



New Brunswick Aboriginal Peoples Council

OFFICIAL STATEMENT

The New Brunswick Aboriginal Peoples Council was expecting more from the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

Fredericton, June 5, 2019 – The final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, *Reclaiming Power and Place*, was formally presented on June 3, 2019 in a closing ceremony in Gatineau, Quebec.

The New Brunswick Aboriginal Peoples Council (NBAPC) has been participating in the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls as a party with standing, along with our sister organization the Native Council of Nova Scotia, representing off-reserve Aboriginal people in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. NBAPC's representatives have attended several truth gathering hearings, cross-examined expert witnesses at the institutional hearings, and provided oral and written submissions.

NBAPC provided [46 recommendations](#) to the National Inquiry highlighting the urgent need of governments to correct their practices of erasure of off-reserve and non-status Indigenous people and to consult with all Indigenous people and their representative organizations. We called on the Commissioners of the National Inquiry to recognize that daily impacts of discrimination and marginalization experienced by women and girls who live off-reserve and the refusal of settler institutions to mention them in policy puts Indigenous women and girls at risk of greater violence. We called on all Canadian settler institutions to demonstrate, through sustained and vigorous efforts, that they are dedicated to acknowledging and correcting systemic wrongs committed against Indigenous people, including perpetuating the false idea that Indigenous people only live on-reserve.

The findings from our research, studies and the knowledge we have accumulated over our fifty years, were the foundation for our line of questioning during the hearings, which we believe resonated with the commissioners, as it is reflected in some Calls for Justice. NBAPC calls for immediate action on the following:

- Equitable access to employment, housing, education, safety, and health care regardless of status or location
- Safe housing that is accessible and where people live, not just in reserve communities or busy urban centres
- Permanent funding of health services and access to First Nations and Inuit Health Branch (FNIHB) for all Indigenous women and girls and their families on a continual basis, regardless of status, jurisdictional lines, and geographical location
- Long-term sustainable funding to ensure that programs are developed and administered by Indigenous people and our organizations

- An Action Plan to respond to this Inquiry, ensuring its foundation is grounded in the lives of Indigenous people, and that it be fully inclusive, regardless of status or location

Our contribution was proven valuable and we were successful in our advocacy for off-reserve as demonstrated through the recognition and inclusion of the off-reserve and non-status population throughout the report. However, we are disappointed that the Calls to Justice fail to reflect a full understanding of the unique lived experiences and challenges of our population, which now represents over 80% of Indigenous people in Canada, face in their daily lives.

We are also frustrated to see the language of *distinctions-based* being used in the report. We agree that pan-Indigenous approaches are inherently racist, however, the problem is that the language of *distinctions* has been politicized by the federal government to mean only three national organizations, resulting in the exclusion of many.

Now that Canada has received this report, our expectation is to see action that will better the lives of Indigenous people across our beautiful land and that Canada respects Indigenous peoples by implementing international instruments such as The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) that has been called for in numerous reports, commissions and from grassroots peoples since Canada's promise to do so. We also expect that this includes Canada's true commitment to work with Indigenous organizations such as ours, who have extensive knowledge and experience, to implement many of these Calls to Justice and better the lives of Indigenous people.

NBAPC will continue to move forward in making a positive change through collaborative approaches and grassroots-lead initiative such as our homelessness studies and our project [*Looking Out For Each Other : Assisting Aboriginal families and communities when an Aboriginal woman goes missing.*](#)

Amanda LeBlanc
Interim President & Chief
New Brunswick Aboriginal Peoples Council