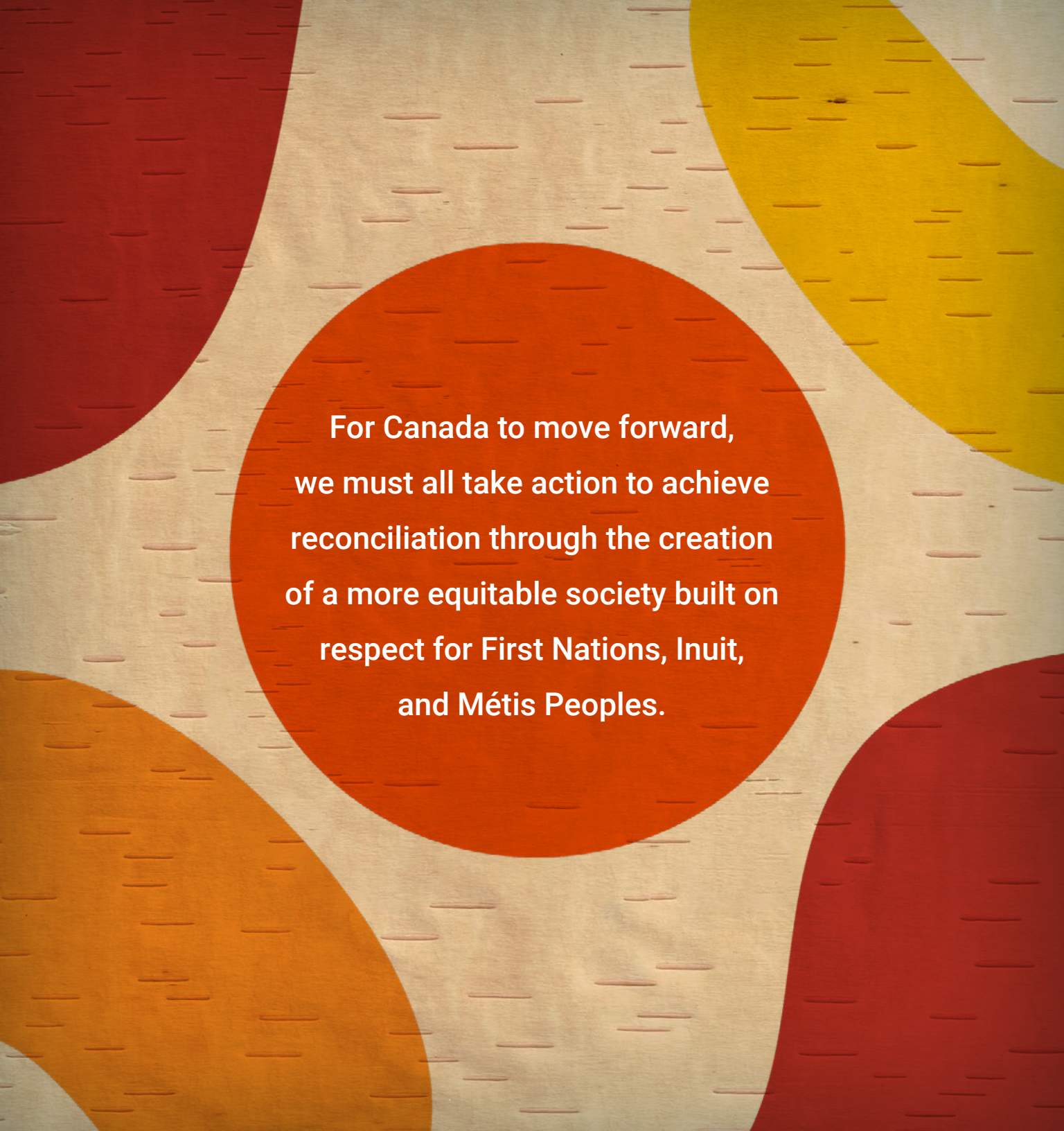




Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan



**For Canada to move forward,
we must all take action to achieve
reconciliation through the creation
of a more equitable society built on
respect for First Nations, Inuit,
and Métis Peoples.**

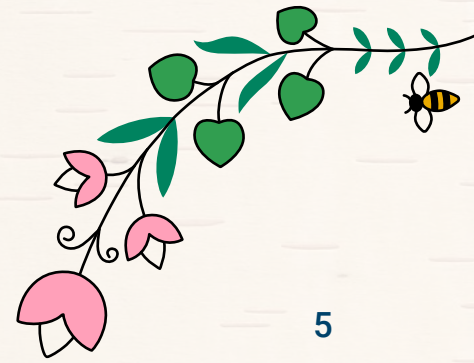


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In Gratitude

The development of this Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan would not have been possible without the contributions of the John Howard Society of Ottawa's staff, Board of Directors, and partners in the community.

In particular, we thank the members of the John Howard Society of Ottawa Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group, all of whom contributed their time and wisdom to the development of this plan:

- Leandra Carino
- Allan Clarke
- Eva Davis
- Frank Leaney
- Tina Matchett
- Joe Morin
- Allan Reesor-McDowell



From left: Frank Leaney, Annie Carruthers, Tina Matchett, Eva Davis, Allan Reesor-McDowell, Allan Clarke (not included: Joe Morin and Leandra Carino)



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Finally, we would like to thank the Ottawa Community Foundation for their generous financial support for the entire Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan development process.



Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge with much gratitude that all John Howard Society of Ottawa buildings, housing rehabilitation programs and other initiatives are located on the unceded, never surrendered lands of the Algonquin Anishnaabe.

