

**Submission to
The Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs
House of Commons
Parliament of Canada**

Study on the Sex Trafficking of Indigenous Peoples

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**The Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples
The Anglican Church of Canada**

Background

Although instances of sex trafficking and exploitation impact communities across Canada, studies have demonstrated that Indigenous Peoples, particularly Indigenous women and girls, Indigenous boys and young men, and Indigenous 2SLGBTQ+ persons are made especially vulnerable to being victimized by these crimes.¹ The many systemic barriers and abuses stemming from colonization experienced daily by Indigenous Peoples in Canada compound this vulnerability. Racism, poverty, the intergenerational trauma of Residential Schools, inadequate housing, lack of services and opportunities, and overrepresentation of Indigenous Peoples in child welfare systems and incarcerated populations are all significant contributors to the exploitation of Indigenous Peoples in these lands.

These abuses have resulted in many Indigenous Peoples being dispossessed of their lands, displaced from their territories, disconnected from their spiritual and cultural traditions, and left economically and culturally marginalized in comparison to other populations in Canada. The resulting exclusion, uncertainty, and lack of options increases the vulnerability of Indigenous Peoples to sexual exploitation and trafficking.² Indigenous Peoples are not simply more vulnerable, they are *made more vulnerable* to these crimes through neglect and indifference at all levels.

The Basis of our Work

Our Christian tradition teaches us to respect the dignity of all persons, to stand with the vulnerable, and to free those in bondage. There have been times when, as a church, we have failed to live up to these teachings, particularly in the history of our relationship with Indigenous Peoples. We have offered apologies for our role in the Indian Residential School System³, and for our role in suppressing spiritual practices and traditions.⁴ We continue to journey towards reconciliation with Indigenous Anglicans and Indigenous Peoples across these lands.

Anglican ministries across Canada provide vital services, support and spiritual care to many marginalized and vulnerable members of our communities, including distinct ministries with Indigenous communities. From drop-in programs to suicide prevention to outreach and support with those involved in sex work, Anglicans are working to address root causes of exploitation

¹Native Women's Association of Canada/L'Association des Femmes Autochtones du Canada, 2014, *Boyfriend of Not – Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking of Aboriginal Women and Girls in Canada*, p. 5 https://www.nwac.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/2014_NWAC_Boyfriend_or_Not_Report.pdf

² National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019, *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*, Vol. 1a, p. 619. https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Final_Report_Vol_1a-1.pdf

³The Most Rev. Michael Peers, 1993, "The Apology" <https://www.anglican.ca/tr/apology/english/>

⁴ The Most Rev. Fred Hiltz, 2019, "An Apology for Spiritual Harm" <https://www.anglican.ca/news/an-apology-for-spiritual-harm/30024511/>

and uphold the inherent dignity of all persons. In 2019 the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada passed a resolution condemning human trafficking and modern slavery and calling the church to take action with all levels of government to fight this scourge.⁵

Recommendations

We have been heartened by the updates to the National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking released by the Government of Canada in 2019, in particular the commitment to a “whole-of-government” approach, however the problem of trafficking of Indigenous Peoples for sexual exploitation does not exist solely at the level of federal responsibility. We encourage, instead, a “whole-of-society” approach which recognizes the areas of overlapping jurisdiction, shared responsibility, and moral accountability.

In the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, *Reclaiming Power and Place*, the Commissioners write that “the lack of interjurisdictional cooperation, practically speaking, results in the denial of basic human and Indigenous rights as related to culture, health, security, and justice.”⁶ With this in mind, we offer the following recommendations, not as an exhaustive list, but as key areas that may begin to address these intersectional issues and allow for greater flourishing of Indigenous Peoples in these lands:

1. Listen to the lived experiences of Indigenous Peoples involved in sex trafficking and exploitation.
2. Improve income security for Indigenous Peoples by increasing investment in income support programs and developing specific employment training and placement programs for Indigenous Peoples, particularly Indigenous youth.
3. Increase Indigenous leadership in key agencies and services that most directly impact the lives and experiences of Indigenous Peoples living in Canada through a program of focused outreach and engagement. This includes government ministries, child welfare agencies, health care, policing and corrections, legal services and the judiciary.
4. Fund Indigenous-led, culturally appropriate programming and initiatives to address the issue of trafficking for sexual exploitation in local contexts, as well as programs focused on healing and cultural and linguistic renewal.
5. Develop a comprehensive national strategy to address systemic racism, particularly anti-Indigenous racism, especially in the sectors listed in recommendation #1, in order to better serve all Indigenous Peoples and particularly those vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation.

⁵ Resolution A-204 – Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery, General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada, 2019 <https://gs2019.anglican.ca/cc/resolutions/a204/>

⁶ National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019, *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*, Vol. 1a, p. 571 https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Final_Report_Vol_1a-1.pdf

6. Involve the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers Responsible for Social Services Forum in a comprehensive reformation of the child welfare systems of every jurisdiction in Canada to address the overrepresentation of Indigenous Peoples in these systems and to promote healing for those who have experienced trauma through their involvement in these systems.
7. Adopt Bill C-15: “An Act Concerning the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples”, as a legislative framework for the implementation of the Declaration in Canadian law and an opportunity to build new relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples living in Canada
8. Implement the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and the Calls for Justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls as important starting points for establishing new ways of working together.
9. Indigenous Peoples need to have control over their own nations, communities, and lives. Every program will fail if this is not also true.

About

The Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples (ACIP) is the self-determining body of Indigenous Peoples in Canada who have chosen to be partners in the Anglican Church of Canada and the Anglican Communion worldwide. ACIP members come from the four directions and include the many First Nations who inhabit this land, the Inuit of the Arctic regions, the Métis and others of mixed heritage.

The Anglican Church of Canada (ACC) serves Canadians from coast to coast to coast through Christian worship and community service. The ACC is comprised of approximately 1700 individual parishes, organized into 30 dioceses, serving Indigenous, urban, suburban and rural communities.