

The State of Black and Indigenous Youth in Ontario

An Examination of the Experiences and Impacts of Policing on Black, Indigenous & Racialized Youth

November 2023



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Executive Summary

Laidlaw Foundation's primary goal in creating this report was to gather the stories of Black and Indigenous youth to raise awareness about the challenges and barriers they currently face, the actions that can be taken to overcome them, and, importantly, to give young people a platform on which to be heard so we can better address their needs through future programming, advocacy, and community partnerships.

To that end, in 2021, Laidlaw commissioned this project to INDSight Consulting, who then formed a Youth Advisory Committee to better understand the experiences of Black and Indigenous youth in three systems that have historically both overrepresented and underserved them: justice, child welfare, and education. However, in conversations with the participants, we learned that they face inequity in many more aspects of their lives, including but not limited to their experiences with healthcare, employment, and housing. As with the three aforementioned systems, it quickly became clear to us that participants' continued experiences of inequity across all areas of society also stem from the combined actions of over-policing and under-servicing — actions that are deeply rooted in ongoing racial discrimination towards Black and Indigenous populations.

In creating this report, INDSight hosted 11 focus groups which interviewed 103 Black and Indigenous youth from Ottawa, Toronto, and Hamilton. The focus groups discussed the experiences of these diverse youth and highlighted many of the challenges they face today. Of the 103 total participants, 27 (26.2 %) were from Ottawa, and the remaining 76 (73.7%) were from Hamilton and Toronto.

While it is important to acknowledge the voices of our survey's participants, we must also be cognizant that the life experiences of the Black and Indigenous youth who were interviewed cannot and

do not reflect the experiences of all Black and Indigenous youth in Ontario, or even in all urban centres. This report does not intend to speak for those who were not interviewed — it can only create, with broad strokes, an idea of the general state of things for Black and Indigenous youth as they are today.

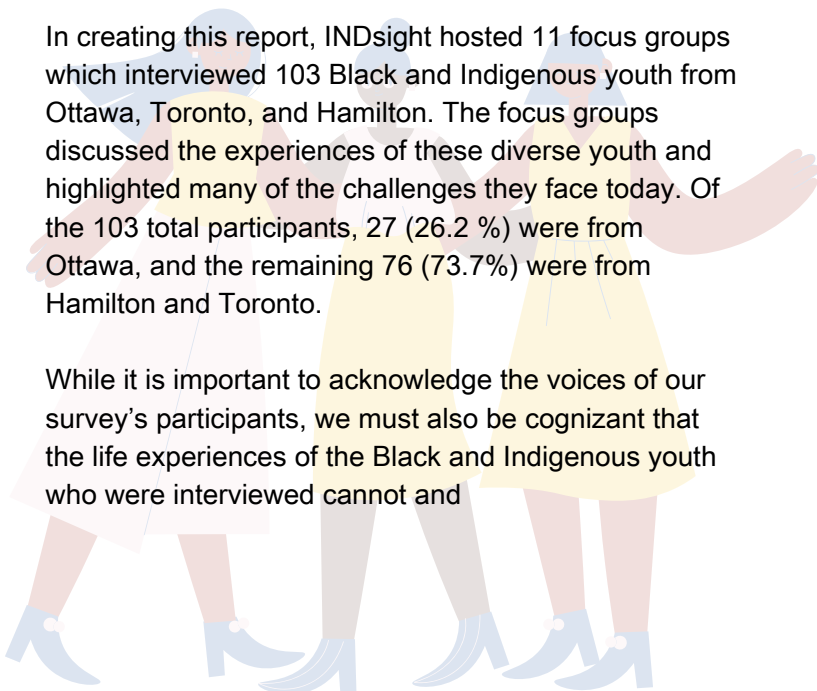
What it highlights is a broken system that fails young people time and time again.

This is the first of a series of reports Laidlaw hopes to publish on the state of Black and Indigenous youth in Ontario. Over time, and through the collection of more stories, we hope to paint a clearer and more complete picture of the experiences of most, if not all, youth across the province. We hope to expand our data collection efforts to capture a broader range of perspectives and narratives, ensuring that more voices and experiences of youth are heard and represented. These future reports will enable us to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and realities faced by youth within the province, ultimately supporting our advocacy efforts and driving positive change.