The People of the Algonquin Nation have been caretakers and stewards of territory encompassing all lands of the Ottawa River watershed and its tributaries since time immemorial.

We also extend our expression of thanksgiving to our Algonquin host nation for their blessings and for their support of the work we do at the John Howard Society.

Message from John Howard Society of Ottawa Leadership

The John Howard Society of Ottawa is honoured to launch our first Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan.

This plan reflects our commitment to truth and reconciliation. We acknowledge the enduring legacy of colonialism and the disproportionate harms it has caused First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples.

As an organization with a long history of service in the criminal legal sector, we also recognize that we have, at times, been complicit in the perpetuation of colonial systems and practices that continue to cause harm today.

With humility, we commit to change. Guided by the principles of **Respect, Collaboration, and Fairness**, this Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan sets out tangible, measurable actions to confront inequities, strengthen relationships with Indigenous partners, and ensure our services are culturally relevant and supportive.



This plan is not a final destination but a beginning. It is a living document that will evolve as we listen, learn, and walk together with Indigenous people on this journey.

We share this plan in the spirit of accountability and hope that it may encourage others to take their own steps toward building a more just and equitable community for all.

With gratitude and determination, we begin.



Mohamed Sofa
Chair, Board of Directors
John Howard Society of Ottawa



Allan Reesor-McDowell
Executive Director
John Howard Society of Ottawa



About the Artist

Simon Brascoupé

Simon Brascoupé, Anishinaabe/Haudenosaunee – Bear Clan is a member of Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg First Nation, Maniwaki, Quebec and is now living in Algonquin territory here in Ottawa. His artwork is displayed across the city, including the Algonquin Birch Bark Basket at Abinan Place, a large mural for the University of Ottawa Heart Institute, and a mural at the Carleton University Ojigkwanong Indigenous Student Centre. One of his most well-known projects is displayed in Pimisi Station, Mamawi: Together, The Algonquin Paddle Project installation painted by one hundred Algonquin artists. Simon's artistic vision is to create a significant presence of Algonquin and Indigenous art and culture in public art and institutions.

Simon communicates traditional teachings and values through the continuity of imagery and narrative. His artwork has been exhibited across the United States, Canada, Europe, China, Japan, and Cuba. His art is represented in the collections at the Canadian Museum of History, the Smithsonian Institution, and major corporate and private collections. His work is presently displayed in the National Gallery of Canada's Canadian and Indigenous Art exhibition.

Simon Brascoupé's artwork reflects his respect for the Algonquin territory and land. From his perspective, animals teach humans how to see the world through their eyes and actions. Simon's father taught him that the bear, when it's wounded, will use the sap from a pine tree as medicine, and that even though the bear is large, it lives lightly on the land.





About the Artwork

The Healing Drum

This artwork, shaped as a circle like the drum, reflects the John Howard Society of Ottawa's commitment to Indigenous programming and healing. The circle represents the cycle of life, the strength of community, and the teaching that wellness must be approached in balance—mind, body, spirit, and emotions working together. Within the circle are the four stages of healing, moving from hurt to reflection to renewal and, finally, to wholeness, showing that healing is a lifelong journey guided by community, culture, and ceremony.

The birds in flight carry the values that guide this journey—respect, honesty, courage, and love—teachings rooted in Indigenous traditions and ways of knowing. Just as birds migrate together and return home, these values remind us of our responsibility to travel together, to uplift one another, and to return to the teachings of our ancestors.

Together, the drum circle, healing stages, and birds honour the resilience of Indigenous Peoples and affirm the Society's commitment to creating safe, culturally grounded spaces where individuals, families, and communities can heal, grow, and thrive.

*Mámawihidiwin, tidibá-ahí tewehigan, ashidj pineshínjag
manádjyáwán eji mashkawizíwadj Anishinábe Pemádizidjig ashidj keget
ikidowag iye John Howard Pináshkágogamig Odáwáng kida kijenindánáwá
sóngin, tbinawe pimádjwowin tawán endaji maya pemádizidjig, ódeg, ashidj
tanakíwínan kida mínahog, minogíg, ashidj mino pimádizig.*



Albert Dumont

A Message from Albert Dumont

I recall speaking to a 21-year-old inmate at Millhaven's Native Grounds. "I killed myself emotionally when I was 17 years old," he told me. 'Cherry' was speaking his truth. He was numb to all things around him. Cherry carried himself in a way that told others, "I am not afraid, so don't make the wrong move on me." He was the walking dead! Cherry did his time, returned to Manitoulin Island where he died of a drug overdose not long afterwards (so I've been told).

Cherry's story is no doubt the story of many other young Indigenous people who find themselves doing serious time in Canada's penitentiaries. They are in a state of rage, have been since early childhood! They live to rebel but experience depression, anxiety and self-loathing.

Who is guilty of bringing such misery down on the Indigenous people? In my view, it is the average Canadian citizen. It is true that things are changing (slowly) but far too many Canadians still despise us or even outright hate us. It is them that we need to reach with a healing plan, not just for Indigenous people but also for the average Canadian. The big question: How do we convince Canadians that the anger and contempt they have for the Indigenous people is wrong? How can real reconciliation come to pass if most Canadians see no need for it?

I'm prepared to do what I can to contributing to a plan created to doing it.

I see in the John Howard Society's Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan that the restorative goals you set have a good chance of doing what needs to be done in bringing about stronger healing programs for Indigenous people entangled in Canada's justice system. For this I am truly grateful.

