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Red Women Rising: Indigenous Women Survivors in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (excerpt)

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Available at <http://dewc.ca/resources/redwomenrising>

THIRTY-FIVE KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Full Indigenous jurisdiction:

1. Implementation of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* at all levels of government; assertion of Aboriginal Title over lands; jurisdiction over all areas of law-making; and restoration of collective Indigenous women's rights and governance.

Active Indigenous women's leadership:

2. All levels of Canadian government, national aboriginal organizations, and nonprofit agencies must ensure the active leadership of Indigenous women in the design, implementation, and review of programs and policies that are directed to increase the safety of Indigenous women. Strengthen and support solutions that restore the role of Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit people as Title-holders of their lands, traditional knowledge keepers, sacred life-givers, and matriarchs within extended kinship networks.

Eliminating structural violence against Indigenous women and girls:

3. Increased state enforcement alone cannot eliminate violence against Indigenous women and girls because structural violence is connected to individual acts of male violence. A comprehensive national-level integrated action plan to eliminate violence against Indigenous women and girls must address all the socio-economic factors impacting Indigenous women's, girls', trans and two-spirit's safety including equitable access

and self-determination over land, culture, language, housing, child care, income security, employment, education, and physical, mental, sexual and spiritual health.

Legislative reform to reduce Indigenous women's manufactured vulnerability

Immediate legislative reform including but not limited to:

4. Implement independent civilian oversight of officials responsible for responding to and investigating violence against Indigenous women. Ensure that administrative, disciplinary, or criminal measures are available to hold such officials accountable when officers are found to have failed to act on reports of missing women or to have carried out biased or inadequate investigations of violence against Indigenous women.
5. Remove discrimination from the *Indian Act* by making women and men equal in the ability to pass on status, repair situations where discrimination against women has disadvantaged those claiming status through the mother's line, and remove the two-parent rule for transmitting status and the 6(2) cutoff that withholds status from the children of many women who are unable or unwilling to provide the father's name.
6. End the apprehension of Indigenous children and prohibit the placement of Indigenous children into non-Indigenous foster and adoptive families.
7. Require Gladue factors to be used as mitigating factors only, unless the victim is an Indigenous woman in which case her wishes should take precedence over an offender.
8. End the policing practice of street checks; reduce the number of bylaw infraction tickets issued by police in the DTES; prohibit police from carrying and using all lethal weapons; develop guidelines to facilitate greater use of police discretion not to lay charges especially for minor poverty-related offences; and end the counter-charging and criminalization of Indigenous women who defend themselves or their children.
9. Commit to using non-incarceration and alternative measures especially for minor offenses committed by Indigenous women. Governments must

also provide sufficient and stable funding to Indigenous communities and organizations to provide alternatives to incarceration including community-based rehabilitation, diversion, community courts, and restorative justice methods geared towards Indigenous women.

10. Repeal laws that criminalize or increase harm for Indigenous women in the sex trade.

11. End the criminalization of people who use or possess small amounts of illicit substances.

12. End the criminalization of homelessness by eliminating bylaw infractions and criminal charges for sleeping or tenting in public spaces, and end the displacement of tent cities.

13. Change government definitions of social housing and affordable housing to mean rates that are affordable to people on social assistance, and rents that are income-geared not market-geared.

14. Amend the provincial *Residential Tenancy Act* to cover all housing and to strengthen tenants rights. Amend the provincial *Human Rights Code* and *Residential Tenancy Act* to make it illegal to discriminate on the basis of social condition including health status and drug use.

15. Implement an Indigenous reparations tax on top of property taxes on residential, commercial, and industrial properties, with all revenues going to implementation of an Indigenous poverty reduction plan.

Immediate Services needed in the DTES:

Implementation of comprehensive services in the DTES including but not limited to:

16. At least one multipurpose Indigenous Women's Centre in the DTES that is run by and for Indigenous women with long-term funding and wrap-around supports including healing support, communal kitchen, child care facility, elder accompaniment, artisan training and vending, and 24/7 educational, cultural, recreational, and empowerment-based programming to bring Indigenous women together collectively. This would also serve as a single point of access to connect to integrated services.