ABOUT

Laidlaw Foundation is a private, charitable foundation dedicated to fostering innovation, facilitating collaboration, sharing knowledge, and advocating for transformative change. The foundation's primary objective is to empower young people, enabling them to lead healthy, creative, and active lives while fully participating in the civic, economic, social, and cultural fabric of Ontario.

Laidlaw Foundation is committed to supporting the holistic development and well-being of Ontario's youth by fostering positive and meaningful engagement in various aspects of life. Their initiatives are designed to equip young individuals with the necessary tools, opportunities, and resources to thrive and contribute to society in a diverse and impactful manner.



Acknowledgements

This report has been made possible through the invaluable contributions of numerous individuals and organizations, who generously provided their time, expertise, and experience.

We would like to extend our deepest gratitude to INDSight Consulting, an Indigenous-owned research firm commissioned for this project. INDSight Consulting played a pivotal role in spearheading the research, conducting field work, and coordinating 11 focus groups across three cities in Ontario, involving over 100 youths. They served as the lead authors of this report and also formed a dedicated advisory committee consisting of passionate Black and Indigenous youth, whose insights and guidance greatly influenced the design and implementation of this project.

Our heartfelt appreciation goes out to the members of the Youth Advisory Committee, who graciously shared their time and personal experiences, laying the groundwork for the discussions and analysis presented in this report.

We are immensely grateful to the 100+ youth who generously shared their personal stories, enabling us to gain profound insights into their encounters with policing and various systemic challenges. Their narratives shed light on why they continue to face marginalization in society, despite numerous calls for change. The persistence of these issues, spanning the history of Canada as a nation, suggests that previous attempts may have only offered temporary solutions, while the root causes remain unaddressed or inadequately approached.

Furthermore, we would like to express our sincere appreciation to all the former and current grantee organizations of Laidlaw Foundation. Their

assistance in connecting us with potential youth participants during the height of the pandemic was instrumental in completing this work.

We extend our gratitude to Irwin Elman, former Ontario Child Advocate and Laidlaw Foundation Fellow, for sharing his expertise, which played a crucial role in shaping the structure of this report. We would also like to acknowledge the support of Haiat Iman, the current Research Lead at Laidlaw Foundation, who provided input and guidance in the production of this report. She also contributed to the co-creation, research, and editing processes. We would like to thank, Aldeli Albán Reyna, Director of Grants and Community Initiatives at Laidlaw foundation, and Amanda Bernard, Director of Indigenous Programs at Laidlaw Foundation, for their editing support and feedback throughout the lifespan of this project.

Lastly, we offer a special thanks to Jasmyn Galley, Copyright Editor, co-creator, researcher, and designer, for her valuable contributions to this project.



Reflections from the Youth Advisory Committee

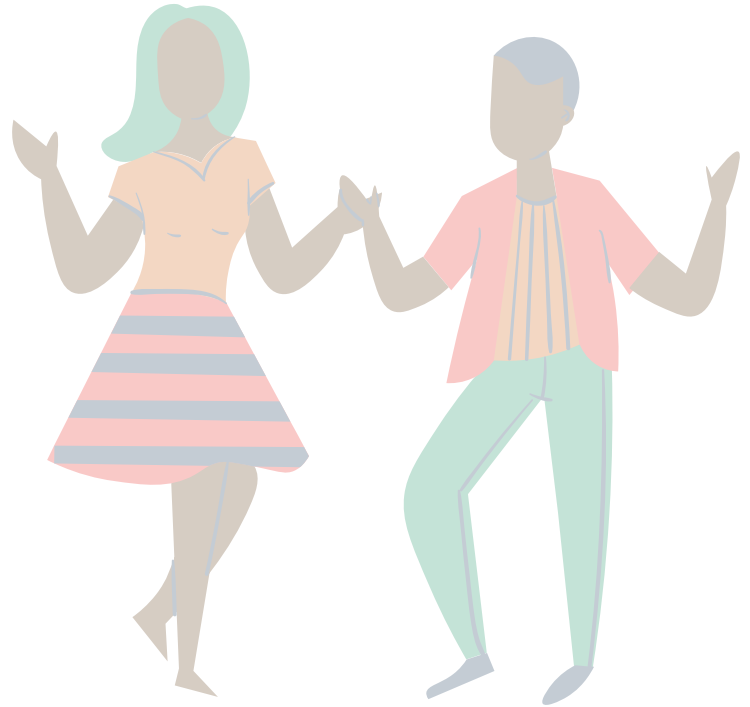
Working with INDsight Consulting and other Indigenous and Black Advisory Committee members was both a privilege and a learning experience. Throughout this consultation process and the many revisions we participated in finalizing this crucial report about the lived experiences of Black and Indigenous youth in Ontario, what clearly emerged is the continuous persistence of systematic barriers and societal racism.