Because of You

The Words of the Victim

Albert Dumont©

You pushed me into raging waters
And I wonder
If I will ever be the same

Because of you
I have forgotten the reasons
For the blossoms
And the purpose of the rain

Because of you
Instead of smiling into the dawn
I hide
And shed tear after tear

Because of you
I feel as the rust
That descends onto the beauty
Of the autumn's maple leaves

Because of you
Peace eludes me
And I know only heartache
Everywhere I turn

It is good that you tell me
That you are sorry
But tell me also
What you will do that will
Restore who and what I was
Before your cruelty
Pushed me into raging waters

Because of Me

The Words of the Perpetrator

Albert Dumont©

I pushed you into raging waters
And now I wonder
If you will ever be the same

Because of me
You have forgotten the reasons
For the blossoms
And the purpose of the rain

Because of me
Instead of smiling into the dawn
You hide
And shed tear after tear

Because of me
You feel as the rust
That descends onto the beauty
Of the autumn's maple leaves

Because of me
Peace eludes you
And you know only heartache
Everywhere you turn

I regret that I have caused you
Such great suffering
And I am sorry

What would you have me do
That would help you
Restore who and what you were
Before my cruelty
Pushed you into raging waters





John Howard Society of Ottawa

Statement of Commitment to Reconciliation

The John Howard Society of Ottawa is committed to reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples. With this Action Plan, we lay out the steps that we will take in the first three years of our reconciliation journey.

The John Howard Society of Ottawa is aware of the history of colonial practices designed to assimilate Indigenous Peoples and to eradicate their cultures. We acknowledge the legacy of these practices, and we recognize that many of them prevail to this day. In Canada, Indigenous people face disproportionate and unfair treatment in their involvement with the criminal legal system. The 2023-2024 Annual Report from the Office of the Correctional Investigator confirms that attempts to address this problem have been ineffective, and despite governments' introduction of measures to address the imbalance, the overrepresentation of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people involved in the criminal legal system continues to increase at an alarming rate. Discrimination continues to be a problem. Many Indigenous service users report that they experience racist attitudes from the police, in the courts, and when trying to secure housing and employment.

The John Howard Society of Ottawa is an organization with a long history of service in the criminal legal sector. We acknowledge that by not taking action to address this unfair treatment of Indigenous Peoples, we have perpetuated colonial practices. This is contrary to the spirit of reconciliation. We commit to act.

We support Indigenous individuals who are involved in the criminal legal system, and we will work with the John Howard Society of Canada and the John Howard Society of Ontario to advocate for fair treatment and culturally relevant solutions.

As an organization that provides services to Indigenous individuals who are at risk of legal system involvement, we will work to ensure that our supports for education, employment, and housing respond to Indigenous service users' specific cultural needs, and that we help connect Indigenous individuals to Indigenous programs and services.

As a community justice agency, we will use our influence to be an ally and a partner to the Indigenous communities in Ottawa, and in each rural community we serve.

Our wish for reconciliation is for a Canadian legal system that does not harm Indigenous Peoples, but that treats them fairly and helps them connect to Indigenous programs, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and cultural events and teachings to assist them on their healing journey.

The John Howard Society of Ottawa has a role to play. We will walk alongside Indigenous people to help make this happen.

خوش آمدی



Ласкаво просимо

BINE ATI VENIT

KARIBU

BOOZH

TIKILLU

BRODOŠLI

SOO DHAWOOW

歡迎

BIENVENUE

ਚੀ ਆਇਆਂ ਨੂੰ

MACHIYA

WELCOME

ATELIHA

BIENVENIDOS

PIJASHIG

歡迎

DO

POBATE

स्वागत

WILLKOMMEN

Canada's Call to Action

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Despite the promise of the early treaties upon which the relationship between Canada and Indigenous Peoples was based, Indigenous people have been subject to colonial policies and practices designed to disenfranchise, assimilate and eradicate them. These actions taken throughout the years have created systematic barriers.

The effects of colonial policies are still ongoing. In 2008, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was created to document the effects of colonial practices, many of which continue. Focused primarily on the residential school system, it released its final report in 2015.

The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission included 94 Calls to Action directed to governments, churches, organizations and all Canadians. These Calls to Action aim to address the harms of one of the key instruments of colonialism, the residential school system, by achieving reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians.



According to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, reconciliation will not happen until there is “...awareness of the past, acknowledgement of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change behaviour.” The Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action are sweeping, and propose actions in areas such as child welfare, education, health, justice, and culture.

All Canadians have a role to play in achieving reconciliation.

Individuals and organizations are working in partnership with Indigenous communities. They are taking action by examining their practices and attitudes, and by removing barriers that their activities present to Indigenous people. In adopting a commitment to reconciliation, organizations can review their activities and implement policies and programs that are culturally relevant and responsive. They can educate themselves to understand and respect Indigenous cultures.

Through open, transparent, and collaborative relationships, all Canadians can contribute to reconciliation with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples.



Who We Are

The John Howard Society of Canada is a national, not-for-profit organization whose stated mission is to promote effective, just, and humane responses to the causes and consequences of crime. The organization achieves its goals through the delivery of public education and services to communities across Canada. It also acts as an advocate for reform in the criminal legal system. The John Howard Society operates offices in over sixty communities across Canada, including provincial offices in all ten provinces and the Northwest Territories.

The first step in our reconciliation journey rests on the acknowledgement and understanding of the past and present-day impacts of colonialism and systemic discrimination on Indigenous people involved in the criminal legal system. This is necessary to inform the empathy and commitment required to undertake the concrete actions we have identified to help address past harms and build a path forward that is more inclusive, mutually respectful and equitable, in partnership with Indigenous people.

