



Anti-Racism & Métis Women, Girls and Gender-Diverse People





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Introduction

The Métis Nation is one of three distinct groups of Indigenous peoples in Canada. We have our own history, customs, laws, language, culture and traditions. Métis women are vibrant, strong, resilient and resourceful and are the backbone of the Métis Nation. Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak, operating as Women of the Métis Nation, is the national voice of Métis women across the Homeland, which includes the provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario.

Historically, the Métis Nation has struggled for recognition as a distinct Indigenous nation. It is only recently that the federal government has prioritized the recognition of the Métis Nation. In December 2016, the Métis Nation was recognized with the establishment of a permanent bi-lateral mechanism between the Government of Canada and leaders of the Métis Nation. On April 13th 2017, the Métis Nation and the Government of Canada signed an Accord which formalized this agreement. Both the bi-lateral mechanism and Accord bring the Métis Nation one step closer to a Nation-to-Nation governing approach. As Prime Minister Trudeau stated, we are now “partners in Confederation” and for the first time ever, the Métis Nation is working with Canada as a partner rather than as an adversary.¹

However, despite this progress, Métis women, girls and gender-diverse people continue to experience a unique form of racism due to their distinct historical contexts and the ongoing systemic discrimination perpetuated by Canadian governmental policies and practices. Métis women, girls and gender-diverse people experience racism not only because of their Indigeneity but also because of a multitude of other identity factors including, but not limited to, gender identity, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, age, geographic location, level of education, and physical and/or mental ability. These layered experiences of discrimination and racism stem from the historical mistreatment of Indigenous Peoples by the Government of Canada as mentioned earlier in this report.

¹ Métis National Council. "Canada and the Métis Nation." YouTube. October 24, 2018. Accessed June 05, 2019. https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=613&v=Clfzn7WCopA.
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Key Themes

This paper is a response to inform the Government of Canada’s public engagement on racism in Canada through the “Cross-Country Conversation on Anti-Racism”. Métis women, girls and gender-diverse people experience racism in a variety of interconnected ways; it is impossible to address all forms of racism in one document and many of these forms of racism are outside of the scope of this paper. The focus of this paper will be around three key themes: *Employment & Income Support*, *Social Participation*, and *Justice*.

Employment & Income Support

As a result of Métis experiences of the residential school system and racism encountered when accessing services, Métis women often experience distinct gaps in income and income support. There also exist distinct gaps in educational attainment, unemployment rates and median incomes between Métis women and men, and between Métis women and non-Indigenous women for the same reasons. Métis women (32.3% in 2006 and later 18.4% in 2011) are much more likely than non-Indigenous women (11% in 2011) to drop out of high school before completion. Métis men and women drop out for different reasons; men are more likely to leave for work and women are more likely to leave for personal or family-related reasons, such as a lack of childcare services or caring for a dependent family member. Indigenous women also have higher fertility rates when compared to non-Indigenous women in Canada, meaning they are more likely to limit their education or employment opportunities due to limited childcare services and other family needs.

Métis women have higher participation rates (65.9%) and employment rates (59.6%) than non-Indigenous women (61.7% and 57.3%, respectively) in Canada. Métis women (9.6%) have higher unemployment rates than non-Indigenous women (7.2%). The median annual income for Métis women is approximately \$19,289 which is about \$5,500 less than non-Indigenous women and \$3,600 less than Indigenous men. Additionally, employment rates and median annual income of Métis women increase with higher levels of education. Younger Métis women have higher levels of education than older Métis women; therefore, Métis women are demonstrating strength and resilience by closing these attainment gaps in spite of service gaps that still exist.²

Traditionally, Métis people have been excluded from Indigenous childcare programs, which only targeted First Nations on-reserve and northern Inuit communities.³ As mentioned previously, the lack of childcare availability disproportionately impacts Métis women because these women are

² Arriagada, Paula. “First Nations, Métis and Inuit Women.” Statistics Canada. February 23, 2016. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/89-503-x/2015001/article/14313-eng.pdf?st=6NeR5zWM>