Reading this research report, you will learn about the countless ways racism in employment, justice, housing, education and mental health impact Black and Indigenous youth, including specific recommendations made by the youth themselves. In particular, anti-Indigeneity and anti-Black racism permeates the lives of Indigenous and Black youth and it's one that has been demonstrated for decades, if not centuries.

We hope this report will not turn into just another research finding telling us the same issues that plagues Canadian society, without proactive decisions taken by funders (such as Laidlaw Foundation), policy makers, and organizations that work with and serve Indigenous and Black youth in Ontario. Centering the voices of Indigenous and Black youth in the decision-making process, without tokenism, would directly address ways we can dismantle anti-Indigeneity and anti-Black racism, which is negatively shaping their lived experiences.

Adequate investment that goes beyond limited capacity building funding, will significantly shift the narrative from a transactional relationship funders and service providers have with Black and Indigenous youth, to a more collaborative approach that centers their voices and lived experiences.

— Hodan Ahmed, Youth Advisory Committee Member



We are so much more than how you see us.

We are smart; we are resilient.

We have hopes and dreams.

We know there can be a future where we see people building each other up, not tearing each other down. We are here to uplift one another.

We need you to understand the causes of inequities and for you to take action to reduce them.

This is our story. Are you ready to listen? ¹

¹ Unless noted otherwise, quotes throughout this report are from the Black and Indigenous youth who were interviewed in focus groups for the project.

Introduction

There is “a growing belief among Canadians that racialized people are treated less fairly than those who are white in specific settings and circumstances, especially when dealing with the police, but also in the workplace, in the courts, in stores and restaurants, and when receiving health care services.”
(Neuman, 2021)

What is now known as Canada is founded upon and powered by centuries of systemic racism and discrimination towards racialized individuals. These colonial practices remain deeply embedded in and continue to influence society’s present-day systems and structures and those who live within them.

In Ontario, Black and Indigenous youth face frequent discrimination as a result of society’s ongoing and sometimes unrealized racial prejudices. The subsequent over-policing of Black and Indigenous individuals results in a cradle-to-grave experience entrenched in inequity. Compared to the rest of the population, Black and Indigenous individuals:

- Are more likely to be taken into child welfare, where they face many challenges during and as they age out of care
- Have lower education completion rates, and the gap grows as they age
- Earn a lower income, and the gap grows as they age
- Have lower workforce participation, varying by age and gender
- Are more likely to experience food insecurity
- Are more likely to interact with the justice system and be detained longer in detention
- Do not have the same access to or quality of healthcare, and as a result, were harder hit by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In focus groups held for this report, Black and Indigenous youth discussed their experiences of racial discrimination, confirming that existing

systems of oppression negatively affect many, if not all, areas of their lives. They spoke about being surveilled and policed from a young age, racial profiling, involvement in the foster care system, and struggles with education, employment, and housing.

Our existing systems and structures are broken. In perpetuating their existence, Canada is failing its Black and Indigenous youth.

Beginning with a discussion on discrimination, profiling, and involvement with the criminal justice and child welfare systems, this report will focus on the co-occurring acts of over-policing and under-serving Black and Indigenous youth, and the consequences of those actions.

It is important to note that while the term “policing” will surface and resurface throughout this document, **the act of policing is not confined to law enforcement**; it can be performed by children’s aid workers, teachers, school administrators, the general public, employers, and even landlords. Therefore, throughout this report, the term “policing” is two-pronged, referring not only to policing as it is performed by law enforcement and the criminal justice system, but also the insidious action of policing by the general public due to deep-rooted racial prejudice. As such, this report will explore the co-occurring acts of over-policing and under-serving — which are very much two sides of the same coin — in the following sections:

"We need role models and mentors who look and speak like us to help us build up our skills and confidence. They can be our peers or adults we trust. We need someone in our corner telling us that we can do it and guiding us to supports. We also want to see people who look like us in positions of influence everywhere. In school, at work, and in our political leaders. Leaders need to share power in order to empower our communities. You can't be it if you don't see it."

