



CHRC concerned by findings into overrepresentation of Indigenous people in prison

November 3, 2023 – Ottawa, Ontario – Canadian Human Rights Commission

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Following the release of the Office of the Correctional Investigator (the OCI) [50th Annual Report](#) and investigation into the overrepresentation of federally sentenced Indigenous individuals, Charlotte-Anne Malischewski, Interim Chief Commissioner of the Canadian Human Rights Commission, issues the following statement:

The Canadian Human Rights Commission shares the Correctional Investigator’s ongoing concerns that not enough is being done to uphold the human rights of Indigenous individuals in federal corrections. We remain particularly concerned by the findings of the [OCI’s investigation](#) into the overrepresentation of federally sentenced Indigenous individuals, and conditions they experience in the prison system.

The Commission receives human rights complaints from Indigenous inmates that point to the widening disparities in outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous persons in prison.

We echo the OCI report’s recommendations to CSC to improve outcomes for Indigenous individuals in the federal prison system, which include:

- Enhancing support for, and expanding the role of, Elders
- Expanding training for staff on Indigenous cultural safety and awareness
- Increasing funding and support for Indigenous community run healing lodges
- Expanding the role of Indigenous communities in establishing ties and support systems with incarcerated individuals from intake through to post-release.

We also echo the Correctional Investigator’s call for CSC to report yearly and publicly on its efforts to reduce Indigenous overrepresentation in federal corrections, including by using measurable performance indicators, results and outcomes.

The Commission is encouraged by the appointment of the CSC’s first Deputy Commissioner for Indigenous Corrections, an initiative long called for by the Correctional Investigator and Indigenous rights advocates. This is only a first step in addressing the many barriers Indigenous individuals face while navigating the federal correctional system.

Now is the time to demonstrate commitment to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples by meaningfully addressing Indigenous overrepresentation in the federal correctional system. The Commission urges the federal government to respond to the Correctional Investigator’s call for the development and implementation of a national Indigenous decarceration strategy.

Every person in Canada, including those in our criminal justice and prison system, has the right to live with dignity and to live free from discrimination.

It is critical that Canada implement the OCI’s recommendations to ensure safe and humane custody and protect the human rights of the most vulnerable members of our society.

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Related links

- [Office of the Correctional Investigator’s 2022-2023 Annual Report](#)
- [Summary of Ten Years since Spirit Matters: Indigenous Issues in Federal Corrections \(Parts I & II\)](#)

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