

Local action on TRC Calls to Action in relation to prison pipeline for Indigenous women

Mennonite Central Committee | <https://mcc.org/>

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About the Problem

In response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Call to Action 30: eliminate the mass incarceration of Indigenous people, our program has conducted research into the systems perpetuating the over-representation of Indigenous women in Canadian prisons (over 50% and rising) through Map the System 2024. The research found that due to colonial practices, systemic racism and intergenerational trauma, many Indigenous women face what can be called a prison pipeline that leads them to the prison as a result, making colonialism an ongoing reality for Indigenous women. These systems are not broken. They are doing what they were designed to do: perpetuating colonial violence on Indigenous women for assimilation and eradication

About the Community Partner

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Ontario's Indigenous Neighbours program has been engaged in the complex, long-term process of listening into action on Indigenous justice on this land for over 30 years. Through decades of learning, relationship building and working for just peace, we have collaboratively built bridges of understanding together with Indigenous and settler partners. Here on this land, MCC Ontario seeks to create a collaborative, community-based process to 'listen into action' on Indigenous justice matters.

Impact on the Organization

Given the largest federal prison for women is in Kitchener (the Grand Valley Institution for Women - GVI), we see an opportunity here to build understanding, foster connections and inform action. Following the research, we have developed an educational experiential workshop, called the Call30 exercise, to make this prison pipeline visible to non-indigenous communities, hoping to mobilize more people to take action for system change locally. The Call30 activity has been introduced to the community locally in Kitchener-Waterloo recently, sparking interest in the actions we can take individually and collectively to transform the systems that are grinding on.

Potential Connections & Data Sources

We are looking for support to research the relationship between one of the systems below and the prison pipeline, local initiatives in Waterloo Region and broader in Ontario, that are working on transforming the specific system, and the gaps that remain for change. This will help inform MCC Ontario's entry points for next steps in terms of advocacy and collaboration for participants following the Call30 activity. The systems pertain to some Calls to Action (CTA) indicating the change needed as identified by Indigenous communities through the TRC. Students can choose one CTA that interests them the most to focus on:



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- **Child Welfare:** Indigenous children account for 7% of the children population in Canada, but over 50% of children in care are Indigenous. Researchers have established a child welfare-to-prison pipeline for Indigenous children. How does child welfare connect to the prison pipeline, and what are the levers of change locally that can contribute to CTA #1: Reduce number of Indigenous children in care?
- **Education:** Indigenous youth face additional challenges to acquiring further education. What are the levers of change locally that can contribute to CTA #7: Reduce education and employment gaps for Indigenous youth?
- **Healthcare:** Indigenous women experience higher diabetes rates, infant mortality and complications, and have a lower life expectancy compared to non-Indigenous women. What are the systemic factors contributing to the health gaps of Indigenous women (eg. Development projects, lack of food sovereignty), and what are the levers of change locally that can contribute to CTA #19: closing the health gaps for Indigenous women?
- **Justice:** Indigenous-led solutions have been identified in the legal sector to address the mass incarceration of Indigenous women, eg. CTA #35 Indigenous healing lodges; #37 Indigenous programming in half-way houses; #42 Indigenous justice systems) What are the barriers implementing these solutions, and what are the levers of change locally that can contribute to these Calls to Action