-Youth Advisory Committee Member

- Discrimination, Profiling, and Policing: The School to Prison Pipeline
- Intergenerational Trauma and the Child "Welfare" System
- Hitting the Glass Ceiling: Education, Employment, and Economy
- Healthcare, Mental Health, and COVID-19
- Racialized Housing Discrimination in Ontario

Despite the challenges discussed throughout this report, Black and Indigenous youth have exhibited a strong vision for their future, characterized by ambitious goals and aspirations. Thus, this document concludes with a series of Calls to Action that have emerged from our insightful discussions with the interviewed youth. These demands call for meaningful, systemic change, aiming to empower young people to achieve their dreams and aspirations while addressing the deeply entrenched inequities that persist in our society. By heeding these calls and enacting tangible changes, we can work towards a more just and equitable future for all.

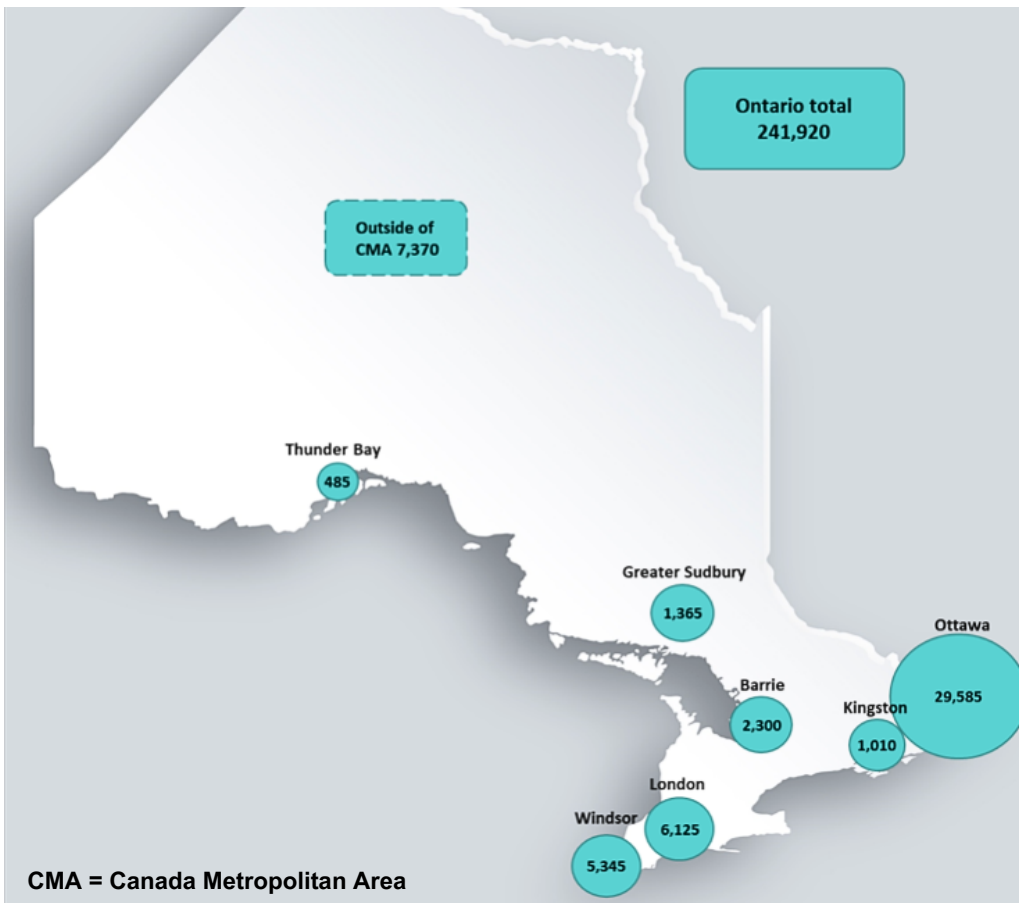
It is time to change the narrative for the youth. This requires dramatic changes across multiple systems. The Calls to Action put forward in this report must be acted upon by governments, philanthropic organizations, community partners, and the public to ensure that Black and Indigenous youth in Ontario can achieve their full potential and break free from the cycle so frequently experienced by their forebears.