Allan Clarke

John Howard Society of Ottawa

John Howard Society of Ottawa, an affiliate organization to the John Howard Society of Canada, is committed to providing a broad range of evidence-based and outcome-driven programs and services in the communities it serves. The organization has a strong history of helping individuals and families who have come into, or are at risk of coming into, involvement with the law. The John Howard Society of Ottawa's work includes the provision of prevention and intervention services, as well as local advocacy, public education, housing, and community partnership development.

The John Howard Society of Ottawa delivers programs and services for the general population, and due to the high number of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people among its service users, the organization provides services that are designed specifically to meet the needs and interests of Indigenous people.





Ikaarvik House

Ikaarvik House is a Federal Community Housing Facility run by the John Howard Society of Ottawa in partnership with Correctional Service of Canada. Ikaarvik House provides 13 beds and accessible rooms for Indigenous men who require a supportive living environment while they transition to independent, community living.

The Ikaarvik team strives to maintain the continuum of care process which ensures that culturally relevant programs and interventions are available to the men living there. These include Elder care, a carving shed, country food, access to cultural activities, and access to training and employment opportunities. The team acknowledges the importance of Indigenous culture and community for supporting clients during their reintegration.

The Inuktitut word ikaarvik means 'bridge' and refers to John Howard Society of Ottawa's belief that the holistic approach practiced here increases the opportunity for Indigenous men exiting custody to make a successful transition back to the community.



Lisgar Women's Residence

In partnership with Minwaashin Lodge, Lisgar Women's Residence is a 29-unit supportive housing program that provides permanent homes for adult women who have exited chronic homelessness, with a primary focus on supporting Indigenous women. Each resident has their own furnished apartment complete with a full kitchen and bathroom, their own set of keys, and a personal mailbox.

As a team we offer compassionate wraparound care for the women, helping them maintain their housing in a way that is dignified and person centered. We are readily available to support a variety of needs that may arise due to mental health, food insecurity, family matters, addiction, personal relationships, interactions with the legal system, and trauma, while promoting overall wellness.

Services include: on-site case management; cultural support and Indigenous specific care; options for food security; medication management; accompaniment; access to clean consumption supplies; in-unit support to help with caring for their space; and, regularly scheduled meaningful activities. For the women who live here, we strive to create a community that is uniquely theirs with lots of homemade food, laughter, and connection.

The Criminal Legal System and Indigenous Peoples

Context

In Canada, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people face disproportionate and unfair overrepresentation in their interactions with the criminal legal system. Indigenous people represent a much higher proportion of new admissions to federal prisons compared to non-Indigenous people. They are released later in their sentences than non-Indigenous offenders and are more often denied parole. When incarcerated, Indigenous individuals are more likely to be placed in structured intervention units, more likely to be victims of unnecessary force, and more likely to be classified as security risks. When released, Indigenous individuals face greater barriers than the rest of the population in their reintegration to the workforce, the healthcare system, educational institutions, the housing market, and their own communities.

Many studies have identified the causes of Indigenous overrepresentation. These include the legacy of colonialism, an entrenched discriminatory legal framework, and the socioeconomic challenges that already plague Indigenous populations, which become exacerbated through an individual's involvement with the criminal legal system.

Attempts on behalf of governments to address the disadvantages Indigenous people face due to their involvement with the criminal legal system have been largely ineffective. Despite calls for change, overrepresentation in prisons is increasing. In 2001, Indigenous individuals represented 18% of admissions to correctional institutions. That number increased to 33% in 2021. This is an alarming trend, given that Indigenous people represent only 4.5% of the total Canadian population.

Studies documenting Indigenous overrepresentation in the criminal legal system have been underway since 1967 when the Canadian Corrections Association completed a report entitled *Indians and the Law*. Since that time, myriad commissions, inquiries, and studies have reported on the issue, calling for reform and presenting recommendations. In 1991, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples observed that the Canadian legal system had “failed” Indigenous people. In 1999, the Supreme Court of Canada identified the situation as “a crisis” and called for change.

Direction concerning how to address the problem and its resultant collateral consequences has been provided. Studies, commissions, the courts, and Indigenous people themselves have all called for a more informed legal profession, targeted housing, employment, educational programming, the use of traditional Indigenous forms of justice and healing, and, overall, greater respect for Indigenous people, cultures, and rights.



Some effort has been made to address the issue. In 1996, the sentencing provisions of the *Criminal Code* were amended to require that judges look for alternatives to imprisonment for all offenders, but “with particular attention to the circumstances of Aboriginal offenders.” The meaning of this section was elaborated upon by the Supreme Court of Canada in the 1999 decision of *R. v. Gladue*, where it was specified that supporting documentation for judges and funding for court support workers should be provided. Consideration has been given to integrating alternatives to incarceration, such as restorative justice practices which focus on accountability and community reintegration. Correctional Service Canada has introduced a handful of healing lodges across Canada, which integrate Indigenous approaches to healing and include community involvement. Despite the federal government’s commitment in 2001 to eliminate Indigenous overrepresentation within a generation, there has been little progress, and overrepresentation continues to increase.

Progress cannot be made until obstacles such as funding deficiencies, lack of a coordinated approach, resistance to change, and discriminatory practices within the system are robustly addressed

John Howard Society and Indigenous Peoples

Where we are now

The John Howard Society of Canada works closely with people who have been, or are at risk of, coming into conflict with the law and being negatively impacted by their experiences of the legal system. The John Howard Society believes that it is in a unique position from which to work, along with partners in the community, to support better outcomes for Indigenous people. The John Howard Society of Canada acknowledges that Indigenous people are overrepresented in the criminal legal system and that this, as well as the resultant collateral consequences of Indigenous individuals’ interactions with the law, must be addressed. This assumption guides action across the full scope of John Howard Society’s activities throughout Canada.