³ “MNC Recommendations for ASETS Renewal.” Métis National Council. March 2015. Accessed June 05, 2019. <http://www.metisnation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/MNC-Report4-Recommendations-1.pdf>

more likely to leave school or employment to care for children and family. Recently, Early Learning and Childcare (ELCC) has been identified as one of the priorities of the Métis Nation.⁴ In September 2018, the Government of Canada released the Indigenous Early Learning and Childcare Framework and announced new funding for Métis ELCC. This document was co-developed with the Métis Nation and has a section dedicated to Métis ELCC that identifies the principles, goals, practices and strategies for creating accessible and culturally-relevant ELCC programming for Métis communities and families.⁵ While the Framework and funding announcement is a step in the right direction, longitudinal tracking of each initiative funded is required to ascertain efficacy on how the new approach and funding will impact grass-roots Métis women.

Several initiatives have also been implemented by governments and employers to try to reduce discrimination in the workplace. One common initiative is the introduction of cultural awareness or competency training opportunities, especially in the field of healthcare. The goal of the training is to reduce and ultimately eliminate discrimination against Indigenous peoples by teaching service providers about their own biases and debunking stereotypes about various Indigenous communities. While the goal behind cultural awareness or competency training is admirable, there is very little empirical evidence on the effectiveness of these programs. A multitude of studies conducted in the healthcare field question the effectiveness of cultural competency training.⁶ One study in particular notes that there is limited review of the effectiveness of this type of training, beyond self-reporting mechanisms which can be subject to a variety of biases.⁷ Therefore, it is essential make training initiatives adhere to distinctions-based knowledge of Métis people and to find better ways of evaluating cultural competency training programs to ensure they are effective in reducing discrimination of Métis women, girls and gender-diverse people.

Recommendations related to Employment

1. Employment and Income Support programs must focus on closing the education, employment and wage gaps for Métis women. This can be achieved by continuing to fund and support culturally-relevant education, training and employment programs for Métis women, girls and gender-diverse people and by amending pay equity legislation to apply to private sector employers.

⁴ Métis National Council. "Canada and the Métis Nation." YouTube. October 24, 2018. Accessed June 05, 2019. https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=613&v=Clfzn7WCopA.

⁵ "Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework." Employment and Social Development Canada. September 17, 2018. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/indigenous-early-learning/2018-framework.html>.

⁶ Clifford, Anton, Janya Mccalman, Roxanne Bainbridge, and Komla Tsey. "Interventions to Improve Cultural Competency in Health Care for Indigenous Peoples of Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the USA: A Systematic Review." *International Journal for Quality in Health Care* 27, no. 2 (2015): 89-98.

⁷ Truong, Mandy, Yin Paradies, and Naomi Priest. "Interventions to Improve Cultural Competency in Healthcare: A Systematic Review of Reviews." *BMC Health Services Research* 14, no. 1 (2014).

2. Continued support and funding for Métis ELCC will help to increase the capacity of childcare programs in Métis communities, allowing Métis women to pursue their educational and career goals, closing the education, employment and wage gaps that currently exist.
3. Create evaluation frameworks for cultural awareness or competency training that are reviewed by Métis women, girls and gender-diverse people to ensure that these initiatives are effective in reducing the discrimination that these women face.

Social Participation

Despite Métis people waging an ongoing battle for recognition, the government's historic and continued denial of the Métis Nation as a distinct group of Indigenous peoples has caused immeasurable damage. It is because of this lack of recognition that whole generations of Métis people have been invisible to the world. Indeed, the term “hiding in plain sight” is a fitting description of the Métis reality.

Historically within federal legislation and program delivery, it has been easier to omit Métis identification in development and design, forcing Métis people to instead navigate provincial jurisdictions in attempts to receive incredibly low “project” funding to meet their basic needs. Jurisdictional issues have always been a barrier to the Métis Nation's social participation. The most impactful action the government can take to combat racism against Métis people is to ensure their inherent rights are affirmed and recognized.

Government policies, programs and services must also migrate from a pan-Indigenous approach to a distinction-based approach that fully reflects the unique realities of Métis, First Nations and Inuit women. When a distinctions-based approach and the recognition of Métis rights across all jurisdictional levels are both applied, Métis women will have more positive experiences when navigating these systems, systems which previously saw to their outright exclusion.