It is up to all Ontarians, whomever you may be and in whatever role you may be in, to engage in an act of reciprocity with young people and do what you can in some small or large measure to tackle the barriers and support youth. Change needs to happen, and it's time to listen to what young people have to say!

DID YOU KNOW? Throughout this report, we have utilized colours in our design symbolic to the Black and Indigenous communities. For the Black communities, we have incorporated black, red, yellow, and green. Collectively, they symbolize unity and pride. Individually, black symbolizes resilience; red, the blood of innocent lives lost in the struggle for independence and liberation; yellow stands for optimism, justice, and equality; green represents Africa's richness in natural resources. Marcus Garvey designed the red, black, and green Pan-African flag, which was created in 1920 to represent people of the African Diaspora and symbolize Black liberation in the U.S. The flag was created to give Black people globally a symbol that would unify them. It became the colours to represent Black History Month in Canada, the U.S., and the UK since its inception in February 1976. Other colours sometimes associated with the African community are blue for the ocean's bounty and marine resources, and purple for royalty.

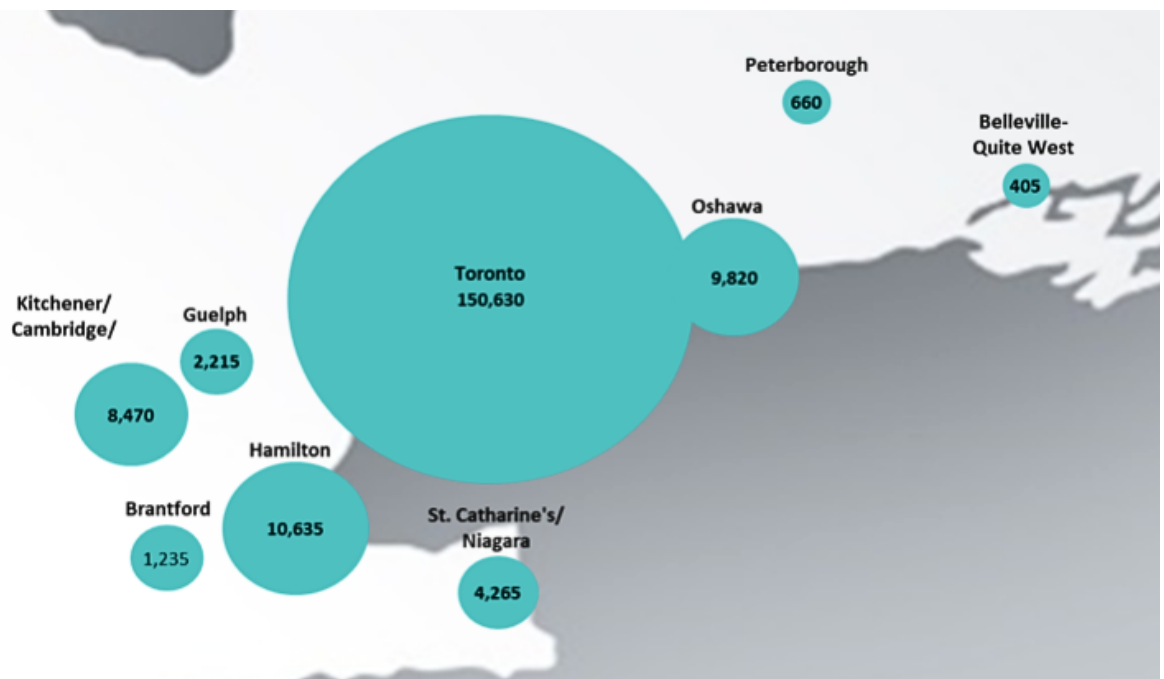
For the Indigenous communities, we have used orange to evoke the colour representing Orange Shirt Day, which takes place on September 30 to recognize and honour the Survivors of the Indian Residential School system in Canada. Red is also symbolic to the Indigenous community, May 5 being the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG). Two more colours used to represent the Indigenous community throughout this report are green and blue, representative of land, which is both culturally and spiritually significant to Indigenous peoples, who were its original caretakers, and from whom it was taken and eroded by colonizers, and water — a resource so full of and necessary for life, and yet one which is still not safe to drink in many Indigenous communities across Turtle Island.

