

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P. Prime Minister

June 21, 2021

Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Re: Open Letter on the Rights of Indigenous peoples

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

This is a content warning: the following describes genocide against Indigenous peoples. The violence and harm need to be named to be destroyed. You will be uncomfortable when reading this. This is a call to action to settlers to end Canada's ongoing genocide of Indigenous peoples.

The 215 children found murdered in Kamloops is not a surprise: the survivors of the residential school system have been telling us children are there and all across the country.

This is not a "chapter" of our history. This genocide is the main storyline of Canada, and it didn't end with the closure of residential schools, it only changed its name. Residential schools have been rebranded as the child welfare system. In the 60s, while residential schools were still operating, the 60s scoop started (1951-1991), where Indigenous children were removed from their families. Today, over half of children in care under 14 are Indigenous, while representing only 7.7% of Canada's under 14 population. Children are taken away and families endure the intergenerational trauma, pain and injustice of never knowing if they will return. But they do know their children will often endure sexual violence and other abuse while in 'care'. Just weeks ago, a lawyer involved in the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTIAQ+ Inquiry shared that girls as young as nine are being forced to undergo IUD insertion. In a land of unmarked mass graves, we ignore the cries of the missing and murdered, choosing instead to apologize and performatively mourn for a loss that we continue to perpetrate.

Canada has the best PR in the universe. We are praised for our peaceful, friendly natures, our pristine waterways, our high standard of living and our beautiful societal mosaic that welcomes all onto this land. Unless of course, you are Indigenous. There is no clean water for you, just a government that dehumanizes you: sees you not as people, but a problem to ignore, and your cultures are ones that we will flaunt for tourist dollars, but not see as legitimate. We will do a land acknowledgment, and then look away when Algonquins are protecting wildlife in their territory or when Mi'kmaq fisheries are set on fire in the Atlantic. We will displace and arrest peaceful Indigenous protestors and damage and mishandle their sacred medicines and ceremonial objects.

We cannot pretend that we are ready for reconciliation while continuing to abduct children, refuse access to basic human rights, and devastate livelihoods and ecosystems. We first must end the attack, then focus on healing. This calls for nothing less than a complete system overhaul.

This is white people's fault, and the governments of our country that continue to commit atrocities against Indigenous peoples. It is time for governments at all levels, to solve the problems they have created with a willing white majority electorate. We must change how we operate on all levels; policing, child welfare, schooling, taxation, resource extraction, everything. These changes may make us uncomfortable, but nowhere near close to the pain and intergenerational trauma as facing down a seven-generation genocide, that is well into the eighth.

We all rightfully denounce the Holocaust, the Rwandan genocide and South African apartheid (a Canadian export). However, we have our own genocide, our own apartheid, our own horror we refuse to look in the face. From 1870 to 1996, 130 schools stole, abused, sexually violated and killed children, all while trying to 'reform them into civilized people'. We continue this legacy by subjugating Indigenous peoples through poverty, child welfare and cultural robbery. As settlers, we owe a debt. As sisters, we owe our assistance. As mothers we owe our rage. As grandmothers, we owe our wisdom. As women we owe our support. As humans, we owe so much more than sorry. We owe a revolution.

We, the undersigned, thus, call on all government officials, and especially you as Prime Minister, to move beyond reconciliation. Reconciliation can no longer be just a façade and lip service. The time for action is long overdue. We demand all levels of government to:

- To accelerate the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) calls to action.
Take active measures that hold yourselves as governments and decision-makers to account for ongoing genocide and state abandonment.
- Implement litigation that provides support to the needs and rights of Indigenous communities in accordance with Indigenous-led principles and protocols,
- End ongoing belligerent and litigious approach against residential school survivors and this generation of First Nations children by dropping the appeals of Canadian Human Rights Tribunal rulings.

Signatories:

Harmony House
Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women (OCTEVAW)
Interval House of Ottawa
Cornerstone Housing for Women
Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity (CCGSD)
Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime (CRCVC)
Planned Parenthood Ottawa
Shelter Movers Ottawa
Western Ottawa Community Resource Centre
The FAM Network (formerly SafePet Ottawa)
Women's Initiatives for Safer Environments
Masculinity: Under Construction
Aline Vlasceanu
Marie-Louise Boudreau
Charlene Maurice
Toby Brooks
Kaitlyn Buske
Abbygail Noah

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