With the new permanent bi-lateral mechanisms in place to facilitate a Nation-to-Nation relationship between Canada and the Métis Nation, Métis women will finally have the ability to highlight their own stories on their own terms. They will speak to their experiences and the unique situations of Métis women and girls in Canada. Facilitating the full social participation of Métis women in both Métis and Canadian governance structures in this way will ensure that Métis women have improved outcomes, including reduced experiences of racism.

Sustainable capacity and long-reaching program funding is also required to ensure that proper programs and services exist for Métis women, to ensure there is enough space in these programs for the Métis women who need them and to ensure Métis women's unique perspectives and voices drive any and all considerations that may impact their health.⁸ Métis women's

⁸ “Pathways to Improving Health and Well-being for Indigenous Peoples: How living conditions decide health.” National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health. Accessed on June 05, 2019. <https://www.nccah->

participation in policy design must start from the ground up; they must be included in the planning and implementation phases of policy to ensure their realities are not considered merely as afterthoughts.

At the heart of the Métis Nation are Métis women. Métis women have always been equal partners in the development and life of Métis communities. They were and are fully engaged in the political, social, and economic life of the Métis Nation. Métis women have always held the honoured role as traditional knowledge keepers and have been accorded respect and held in high esteem by the Métis Nation. Colonialist constructs have impacted the traditional roles of Métis women, thereby altering Métis women's roles in family and community.

Recommendations related to Social Participation

1. The inherent rights of Métis people be affirmed and fully recognized.
2. Jurisdictional footballing between federal and provincial governments must end and that Canada proceeds in earnest to ensure on-going Nation to Nation relationship with the Métis Nation.
3. Métis women must be involved in the planning and implementation phases of policy design to ensure that policies are co-developed and reflect a culturally relevant trauma-informed lens is applied.
4. Governance structures, both Métis and Canadian ensure space is made to assure Métis women's full participation.
5. That sustainable capacity and long-reaching program funding be provided to Métis women to ensure full social participation

Justice

For many Métis women, the circumstances leading to their involvement in the criminal justice system is the result of a complex set of collective and individual life circumstances, marked with systemic discrimination, violence, and poverty. This has led to “the current crisis of highly disproportionate rates of Aboriginal women in the Canadian Federal Corrections system.”⁹

According to Mandy Wesley's report, Indigenous peoples “account for 4% of the Canadian population; however, within the federal corrections population, Aboriginal peoples comprise 20% of the total incarcerated offender population.”¹⁰ Between 1998 and 2008, the number of federally incarcerated Indigenous women increased by 131%.¹¹ Conversely, Indigenous women

[ccnsa.ca/495/Pathways to Improving Well-being for Indigenous Peoples How living conditions decide health .nccah?id=102](https://ccnsa.ca/495/Pathways%20to%20Improving%20Well-being%20for%20Indigenous%20Peoples%20How%20living%20conditions%20decide%20health%20nccah?id=102)

⁹ Wesley, Mandy. “Marginalized: The Aboriginal Women's experience in Federal Corrections” Accessed on June 05, 2019. <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/mrgnlzd/mrgnlzd-eng.pdf>

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Mann, Michelle. “Good Intentions, Disappointing Results: A Progress Report on Federal Aboriginal Corrections” Accessed on June 05, 2019.: <http://www.oci-bec.gc.ca/cnt/comm/presentations/presentationsPRAC-RESCFA-eng.aspx>

are also much more likely to be the victims of violent crimes.¹² The overrepresentation of Métis women in the justice system is a direct result of the discrimination these women face.