Black Youth in Ontario

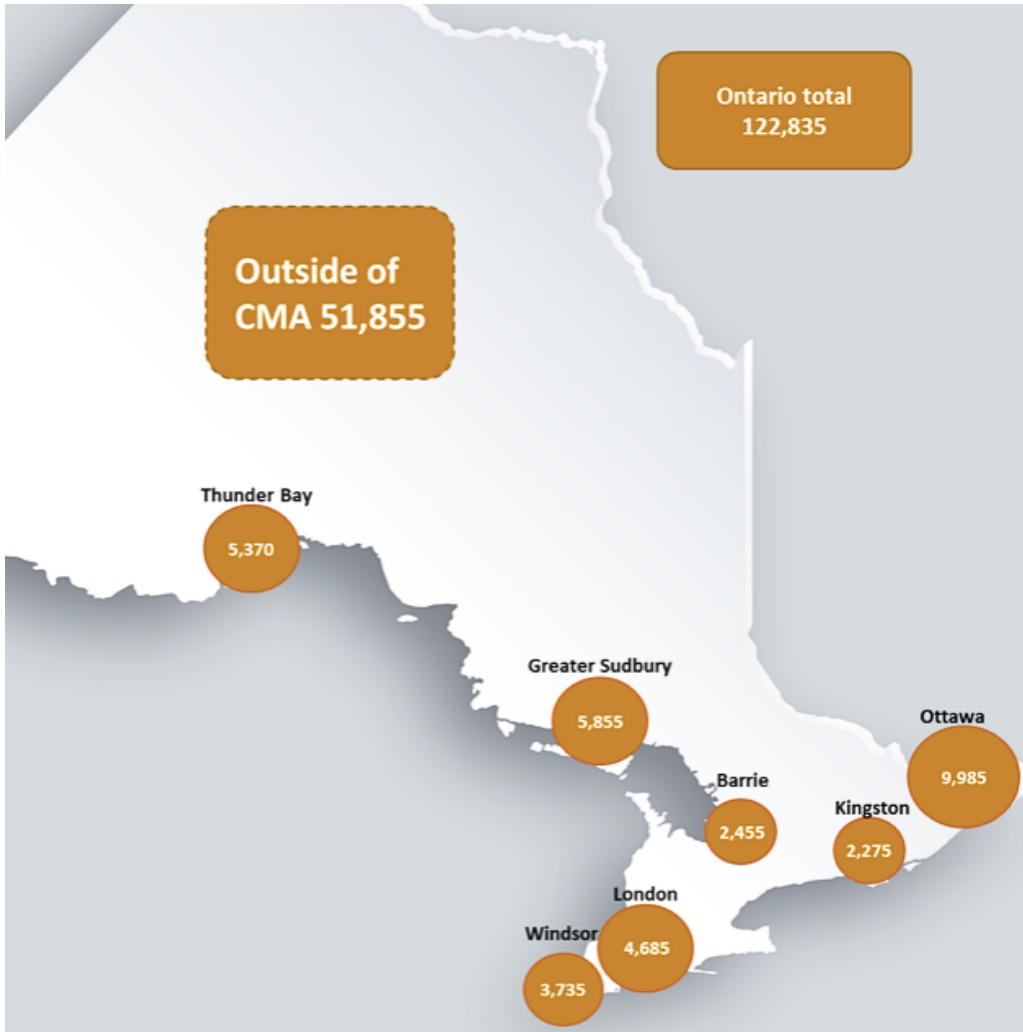


- In 2021, there were over 240,000 Black Youth aged 15 to 34 in Ontario, an increase from just over 196,000 in 2016.
- Black youth of this demographic live mainly in the 16 urban and surrounding areas in Ontario (as defined by Statistics Canada Metropolitan Areas in 2021). The greatest populations of Black youth are in Toronto (8.8%), Ottawa, (10.8%) Oshawa (9.5%), and Hamilton.
- As of 2021, 8% of Black youth aged 15 to 24 immigrated in the last five years. (Statistics Canada, 2021a).