17. Fund more 24/7 low-barrier emergency shelters, transition homes, and drop-ins for women with long-term funding and full wrap-around supports. Also fund more Indigenous-centered and community-based, rather than police-based, victim services programs that provide holistic support including connection to land-based healing and guidance from elders.
18. An Indigenous Health and Wellness Centre in the DTES and Indigenous-run health programs that use Indigenous methods to address physical, mental, sexual, emotional, and spiritual harms. Also fund more mobile healthcare vans and community-based clinics, street nurses, and healthcare providers in the DTES.
19. Guarantee access to affordable, healthy, and nutritious foods especially fruits, vegetables, and meats in the DTES. This means more community gardens, food banks, nonprofit grocery stores, and providing discount cards for regular supermarkets.
20. Expand non-policing options for publicly intoxicated people, including civilian-operated 24/7 sobering centres providing appropriate care for Indigenous women.
21. Rapid easy access to Indigenous women's detox-on-demand where there is no time limit; Indigenous-run treatment centres; indoor overdose prevention sites and consumption sites for Indigenous women only; access to safer drug supply; and full spectrum of substitution treatment options.
22. Guarantee a 24/7 Indigenous mental health and addictions counselling program that is low-barrier, drop-in based, available on demand, and includes overnight street-based counselling in the DTES. Also ensure long-term mental health and addiction services, ranging from prevention, early intervention, treatment, crisis care, home visits, and aftercare.
23. Fund an Indigenous legal clinic in the DTES that can support Indigenous women in all criminal and civil legal matters including but not limited to family, criminal, mental health, and poverty law issues.
24. Fund a Bear Clan Patrol in the DTES that is led by Indigenous residents and based on Indigenous reciprocal responsibilities of safety, security, and kinship.

25. Provide a free medical accompaniment program where women are guaranteed rides and an accompaniment advocate for all medical appointments.
26. Provide an annual transport allowance for Indigenous women in the DTES to be able to travel to their home community.
27. Create a diversity of low-barrier, peer-based jobs in the DTES with priority hiring and support for Indigenous women of the community. Ensure that peer workers are paid a living wage, have full benefits, and the right to unionization. Recognize the contribution of volunteers and create appropriate and accredited volunteer programs to transfer skills and enable access to employment.

Guaranteed Public Services:

Guarantee a range of public services including but not limited to:

28. Provide a safe and affordable home for every Indigenous woman on and off reserve. This housing must be with long-term security of tenure, independent of matrimonial or common-law status, and self-contained units of at least 400 square feet with bathrooms and kitchens. Housing must also consider specific needs such as mobility access, space for children and extended families, and ceremonial practices. Highest priority for social housing should be given to Indigenous women fleeing violence and Indigenous mothers at risk of child apprehension.
29. Provide all residential school survivors with a guaranteed livable income for the rest of their lives. Increase federal pensions and provincial income and disability rates to the Market Basket Measure. Eliminate barriers to accessing income and disability assistance by reducing unnecessary eligibility criteria and simplifying the application processes. End clawbacks, increase earnings exemptions, and raise all asset limitations for those on income and disability assistance.
30. Ensure Indigenous mothers are able to maintain an adequate standard of living by raising income assistance and disability rates, ensuring safe and affordable housing, and guaranteeing food and transit allowances. Provide grandparents raising grandchildren, and all kinship care providers, with livable incomes and benefits. Provide income, housing,

food, transit and all additional supports to youth transitioning out of government care until the age of 25 years old.

31. Guarantee a free and culturally appropriate child care system for all Indigenous families, including families awaiting kinship care placements, that accommodates children of all needs and abilities and is independent from child welfare services.

32. Universal public healthcare coverage to include supplements, prescriptions, counselling, dental, optical, mobility devices, adaptive equipment, and alternative treatments like acupuncture.

33. Provide a free transit pass for children ages 0–18 years old, all youth transitioning out of government care till age 25 years old, and for all adults on pensions, income assistance, and disability assistance.

34. Establish free public bus transportation between each town and city located along the entire length of Highway 16 and all other highways, with a number of safe homes and emergency phone booths along the length of all the highways.

35. Provide free tuition for all postsecondary education for all Indigenous women and girls, and eliminate all existing student loans for Indigenous women and girls.