Discriminatory practices within policing have led to this overrepresentation crisis. One of these police practices is carding which, in its execution, has directly targeted Métis men and women. Carding is a practice where police officers ask for identification and record information on an individual without the individual having committed any offence or crime. In multiple studies it has been proven that this practice targets racialized and marginalized communities disproportionately. For example, in British Columbia, 15% of all carding incidents between 2008 and 2017 targeted Indigenous people, even though Indigenous people only make up 2% of the population in this region.¹³ Even more troubling, carding practices do not actually deter crime and only serve to perpetuate racism against marginalized communities.¹⁴ Additionally, police services in Canada refuse to recognize racial bias as a problem in their practices and policies, and police are not required to record racial data in their reports, making it even more difficult for Indigenous people and advocates to push for change in policing practices.¹⁵

One initiative that is designed to mitigate the systemic racism faced by Indigenous people in the justice system is the use of a Gladue report. This approach to sentencing and bail hearings allows judges to consider sentencing alternatives to incarceration when appropriate.¹⁶ Although this initiative is aimed at reducing the number of incarcerated Indigenous people, the effectiveness of Gladue has been called into question by various research reports. For example, the Research and Statistics division of Justice Canada noted in its report that in British Columbia, “representatives stated that independent reports are prepared rarely because (1) most judges are not familiar with the availability of this type of report; (2) most judges believe that pre-sentence reports will include all the information relevant to Gladue; and (3) funding for this type of report is very limited.”¹⁷ For Gladue to be effective, judges must receive adequate training and Gladue must be fully funded so that all Indigenous people involved in the justice system can be considered.

When Métis women are incarcerated, there is limited access to culturally-relevant programming. It is evident that Métis women are not receiving the supports they need while incarcerated, as the only programming available is pan-Indigenous and preference is given to First Nations women

¹² “Indigenous overrepresentation in the criminal justice system.” Research and Statistics Division of Justice Canada. Accessed on June 05, 2019. <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/jr/jf-pf/2017/docs/jan02.pdf>

¹³ Payne, Jason. "Racial Profiling Cited as Groups Demand Probe into Vancouver Police Carding." Vancouver Sun. June 15, 2018. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://vancouversun.com/news/local-news/racial-profiling-cited-as-groups-demand-probe-into-vancouver-police-carding>

¹⁴ Tulloch, Michael H. “Report of the Independent Street Checks Review.” Accessed on June 05, 2019 <http://www.mcscs.jus.gov.on.ca/sites/default/files/content/mcscs/docs/StreetChecks.pdf>

¹⁵ Ireland, Nicole. "Canadian Police Must Acknowledge Racial Bias to Fix It, Indigenous Advocates Say." CBCnews. September 26, 2016. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/police-racial-bias-aboriginal-canada-1.3761884>

¹⁶ "Gladue and Aboriginal Sentencing." Justice Education Society. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://www.justiceeducation.ca/about-us/research/gladue-and-aboriginal-sentencing>

¹⁷ “Gladue Practices in the Provinces and Territories.” Research and Statistics Division Department of Justice Canada. Accessed June 05, 2019. https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/csj-sjc/ccs-ajc/rr12_11/rr12_11.pdf

over Métis and Inuit women. The 2009-2010 figures from the Aboriginal Initiatives Directorate indicate that no Inuit women were receiving programming and that Métis women were participating in only Indigenous-specific programming. Furthermore, the average wait time for a Métis woman to enter into in Aboriginal specific programming was 264 days from the date of admission, whereas the average wait time for a First Nations woman was 238 days.¹⁸ Even more alarming, Indigenous women are more likely to have a higher security classification, to have force used against them, to be segregated and to be denied parole once inside prison walls.¹⁹ All of the above mentioned factors are part of the discrimination that Métis women face within the justice system.

Recommendations related to Justice

1. Legislation, policies, programs and practices needs to be distinctions based to adequately meet the needs of Métis women, girls and gender-diverse people.
2. Practices that demonstrate racial biases such as carding and segregation must be ended immediately.
3. Adequate funding must be made available to provide culturally-relevant programming to all incarcerated Métis women.

Conclusion

Métis women, girls and gender diverse people continue to experience racism even today and disaggregated data regarding Métis women, girls and gender diverse people is sparse at best, resulting in many gaps in services and programs for them and continued institutionalized racism.

