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Statement from the Canadian Human Rights Commission

on the occasion of the 54th session of the Human Rights Council
on the Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of
Indigenous peoples

September 28, 2023

“As Canada’s national human rights institution, the Canadian Human Rights Commission is pleased to deliver this statement to the 54th session of the Human Rights Council. We welcomed the opportunity to meet with the Special Rapporteur during his visit to Canada and thank him for his excellent report.

We applaud the Special Rapporteur’s broad and inclusive vision of the mandate. In particular, we commend his commitment to ensuring an intersectional perspective throughout his work, and his acknowledgment of the colonial legacy and intergenerational trauma that contribute in a significant way to the challenges faced by Indigenous peoples – First Nation, Métis, and Inuit - today.

As the Special Rapporteur rightly notes, important progress has been made in some areas, in particular the recognition in law and the commitment to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples. However, it is clear that much more remains to be done. The Special Rapporteur has noted the systemic and institutional racism and colonialism that permeate Canadian society. Understanding how these act to perpetuate inequity and discrimination for Indigenous peoples is critical as we seek a way forward towards reconciliation.

The situation of Indigenous peoples in Canada continues to be one of the most pressing human rights issues facing Canada today. The ongoing effects of the residential school system, the Sixties Scoop, and other colonial acts continue to impact in profound ways the lives and wellbeing of Indigenous peoples across Canada.

Indigenous peoples continue to be significantly disadvantaged in terms of education and employment. They face barriers to accessing basic rights such as clean water, food security and housing. Indigenous women, girls and Two Spirit individuals continue to experience staggering levels of violence that all too often are left unaddressed by authorities. Indigenous peoples with disabilities and their families experience unique barriers to accessing supports and services in their communities. Indigenous peoples are also severely overrepresented in both the child welfare system and the criminal justice system. Indigenous communities face threats to their health and wellbeing as a result of climate change, environmental racism, and the dispossession of lands.



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As the Special Rapporteur had noted, the calls to action and justice issued by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls provide a roadmap for meaningful change. Implementation of these Calls must be given priority. We too call for increased support for the implementation of the economic, social and cultural rights of Indigenous peoples. Accessible, affordable, adequate, and safe housing for Indigenous peoples, in particular, must be prioritized.

Finally, we would like to echo the Special Rapporteur in honoring the contributions made by Indigenous groups and individuals in promoting, protecting and advancing human rights. We urge decision makers at all levels of government to follow the lead of the Special Rapporteur and to facilitate the meaningful inclusion of Indigenous peoples, communities, Indigenous-led commissions and advocacy organizations in the development of legislation, policies and programs. The principles of self-determination, autonomy, dignity and self-governance must guide every step moving forward.

We strongly encourage decision makers to work closely with Indigenous peoples – First Nation, Métis, and Inuit - on the prompt implementation of these recommendations. The Canadian Human Rights Commission is happy to offer its support and collaboration in moving forward on these important issues.

Charlotte-Anne Malischewski
Interim Chief Commissioner