



For Immediate Release

Response to the OCI's Recent Reporting "Proportion of Indigenous Women in Federal Custody Nears 50%"

OTTAWA, Ontario (December 17, 2021) Indigenous women will soon account for 50% of all federally incarcerated women, according to [a statement released today by the Office of the Correctional Investigator \(OCI\)](#). The number of Indigenous women, and Indigenous people of all genders, has continued to rise even as the overall federal prison population is in decline. The OCI reported that since 2012, the overall number of Indigenous people in federal prison has increased by 18.1%, whereas the number of non-Indigenous people in federal prisons has decreased by 28.26% over the same period. This is a crisis and requires immediate action on the part of the Federal Government and all parts of the criminal legal system, including the Correctional Service of Canada.

"The ongoing overincarceration of Indigenous people, and in particular Indigenous women, is part of the colonial and genocidal past and present of the Canadian state," said Emilie Coyle, Executive Director of the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies. "This crisis is perpetuated by socioeconomic marginalization of Indigenous women; systemic discrimination against Indigenous women in the criminal legal system; a pattern of over-policing and under-protecting Indigenous women and girls; and the criminalization of resistance to colonization and genocide".

Not only are Indigenous women over-represented in federal prisons, but the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC)'s Custody Rating Scale fails to identify, reflect or accommodate the needs, capacities, and circumstances of Indigenous women. As a result, first Nations, Inuit, and Métis women are routinely classified as higher security risks than non-Indigenous women in prison and are placed in segregation far more frequently. Indigenous women are also more likely to be denied parole, to have served a longer portion of their sentence in custody once granted parole, and to have their parole revoked for technical reasons.

"The path forward to stopping this crisis must address each of the root causes and put Indigenous self-determination at the centre of all solutions," continued Coyle. CAEFS echoes the calls made by many Indigenous communities and activists. These calls include:

- Utilize section 81 and 84 of the [Corrections and Conditional Release Act](#) to create nation-to-nation agreements with Indigenous communities regarding the placement of Indigenous people serving federal sentences.
- Expand principles from [Gladue](#) and section 718 of the Criminal Code to remedy the overincarceration of Indigenous people to the extent that a remedy is possible through the sentencing process.

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- Fulfill Canadian obligations under the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) which calls on members states to affirm Indigenous Peoples' right "to live in freedom, peace and security as distinct peoples" and freedom against being subjected "to any act of genocide or any other act of violence."
- Recognize Indigenous sovereignty over unceded territories to prevent the ongoing criminalization of Indigenous women activists and land and water defenders.
- Increase funding to Indigenous communities to address socioeconomic marginalization caused by Canadian policies of settler colonialism and genocide, including policies that have left Indigenous communities without adequate housing, food security, and clean drinking water.
- Ensure all Calls to Action issued by the National Inquiry into MMIWG and the TRC are fulfilled.

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For Comment

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