Research and data regarding Métis women, girls and gender diverse people can be used to support evidence-based recommendations to meet the distinct needs and circumstances of Métis women and girls. The Government of Canada must create a standard data collection tool that reflects the unique and intersectional realities of all Canadians, and use this data to develop strategies to address systemic human rights issues such as racism, and to monitor and measure the effectiveness of these strategies. Race and gender-based data analysis can highlight how the intersection of systemic inequality and discriminatory practices faced by Métis women and girls reinforces disadvantage. Deciding to commit to collecting and making available disaggregated data is only one step towards dismantling systemic barriers, but it is an essential one.

Community stakeholders must also sit at the table to ensure that this data is interpreted appropriately; there needs to be more opportunities for Métis women stakeholders to co-create

¹⁸ Wesley, Mandy. “Marginalized: The Aboriginal Women’s experience in Federal Corrections” Accessed on June 05, 2019. <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/mrgnlzd/mrgnlzd-eng.pdf>

¹⁹ Pate, Kim. “Increasing Over-representation of Indigenous Women in Canadian Prisons.” Senate of Canada. Accessed on June 05, 2019. <https://sencanada.ca/en/speeches/speech-by-senator-pate-increasing-over-representation-indigenous-women-canadian-prisons-inquiry-debate-concluded/>

solutions to reduce the systemic barriers that Métis women and girls face.²⁰ Métis women have demonstrated immense strength in the face of overwhelming discrimination. Despite all of the systemic barriers they face, they are determined to continue to work towards cultural revitalization.

Métis women's resilience is based on self-reliance, autonomy and independence. Métis women have their own way of doing things which is one part of how they express their distinct identities as Métis people.²¹ As an organization, Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak demonstrates this resilience; its very name is Métis, or Michif, for the women who own themselves. Métis women's resilience is grounded in cultural values that have persisted despite continued systemic discrimination and racism. These values continue to emerge through the cultural revitalization that Métis women are working towards every day.

Recommendations

LFMO recommends to the Government of Canada:

1. Create a standard data collection tool that reflects the unique and intersectional realities of all Canadians this includes collecting and making available disaggregated data to allow appropriate interpretation by Métis women and work together with Les Femme Michif Otipemisiwak to co-create solutions to address racism and discrimination.
2. Employment and Income Support programs must focus on closing the education, employment and wage gaps for Métis women. This can be achieved by continuing to fund and support culturally-relevant education, training and employment programs for Métis women, girls and gender-diverse people and by amending pay equity legislation to apply to private sector employers.
3. Continued support and funding for Métis ELCC will help to increase the capacity of childcare programs in Métis communities, allowing Métis women to pursue their educational and career goals, closing the education, employment and wage gaps that currently exist.
4. Create an evaluation framework for cultural awareness or competency training that are reviewed by Métis women, girls and gender-diverse people to ensure that these initiatives are effective in reducing the discrimination that these women face.
5. The inherent rights of Métis people be affirmed and fully recognized.
6. Jurisdictional footballing between federal and provincial governments must end and that Canada proceeds in earnest to ensure on-going Nation to Nation relationship with the Métis Nation.

²⁰ Beggin, Miranda. "Race and Data: Identifying Race-based Disparities." Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://www.thirdsectorcap.org/blog/identifying-race-based-disparities/>

²¹ Kirmayer, Laurence J., Stéphane Dandeneau, Elizabeth Marshall, Morgan Kahentonni Phillips, and Karla Jessen Williamson. "Rethinking Resilience from Indigenous Perspectives." *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry* 56, no. 2 (2011): 84-91.

7. Métis women must be involved in the planning and implementation phases of policy design to ensure that policies are co-developed and reflect a culturally relevant trauma-informed lens is applied.
8. Governance structures, both Métis and Canadian ensure space is made to assure Métis women's full participation.
9. That sustainable capacity and long-reaching program funding be provided to Métis women to ensure full social participation.
10. Legislation, policies, programs and practices needs to be distinctions based to adequately meet the needs of Métis women, girls and gender-diverse people.
11. Practices that demonstrate racial biases such as carding and segregation must be ended immediately.
12. Adequate funding must be made available to provide culturally-relevant programming to all incarcerated Métis women.

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