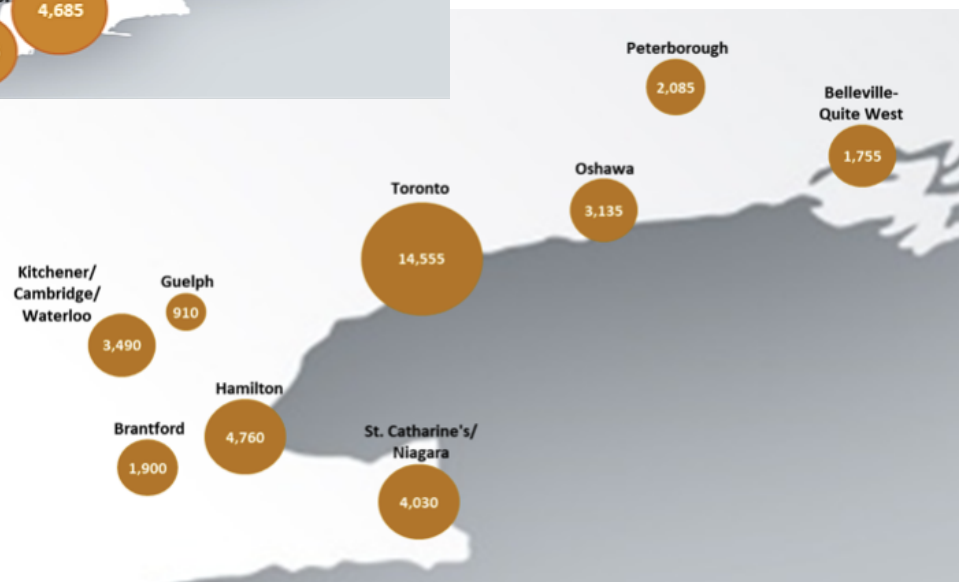
“Black youth who are newcomers to Canada may also experience mental health issues stemming from difficulties adapting to Canadian society, exclusion tied to having a mother tongue other than English or French, having an accent, migration-induced stress, or trauma from experiencing war or other threats to national security in their country of origin” (Government of Canada, 2022b).



Indigenous Youth in Ontario



- In 2021, there were over 150,000 Indigenous youth aged 15 to 24 in Ontario, an increase from just over 115,000 in 2016.
- Almost half (42%) of Indigenous youth of this demographic lived outside urban and surrounding areas. The other half (58%) live in the 16 Metropolitan areas, with the largest populations in Thunder Bay (17.7%) and Greater Sudbury (14.3%), and 9.6% live in the surrounding areas.
- Indigenous youth make up more than one-sixth of the total Indigenous population (Statistics Canada 2021k).



Quick Facts: Black and Indigenous Youth in Ontario

“Black youth in Ontario face economic barriers such as economic marginalization, disproportionate outcomes in the education system, lack of access to critical social capital, and discrimination in employment. These barriers and other economic barriers facing Black youth are deep-seated, found across sectors, and are often intergenerational.” (YouthREX, 2022)



CHILD WELFARE

- Black and Indigenous youth are overrepresented in the child welfare system
- Youth leaving or aging out of care are unprepared for independence because they lack basic life skills; have insufficient transition planning; experience loneliness; have difficulty accessing safe and stable housing; have difficulty accessing quality mental health services (Sukumaran, 2021)
- They also have a lower rate of obtaining post-secondary degrees. Only 0.5% of youth aging out of care in Ontario were estimated to graduate from university, because only one in eight of those who enrol graduate (Mussell and Rampersaud, 2021)

THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

- Black and Indigenous youth continue to be disproportionately represented in admissions to detention (John Howard Society, 2021)
- The conviction rate for Black people in Toronto is 3.2 times higher than for white people. (Wortley & Jung, 2020, 77)
- While representing 4.1 percent of the Canadian population, Indigenous adults accounted for almost 30 percent of total admissions into custody in 2016-2017 (Statistics Canada 2016a; Statistics Canada, 2017a)
- In the criminal system, Indigenous and Black youth are assumed guilty and are not believed when they are the victims (Loppie et al., 2020; Owusu-Bempah & Jeffers, 2021)



“This differential treatment likely results from pervasive stereotypes of Black youth as angry, aggressive, violent, and prone to criminality” (Rogers & Way, 2016; Jerald et al., 2017).