John Howard Society affiliates across the country are engaged in activities to support Indigenous people. These activities range from providing support in court processes, to mentoring Indigenous youth, to partnering with Indigenous communities in the delivery of restorative justice programming. Programming differs from region to region and is targeted to the needs of Indigenous people in each community.



John Howard Society of Ottawa

Indigenous people make up approximately 30% of individuals served by the John Howard Society of Ottawa. Knowing that Indigenous individuals who have been impacted by the legal system face challenges such as housing instability, employment barriers, limited access to education, and other systemic inequities, the John Howard Society of Ottawa delivers services that are targeted specifically to the needs and interests of Indigenous people.

The John Howard Society of Ottawa has an established practice of collaborating with Indigenous people and organizations in the region to deliver its programs and services. Strong relationships are in place with Minwaashin Lodge, the Odawa Native Friendship Centre, and Tungasuvvingat Inuit. Indigenous individuals hold key positions on the John Howard Society of Ottawa management team, and place is held for Indigenous representatives on the Board of Directors.

The John Howard Society of Ottawa believes that stable, secure housing is one of the most important determinants of health and well-being. Accordingly, supportive housing is a key element in the organization's suite of programs in support of Indigenous service users. The John Howard Society of Ottawa currently manages two housing programs that are designed for Indigenous individuals. These programs offer both permanent housing with supports, and transitional housing geared to facilitate transition from incarceration to independent community living.

In 2023-24, the John Howard Society of Ottawa's Board of Directors and management team committed to developing a Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan to support their desire to work toward reconciliation. In January 2025, a working group made up of staff, Board members, and individuals with lived experience was formed to drive the work of creating the Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan and oversee its implementation.

While there are many layers to reconciliation, I would say that it is an intentional return to honoring the relationship. It isn't a goalpost; it's something that we live. This mindset will ask us to critically analyze the status quo mentality of the colonial systems and beliefs that surround us, guiding us to challenge policies, language, and processes.

Eva Davis



Our Vision for Reconciliation

The John Howard Society of Ottawa is committed to reconciliation in every aspect of the work that we do. The Canadian legal system has offered unfair and harmful treatment to Indigenous Peoples. As part of this system, we pledge to take action.

Our vision is for a criminal legal system that does not harm Indigenous Peoples. Our vision is for health, housing, education, employment, and legal systems that offer fair advantage to Indigenous Peoples.

The John Howard Society of Ottawa will support Indigenous-led solutions and commit to work toward meaningful change. We call for a system that does not further harm Indigenous Peoples, rather one that honours their cultures and connects them to their communities to heal their spirits.



Ninawind Ejiwabandamang Ondji Ponenindamowin

Iye John Howard Pináshkáwogamig Odáwáng keget wí ijichige ondji pónenindamowin kágige ondji ni ondamitáwininán. Iye Kánádáng tibákonige inákonigewin ogí ayánsín kwayak ashidj wísagápinigewin ondji Anishinábe Pemádizidjig inakág. Mí tash pangí iyo inákonigewin, nínawind wáwíndamágemin kdiji wawejitóyáng inákonigewin.

Nínawind eji wábandámáng ondji madji ayindawin kidji ega wísagapinádj kakina Anishinábe Pemádizidjig. Nínawind eji wábandámáng ondji mino pimádiziwin, wígiwámáng, kikinámágoziwin, ondamitáwin, ashidj tibákonige inákonigewin kidji mino ayámowadj wáge wanishishin ondji Anishinábe Pemádizidjig.

Iye John Howard Pináshkáwogamig Odáwáng oga wídókawán Anishinábe nígán nakwetamowinan ashidj kidji ijichigedj kidji mino wá ikidómagak apích ándjiseg. Nínawind nandawenindánánán inákonigewin ega kán wíkád wísagápinagawídj Anishinábe Pemádizidjig, sóngan ashidj apítenindágog wín pimádjowin ashidj kidji ánikósing tanakíwiniwa ashidj kidji nódjimo wínawa manidówiziwinwa.

Our Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan

The John Howard Society of Ottawa Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan is a framework for our organization to build respectful relationships with Indigenous people, and to contribute to the work of reconciliation.

Our Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan identifies tangible actions, clear deliverables, a plan to evaluate our progress, and a requirement that we remain accountable for our results.

The actions set out in our plan fall within the following three categories: RESPECT for Indigenous people and cultures; COLLABORATION with our Indigenous partners, our community, and our clients; and FAIRNESS in the delivery of programs and services for Indigenous people.

The development of our Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan was driven by a working group made up of John Howard Society of Ottawa staff, Board members, and individuals with lived experience. This working group is now tasked with establishing an implementation group to lead the ongoing operation, monitoring, evaluation, and maintenance of the Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan.

My cousin Dean experienced homelessness, incarceration, and alcoholism all of which can be directly related to the impacts of intergenerational trauma. He participated in a controlled consumption program at Shepherds of Good Hope, and in the New Beginnings program at the Wabano Centre. If Dean were alive today, he would have had the opportunity to access supportive housing programs we have at John Howard Society of Ottawa. I am grateful for these programs.

John Howard Society of Ottawa programs and this Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan are not going to “make up” for the harms and trauma done to Indigenous people in our community. But this Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan is an important exploration of what a spirit of reconciliation means for John Howard Society of Ottawa, and how we can translate that into action.

Allan Reesor-McDowell

This Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan will guide the John Howard Society of Ottawa in taking respectful, appropriate and effective actions to support the specific needs of the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis members of the communities we serve.

