



BRITISH COLUMBIA ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

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BCAFN'S REGIONAL CHIEF SPEAKS TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY AND NATIONAL DEFENCE'S STUDY ON SYSTEMIC RACISM IN POLICING IN CANADA TODAY

(Lheidli T'enneh Territory, BC – 23.07.2020) – BC Assembly of First Nations' (BCAFN) Regional Chief Terry Teegee spoke to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Defense's Study on Systemic Racism in Policing in Canada today to advocate for substantive reforms that are urgently required. The history of policing across Canada displays a record of enforced genocidal practices including, forced removal of Indigenous peoples from their territories, stolen children forced into residential schools, and the criminalization of languages, laws and cultures. The systemic racism deeply embedded in Canadian police institutions, including the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), is built upon a foundation of historical agendas, beliefs and attitudes that originated from a central colonial power that continues to this day. Only sweeping institutional changes will begin to redress the structural oppression that continues to exist against Indigenous peoples.

While Indigenous peoples have experienced extreme levels of surveillance and enforcement in many aspects of their lives, there have also been areas of neglect and indifference. Indigenous women have been exposed to systemic bias with police failings involving investigations into sexual and physical violence, disappearances and murder. In some cases, sexual and physical assaults involved the police officers themselves. The final report on the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls released in 2019 provides extensive details.

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) has developed a list of 14 recommendations including:

1. Accelerating federal action on the Calls to Justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls;
2. Working with First Nations on a legislative framework to support First Nations-led policing with the proper financial resources to support self-determining efforts of First Nations policing services;
3. Federal and provincial support for First Nations restorative justice initiatives and respect for the jurisdiction that arises from such initiatives;
4. Immediately establish an independent review of Royal Canadian Mounted Police operational practices involving "wellness checks" which provides recommendations for reforms;
5. Redirecting fiscal resources from militarized policing to much needed, more effective social supports, such as mental health, homeless and social work supports that do not require police presence;
6. The implementation of zero-tolerance policies on the use of excessive force;

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7. A review of the *Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act* including providing more power to a civilian oversight body and to provide provisions that clearly state First Nations jurisdiction in matters of policing;
8. Develop legislation that outlaws white supremacist ideologies while simultaneously increasing the role of the Canadian Human Rights Commission to deal with private matters involving racist hate speech and action;
9. Greater accountability for the protection and respect of the fundamental human rights of First Nations, including the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Right of Indigenous Peoples;
10. Increased use of police body cameras in First Nations communities and access to video records;
11. Enhanced de-escalation and implicit bias training, including cross-cultural training;
12. The recruitment and promotion of First Nations within the Royal Canadian Mounted Police;
13. Change of name from “Canada’s national police force” to “police service”;
14. Create a national First Nations justice strategic framework, action plan, and commitments, led by First Nations with full support and partnership of Canada and the provinces.

With the implementation of these recommendations we will see a transformation of Canadian policing systems and the empowerment of Indigenous communities that will begin to positively change the relationship between Canada and Indigenous peoples.

“Priority areas that will immediately begin a systemic overhaul of policing include, resources and support for First Nations jurisdictions for policing and organizations, with training for police that will support the work of these organizations, and the federal implementation of the *United Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* which will recognize First Nations laws and practices,” stated Regional Chief Terry Teegee.

Regional Chief Terry Teegee holds the AFN Justice portfolio, along with Quebec-Labrador Regional Chief Ghislain Picard.

House of Commons presentation recording at:

<https://parlvu.parl.gc.ca/Harmony/en/PowerBrowser/PowerBrowserV2/20200723/-1/33574?Language=English&Stream=Video>

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For further information, contact:

Annette Schroeter, Communications Officer, cell phone (778)281-1655.

