basic parity suggests to some that Canada is discriminating based on race and national ethnic origin by failing to provide First Nations children with equitable and culturally based services. Formal challenges to these inequities are often slow and marked by procedural difficulties and lack of governmental attention to compiling adequate information. This is compounded by the tragedies of missing and murdered Aboriginal women in Canada. Within a single generation, nearly 600 Aboriginal women have gone missing or have been murdered. Of documented cases, 100 were girls under the age of 18 and more than 440 children are known to have suffered the loss of their mother. Much more information on the way that the tragic loss of these women may be causing children to enter state care is needed

Compromised health care and land rights also adversely affect Indigenous children's lives in Canada. They lose out compared to other children with respect to even the most basic health services and continue to be denied care because they are caught in the middle of jurisdictional disputes between provincial and federal governments. Even safe drinking water and decent housing are in shocking demand on reserves. More than 1 out of 10 First Nations communities have to boil their water and there is a skyrocketing need for on reserve housing in the last decade. While Canada does acknowledge the link between land rights and the wellbeing of Indigenous children, its policies and practices continue to be an obstacle towards the conclusion of land rights and self-government agreements. Notwithstanding clear recommendations from a number of UN treaty bodies, including the Human Rights Committee, Canada has failed to establish meaningful alternatives to its "extinguishment" policy (i.e., the requirement that Indigenous people relinquish their rights or title to significant shares of their traditional lands as a condition of settlement).

The threats to the human rights and flourishing of Indigenous peoples in Canada must not be understated. Failure to uphold both the honour of the Crown and the best interest of the child must end. With this in mind, "Honouring the Child" offers a series of recommendations to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child for consideration on the occasion of Canada's periodic review.

These include the recommendations that:

- Canada act immediately on the recommendations put forward by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, in particular those relevant to Indigenous children, and that the Committee engage a special study on Canada's implementation of the UNCRC with respect to the rights of Indigenous children.
- Canada work in collaboration with Indigenous peoples in Canada on the full and effective implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, in particular those articles relevant to Indigenous children.
- Canada work with Indigenous peoples to allocate and structure sufficient financial, material and human resources to ensure the safety, full enjoyment of education, and cultural and linguistic rights of Indigenous children, as well as devising and implementing a comprehensive strategy and action plan to ensure that Indigenous housing is improved to a decent and healthy standard.
- Canada in full partnership with Indigenous peoples, act immediately to ensure that government jurisdictional disputes do not impede or delay Indigenous children from receiving government services available to other children.
- Canada act immediately to establish, in collaboration with Indigenous peoples, a national, independent mechanism empowered to implement reforms, and available to receive, investigate and respond to reports of individual and systemic child rights violation.
- Canada base future governance and land rights discussions on the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, which includes the

recognition that Aboriginal peoples are nations vested with the right of self-determination, and that federal, provincial, and territorial governments, through negotiations, provide Aboriginal nations with lands that are sufficient in size and quality to foster Aboriginal economic self-reliance and cultural and political autonomy.

- Canada ensures its domestic laws, government policies and practices are fully consistent with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and implements immediate and effective measures to ensure indigenous children, young people and families are aware of their rights under the Convention.

Region: Canada ^[4]

Tags: aboriginal ^[5]

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