Our plan, its governance structure, and its timeline are set out on the following pages.

Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan

RESPECT

John Howard Society of Ottawa is respectful of Indigenous people, their histories, their rights, and their cultures.

We acknowledge the diversity within Indigenous communities. We are committed to learning about their languages, practices, traditions, and experiences.

We are committed to ensuring that this knowledge informs our actions.

COLLABORATION

John Howard Society of Ottawa is committed to working in collaboration with Indigenous partners in the design and delivery of our programs.

We strive to ensure that Indigenous perspectives are reflected in the design and implementation of our programs and services.

FAIRNESS

John Howard Society of Ottawa believes that Indigenous people have the right to fair and humane treatment under the law. We believe that they have the right to adequate education, employment, housing, and health supports that serve their specific needs.

We commit to delivering programs that are fair and culturally relevant.

We will advocate for appropriate and relevant treatment and services for Indigenous people.



RESPECT



The John Howard Society of Ottawa’s staff, Board, and volunteers are respectful of Indigenous people, their histories, their rights, and their cultures.

We acknowledge the diversity within the Indigenous communities. We are committed to learning about their languages, practices, traditions, and experiences.

We are committed to ensuring that this knowledge informs our actions.

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE
Increase understanding, value, and recognition of Indigenous identities, cultures, histories, knowledge, and rights.	<p>The John Howard Society of Ottawa makes training and educational opportunities available for every member of the John Howard Society of Ottawa team and the Board of Directors. An emphasis is placed on a balance of on-line, in-person and experiential learning.</p> <p>A training plan is in place that is spread incrementally over the span of each John Howard Society of Ottawa employee’s time with the organization. The plan includes an introductory module dedicated to basic cultural competency, and subsequent modules that build other competencies, as necessary.</p> <p>The John Howard Society of Ottawa shares information regarding this training with all staff through internal communication channels. Consistent and updated access to resources and learning opportunities is provided.</p> <p>The Kairos Blanket Exercise or a similar experiential learning tool is provided annually.</p> <p>Learning tools for staff that promote decolonization (literature, videos, external workshops) are provided.</p>	<p>Basic learning, such as access to online courses, is currently encouraged.</p> <p>Beginning in 2026, an annual experiential learning event, such as the Kairos Blanket Exercise, will be hosted for staff and Board of Directors.</p> <p>A training plan, setting out the learning requirements for the full John Howard Society of Ottawa team, will be in place by March 2027.</p>

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE
<p>Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.</p>	<p>Anti-Indigenous racism and anti-Indigenous discrimination strategies are provided through the work of the John Howard Society of Ottawa's Culture of Belonging Committee.</p> <p>Regular and mandatory anti-oppression/anti-Indigenous racism training is integrated into the annual training plan.</p>	<p>March 2026 and ongoing.</p>
<p>Bring the John Howard Society of Ottawa Community together to recognize the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation in September of every year.</p> <p>Recognize National Indigenous Peoples Day in June of every year.</p>	<p>The John Howard Society of Ottawa will designate National Day for Truth and Reconciliation as a day for reflection, learning, and action. This day will be recognized annually through staff meetings and learning events.</p> <p>The John Howard Society of Ottawa will make every effort to recognize other days of importance to Indigenous people through a range of communications and events (for example, press releases, social media postings, learning opportunities).</p>	<p>March 2026 and ongoing.</p>
<p>Observe cultural protocols and offer land acknowledgements.</p> <p>Ensure that staff understand the significance of these practices and can participate.</p>	<p>In collaboration with staff and Indigenous partners, the John Howard Society of Ottawa updates the current land acknowledgement for use in meetings, signage, and other contexts.</p> <p>The John Howard Society of Ottawa posts written land acknowledgements in physical and virtual John Howard Society of Ottawa spaces (for example, inside and outside buildings, website, email signatures, etc.).</p> <p>Staff are provided with information and tools to help them to confidently conduct well-informed land acknowledgements in their work.</p> <p>In collaboration with Indigenous partners, the John Howard Society of Ottawa seeks opportunities to appropriately integrate Indigenous protocol (prayer, smudging) in other aspects of its practice.</p>	<p>The land acknowledgement will be updated by January 2027.</p> <p>Implementation of new land acknowledgement and supporting tools will be complete by March 2027 and practiced on an ongoing basis.</p>



ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE
<p>Engagement of the John Howard Society of Ottawa team in the delivery of the Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan.</p>	<p>The Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group is stood down and will inform the creation of the Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan Implementation Working Group. This group will ensure that all agency staff, Board members, and volunteers are aware of the plan and how they can get involved and support the delivery of the plan.</p> <p>Formal mechanisms are created to share information on progress such as a reconciliation newsletter, and JHS website.</p> <p>The Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan Implementation Working Group will seek funding to employ a full-time or half-time Reconciliation Champion to provide monthly engagement activities to keep the plan alive.</p>	<p>March 2026 and ongoing.</p>
<p>Applicants for management positions are evaluated for their commitment to reconciliation.</p>	<p>Standard interview protocol is developed to evaluate applicants' openness to learning about Indigenous issues and to advancing reconciliation objectives.</p> <p>Knowledge requirements are adjusted as appropriate to meet the profile of the position being filled.</p>	<p>New HR policies and practices in place by September 2026.</p>
<p>Work with national, provincial, and affiliate chapters of the John Howard Society to learn and share best practices.</p>	<p>The John Howard Society of Ottawa participates in provincial and federal John Howard Society tables and discussions related to support for Indigenous service users and reconciliation.</p> <p>The John Howard Society of Ottawa supports other John Howard Society affiliates in their pursuit of reconciliation objectives, including their adoption of similar formal plans.</p>	<p>March 2026 and ongoing.</p>

COLLABORATION



The John Howard Society of Ottawa is committed to working in collaboration with Indigenous partners in the design and delivery of our programs.

