

**Government of the Northwest Territories Action Plan for the  
Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Calls for Justice**

Madam Speaker, at the appropriate time today, I will table Changing the Relationship, the final Action Plan in response to the Calls for Justice on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ People.

At its core, this action plan is about relationships. Our relationships with institutions, governments, people, and history.

The national inquiry examined the causes contributing to the ongoing violence and systematic vulnerabilities that continue to disproportionately affect Indigenous Women, Girls and Two Spirit persons. They found that the thousands of truths shared reinforce the existence of acts of genocide against Indigenous Women, Girls and Two Spirit persons.

Many of those acts are sadly well known in the NWT. I have said it before, Madam Speaker, most NWT residents, and certainly everyone in this room, know someone who has attended a residential or day school, whose grandparent lost a family member during the 50's and 60's tuberculosis outbreak, or whose sibling was taken away during the 60's scoop. We may also know someone whose friend, sister, or mother suffered from violence or was taken away by violence from her family too soon. We continue to see disproportionate higher rates of poor health indicators, lower education attainment and other negative social, health and economic indicators across the NWT's indigenous population compared to the rest of Canadians.

In 2019, the Calls for Justice challenged jurisdictions across Canada to acknowledge that colonialism is not only a discrete event in the past but that it built systems, institutions, practices, and ways of thinking that are still around today. For example, residential schools might be closed, but the deeper rooted notion that Indigenous people are better off to be educated under a Euro-centric designed system is not. The connection between the past and the present day, and how this

past continues to influence governance, policies, and culture; and continues to impact people across Canada. It impacts every one of our relationships: with ourselves, with others, with communities and with government.

Only through understanding this, can we begin to take action so that Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people are granted the same safety and security as their non-Indigenous friends, colleagues, and neighbours.

Changing the Relationship aims to understand and to find ways to change all of these relationships. Guided by engagements with Indigenous governments, community governments, and people with lived experience, this action plan is a culmination of years of work that is intended to dismantle colonialism and racial and gendered discrimination from all levels of government and public institutions.

As the Minister responsible for this action plan, I feel the weight of the challenges ahead but also privileged to be in a position of such tremendous trust and with so much opportunity for change.

The team supporting the work of the national inquiry prepared 233 pages of recommendations collected from 98 different inquiries, inquests and reports across the country looking for answers to the challenges of decolonization and anti-racism. Without fundamentally altering the underlying relationships through which we read and apply these recommendations, the change that they might otherwise achieve remains fleeting.

Therefore, before getting into the individual or department specific actions, we start with a comprehensive approach for changing relationships with government and within government through change leaders throughout the public service.

Our list of action items are then grouped according to the themes presented within the National Report namely, culture and language, health and wellness, human security, and justice. Some are specific, such as expanding the Northern Distance Learning Program; while others are more far

reaching, such as leading a system-wide shift towards a culturally safe and relationship-based health and social services system.

In every case, achieving these action items will not only be changing the systems, pathways, processes, and outcomes for Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people but will also be transforming the way we govern in ways that will benefit every single resident of the NWT.

Madam Speaker, the life of every mother, sister, auntie, daughter, or friend who has died, gone missing, been hurt, or been in any one of many ways silenced, is being heard. Those voices are the voices within the National Inquiry's Final Report and its Calls to Justice. These voices have carried us to a moment where we have an opportunity as a government, as a Legislative Assembly, and within our society to plant seeds of change.

I am planting seeds with this action plan, but I am relying on every colleague in this room, and fellow leaders in every Indigenous government assembly and in every municipal council chamber to plant their seeds. Together, nurtured by a new sense of relationship, these seeds will grow into a strong and healthy forest.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.