



Pacific Association of First Nations Women

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April 30, 2021

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGES TO THE POLICE ACT

The Pacific Association of First Nations Women envisions a matriarchal community where all Indigenous women in BC are safe and respected with a sense of belonging and connection to cultural traditions. To bring our vision into reality, we advocate for systems change, providing culturally safe learning and holistic supports to uplift Indigenous women and strengthen families. This year we will be celebrating our 40th anniversary. We are connected to over 1,500 First Nations, Metis and Inuit women in the Province of BC and are 100% Indigenous woman managed and led.

The Pacific Association supports the recommendations made by Feminist Deliver, UBCIC and BC Civil Liberties for changes to the Police Act.

Furthermore, we request that all employees of the police force undergo mental health screening to ensure that employees are not acting out on their own bias towards Indigenous men, women, elders, and youth. The Police Act must support the need for systemic changes in our system. We must rid the Force of those who carry unconscious bias towards people of Indigenous ancestry. While the force provides some training, it never removes those who are systemically racist. We must screen those bad apples out of the Force.

The Police Act ought to have provisions to ensure that Indigenous people are employed within the Force and at every level of the organization. It was shocking to learn that the Vancouver Police Department had no First Nations, Metis, or Inuit officers in the investigation unit, and/or missing persons unit. They have a surprisingly low number of First Nations, Metis and/or Inuit employees. We must have a certain percentage of Indigenous people employed within each unit and at each level, to affect positive change and create trust with our people.

Investigation units must include First Nations, Metis, and Inuit people on staff to ensure that investigations regarding the Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Men are followed up and receive the attention they require.

There must be Indigenous civilian oversight bodies with jurisdiction to audit police services and investigate police misconduct claims, including incidents of rape and other sexual assaults,

within those services. This is a reality for some of our women. These oversight bodies must report publicly at least annually.

The RCMP and other forces need to be equipped with body cameras when they are interacting with our people, for the protection of our people. This could help ensure the necessary safety of our people, as well as provide evidence of abuses against our people.

The Police Act should also allow for a camera to be installed over the Highway of Tears collecting each license plate that travels through, to help in investigations of those women who end up missing. The Province installs cameras on bridges to catch tolls, it would be best to have a camera to save lives. It would also be good to have more than one ride share station that was well light and has cameras to document those people needing rides and those who pick them up, this would reduce the numbers of MMIWG and help to catch predators.

The Police Act needs to change to align with the Calls for Justice. The Province of BC must work with Indigenous peoples in BC to align the Police Act with the Calls for Justice. Evidence gathered by the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls demonstrates that human rights and the abuse of Indigenous rights committed and condoned by the Canadian state represent genocide against Indigenous women, girls, and other genders. These abuses and violations have resulted in the denial of safety, security, and human dignity. They are the root causes of the violence against Indigenous women, girls, and other genders, all of whom are forced to confront violence daily, while perpetrators act with impunity. Secondly, this effective change includes developing provincial guidelines using the Principles of Change: a Decolonizing Approach. This approach is a way of doing things differently; this includes making space for Indigenous perspectives that are often cast aside, inclusion of families and survivors, Indigenous-led Solutions and Services, Cultural Safety and Trauma-Informed Approach. Thirdly, these provincial guidelines with the Principles of Change challenge the Police Act to be replaced with a new legislative and funding framework, that is consistent with the best international and domestic policing best practices and standards, this framework must be developed in partnerships with Indigenous Peoples.

The complaint process needs to be handled differently. The process is flawed and must include Indigenous people in the review process. We would like to see this process changed to include local First Nations at the table and involved with each of the agencies handling complaints. We recommend that police facing complaints be put on unpaid leave and not remain on active duty while complaints are being reviewed. We also ask that Officers with 3 or more complaints against them be removed from their positions entirely and not relocated to another district.

The Province of BC Police Act must develop an enhanced, holistic, and comprehensive approach for the provision of support to Indigenous victims of crime, families and friends of Indigenous murdered or missing persons. This includes but is not limited to the following measures: Guaranteed access to independent legal services must be provided throughout court processes. As soon as an Indigenous person decides to report to an office, before speaking to the police, they must have guaranteed access to legal counsel at no cost.

We trust that the Police Act will be changed to reflect a more just society and have the utmost respect for the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

I can be reached at 604-872-1849 for clarification on this submission.

In Unity,

Indigenous Women Rise

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Diana Day, Lead Matriarch
Pacific Association of First Nations Women