We strive to ensure that Indigenous perspectives are reflected in the design and implementation of our programs and services.

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE
Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Indigenous partner organizations.	The John Howard Society of Ottawa works in partnership with Indigenous organizations and governments in both service delivery and program development.	Ongoing. The John Howard Society of Ottawa will continue to collaborate with existing partners and to expand its network.
Create an organizational culture that attracts and prioritizes greater diversity amongst staff and board to include Indigenous representation.	The John Howard Society of Ottawa makes efforts to increase the number of Indigenous staff at the John Howard Society of Ottawa (including full-time staff, students, interns, and peer support staff) and on the Board of Directors. The John Howard Society of Ottawa updates HR and board policies to ensure recruitment of Indigenous people at every level of the organization, for example, job qualifications and interview practices may be modified to remove barriers to Indigenous candidates and to prioritize lived experience over formal education criteria.	New HR policies and practices will be in place by September 2026. By September 2026, the John Howard Society of Ottawa will adopt a strategic Indigenous hiring plan as part of the John Howard Society of Ottawa's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion hiring plan.



ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE
Seek ongoing advice from Indigenous partner organizations on the delivery of our Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan.	The John Howard Society of Ottawa initiates regular check-ins with key Indigenous partners to inform the delivery of elements of this plan.	The John Howard Society of Ottawa will hold its first check-in in March 2027 and continue to host similar meetings on at least an annual basis.
Promote reconciliation in the broader Ottawa community through the sharing of our experience of developing and implementing a Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan.	While recognizing that the John Howard Society of Ottawa continues to learn throughout this work, the John Howard Society of Ottawa shares its work, along with lessons learned, with John Howard Society affiliates and other non-Indigenous organizations in the Ottawa community and beyond. The John Howard Society of Ottawa website is updated to include a page dedicated to its reconciliation objectives and plan.	March 2026 and ongoing.
Communicate the principles set out in our plan broadly, report transparently on our results, and engage the community in reviewing our practices.	The John Howard Society of Ottawa adopts a transparent approach to communicating and reviewing our Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan and will seek the support of the community in its ongoing review and maintenance.	First report on progress to be prepared in March of 2027.

FAIRNESS



The John Howard Society of Ottawa believes that Indigenous people have the right to fair and humane treatment under the law.

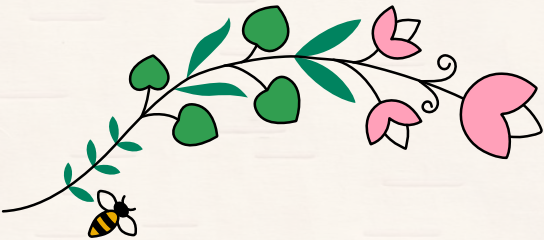
We believe that Indigenous people have the right to adequate education, employment, housing, and health supports that serve their specific needs.

We commit to delivering programs that are fair and culturally relevant.

We will advocate for appropriate and relevant treatment and services for Indigenous people.

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE
Review policies and practices to ensure that they do not present barriers to Indigenous people, that they minimize harm, and that they are respectful of Indigenous people and cultures.	In collaboration with Indigenous people, partners, and other John Howard Society affiliates, the John Howard Society of Ottawa conducts a review of its policies and practices to ensure that they are respectful of Indigenous people and relevant to their needs.	By September 2027, the John Howard Society of Ottawa will launch an internal assessment to determine the areas of focus, logistics, and feasibility of such a review. Recommendations on the scope and methodology of the review will be delivered in 2028.

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE
<p>Introduce design features into John Howard Society of Ottawa buildings that acknowledge Indigenous culture and support congregation and ceremony.</p>	<p>In consultation with Indigenous partners, John Howard Society of Ottawa staff, volunteers, and clients will be consulted on how best to introduce Indigenous elements to physical spaces throughout the agency. For example, artwork, land acknowledgement signage, natural elements, and other physical design features are integrated into John Howard Society of Ottawa spaces.</p> <p>The John Howard Society of Ottawa ensures that spaces made available for congregation permit for smudging and other ceremonies.</p>	<p>September 2026.</p>
<p>Advocate for improved conditions and appropriate services for Indigenous people throughout the criminal justice system.</p>	<p>The John Howard Society of Ottawa collaborates closely with Indigenous people and Indigenous partner organizations to identify areas of priority concern to Indigenous people in the Ottawa area and will work collaboratively to advocate for change.</p> <p>The John Howard Society of Ottawa supports the research and advocacy efforts of the John Howard Society of Ontario and the John Howard Society of Canada to address the Calls to Action set out in the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.</p> <p>Key areas of priority will include but not be limited to the following: eliminating the overrepresentation of Indigenous people in custody; considering realistic alternatives to incarceration; improving supports for people with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder; improving supports available to Indigenous people in their navigation of the court system.</p>	<p>March 2026 and ongoing.</p>



ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE
Continue to provide and enhance employment and training opportunities through peer support programs.	The John Howard Society of Ottawa seeks opportunities to enhance peer support programs staffed by past and current Indigenous users of John Howard Society services and programs.	Recommendations in March 2027.
Provide John Howard Society of Ottawa clients with easy, regular, and dependable access to spiritual and cultural supports and activities.	The John Howard Society of Ottawa makes resources necessary for spiritual and cultural practices available to its clients, for example, craft and carving supplies, country food, traditional medicines.	March 2026 and ongoing.
	The John Howard Society of Ottawa provides reliable transportation, free of charge, to its service users to attend cultural and spiritual events, and to engage in traditional activities.	March 2027 and ongoing.
	The John Howard Society of Ottawa provides a staff cultural support worker on at least a part-time basis.	March 2026 and ongoing.
	The John Howard Society of Ottawa maintains a list of Elders and Knowledge Keepers to assist service users, staff, and program developers. Consideration is given to the needs of Inuit, First Nations, and Métis Peoples.	March 2026 and ongoing.
	The John Howard Society of Ottawa works with the Odawa Native Friendship Centre and Correctional Service Canada to explore the feasibility of providing a healing lodge for clients in the Ottawa region.	Review and recommendations undertaken by March 2027.
	The John Howard Society of Ottawa holds regular feedback sessions with its Indigenous service users to obtain their recommendations concerning service offerings in this area.	First formal feedback sessions to be held in March 2027, and repeated at least on an annual basis.

ACTION

Review, in conjunction with the Odawa Friendship Centre, the John Howard Society of Ottawa's Bail Verification and Supervision Program, to identify ways to increase access for Indigenous Peoples.

DELIVERABLE

The John Howard Society of Ottawa, in conjunction with the Odawa Native Friendship Centre, conducts a review of the size and needs of the Ottawa Region Indigenous bail population, and of current services available to them.

The John Howard Society of Ottawa, in conjunction with the Odawa Native Friendship Centre, takes action to ensure admission criteria and services are relevant to potential and actual Indigenous program participants.

The John Howard Society of Ottawa, in conjunction with the Odawa Native Friendship Centre, takes action to expand programming as necessary to fulfill the needs of Indigenous program participants.

TIMELINE

Review and recommendations undertaken by September 2026.



Governance and Accountability



ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE
<p>Maintain a Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan Implementation Working Group to drive governance and accountability for the Plan.</p>	<p>A permanent implementation working group comprising John Howard Society of Ottawa staff and Board representatives will be maintained. It will be tasked with oversight, review, and reporting in relation to the Plan.</p>	<p>March 2026.</p>
<p>Provide appropriate support for implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan's commitments.</p>	<p>The John Howard Society of Ottawa will define resource needs for the Plan's implementation.</p> <p>The John Howard Society of Ottawa will monitor and support reporting and other commitments related to funding for the Plan's implementation.</p> <p>John Howard Society of Ottawa Management will be engaged in the Plan's implementation.</p>	<p>March 2026.</p>
<p>Build accountability and transparency through reporting on the Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan's achievements, challenges, and learnings, both internally and externally.</p>	<p>The John Howard Society of Ottawa will define appropriate systems to monitor, evaluate, and report on Plan's commitments.</p>	<p>March 2026.</p>

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE
<p>Continue our reconciliation journey by reviewing and renewing our Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan every three years.</p>	<p>The Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan will be reviewed annually, and reports will be posted on the John Howard Society of Ottawa’s website.</p> <p>Every three years, an evaluation of progress will be undertaken, including review and renewal of Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan commitments.</p>	<p>March 2027 and ongoing.</p>
<p>John Howard Society of Ottawa will identify a dedicated staff position to support the implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan.</p>	<p>While the Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan Implementation Working Group will oversee the Plan’s implementation, the John Howard Society of Ottawa will assign a director to oversee the implementation of the Plan, to chair or co-chair the Implementation Working Group, and supervise the work of the reconciliation champion(s).</p> <p>The reconciliation champion(s) will assist with organizing training and events, and program development.</p>	<p>March 2026 and ongoing.</p>



Timeline

COMMITMENT	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Launch and publicise our Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan through internal and external channels.	The Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan is posted on the John Howard Society of Ottawa's website – March 2026.	Implementation Working Group John Howard Society of Ottawa Management
Report publicly on progress.	March 2027 and every March going forward.	Implementation Working Group
Internal communications to ensure engagement of all John Howard Society of Ottawa staff and Board.	March 2026 and ongoing.	Implementation Working Group John Howard Society of Ottawa Management
Review and refresh the the Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan every three years.	First report in March 2029.	Implementation Working Group
Integrate the Plan's commitments into the John Howard Society of Ottawa's strategic plan.	At next strategic plan renewal.	John Howard Society of Ottawa Board and Management
Monitor implementation.	March 2026 and ongoing.	Implementation Working Group

Join Us on the Path

The John Howard Society of Ottawa's Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan will guide us through reconciliation practices and efforts both within our own organization and in the broader Ottawa community.

While we view our adoption of this Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan as a major step for our organization, a greater achievement will be if others in the community join us in adopting Truth and Reconciliation Action Plans of their own.

For Canada to move forward, we must all take action to achieve reconciliation through the creation of a more equitable society built on respect for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples. The John Howard Society of Ottawa is committed to doing our part. We hope that others will join us on this journey toward reconciliation.

Notes on Sources

The following sources were consulted in the development of material in this document related to the unfair treatment faced by Indigenous Peoples in the Canadian Legal System:

1. The Canadian Corrections Association, *Indians and the Law* (1967)
2. John Howard Society of Ontario, *Uneven Scales* (2025)
3. Graeme McConnell, *Indigenous Peoples and Sentencing in Canada* (2020)
4. Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (1996)
5. Jonathan Rudin, *Indigenous Peoples and the Criminal Justice System* (2022)
6. Supreme Court of Canada *R. v. Gladue* (1999)
7. Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC), *The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (2015)
8. *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (2007)