Quick Facts: Black and Indigenous Youth in Ontario

EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT

- Indigenous and Black youth are often encouraged to take “applied or basic courses instead of academic level courses and apply to college rather than university” (Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, 2019, 56)
- Compared to others, Black and, to a lesser extent, Indigenous youth are more likely to be unemployed between the ages of 15 and 24 and, therefore, have a lower income than their peers



HEALTHCARE

- Mental health among Indigenous and Black youth is often perceived as disruptive behavioural problems (Ontario Child Advocate, 2019)
- Black youth are more likely to access mental health care for the first time through the justice system or emergency department, and they wait longer for mental health care than other populations in Canada (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, 2021)
- Young Indigenous women are more likely to have a chronic health condition than men. They are also more likely than Indigenous young men to have adverse mental health outcomes (Statistics Canada 2021k)

HOUSING

- Black Torontonians are overrepresented in low-income neighbourhoods, which are often heavily policed, as they are seen as “improvement areas”
- Roughly 40% of Toronto's homeless population belong to the Black community. They also constitute the largest demographic within the city's shelter system. A report from the City of Toronto suggests that these figures might not fully capture the problem due to hidden homelessness driven by cultural differences and discrimination, leading to some Black individuals being reluctant to use the shelter system (City of Toronto, 2020a).
- Indigenous Peoples constitute around 15 percent of those experiencing homelessness in Toronto, even though they make up only around 0.5 percent of the total population. One study found that 1 in 15 Indigenous Peoples in urban centres experience homelessness compared to 1 in 128 for the general population. Urban Indigenous Peoples are eight times more likely to experience homelessness (Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, 2021)



Discrimination, Profiling, and Policing: The School to Prison Pipeline

Racial profiling is defined as any “action undertaken for reasons of safety, security or public protection that relies on stereotypes about race, colour, ethnicity, ancestry, religion, or place of origin rather than on reasonable suspicion, to single out an individual for greater scrutiny or different treatment.” (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2017, p. 16)

Racial profiling and over-policing, both forms of overt racism, act as catalysts for the school-to-prison pipeline. Students who are over-policed at school or experience racial profiling in other areas of their lives — such as when they are tailed by security guards while shopping or experience discriminatory attitudes from the general public, law enforcement, or their non-racialized peers — are more likely to develop tougher demeanours, which can lead to increased conflict as they age.

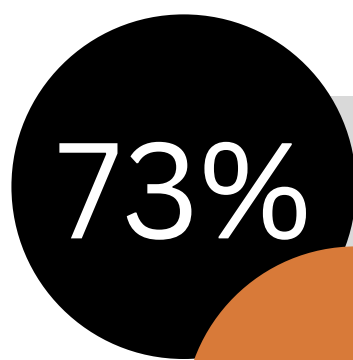
In focus groups for this report, one youth shared his disappointment about how he is perceived as a Black man. He said he is aware that people look at him differently and are scared or wary of him:

“Sometimes, I walk through the streets, and I get stares. I’m Black. And that’s more discrimination. You get looked down on. When I’m going to get something, people stare. That’s how the system is right now, and I think they need to get better.”

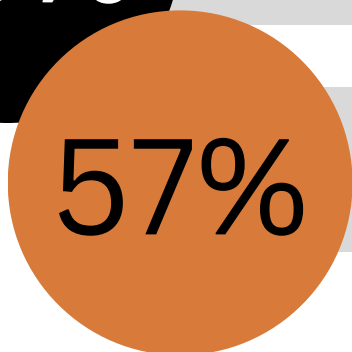
Racial profiling can, and does, lead to increased run-ins with law enforcement and subsequent overrepresentation within the criminal justice system. For example, although they represent only 8.8% of Toronto’s population:

- Black individuals represented almost one-third (32%) of all the charges in the charge dataset, while white people and other racialized groups were under-represented; and
- Black people were more likely to be involved in cases that involved proactive policing (in other words, when an officer decides to stop and question someone) than reactive policing – that is, when police respond to a call for assistance (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2020).

Black and Indigenous Youth in Ontario experience racial profiling and discrimination at a staggering rate compared to the rest of the population (OHRC, 2017, p. 20; 2019 General Social Survey; Statistics Canada, 2022b). For instance, in a 2015 non-random survey:



of Black youth in Ontario experienced racial profiling (203 respondents)



of Indigenous youth in Ontario experienced racial profiling (66 respondents)

“Black youth are too often perceived as dangerous because of their physical characteristics.”
(Government of Canada, 2022b)

In a Summary Report by the Government of Canada (Government of Canada, 2022b), Black youth surveyed identified school as their first point of contact with the criminal justice system.

Over-policing in education can be seen in discriminatory practices, such as zero-tolerance policies towards Black youth compared to their non-racialized peers, as well as increased suspensions and expulsions, which can lead to excessive or exaggerated responses from school staff and/or police.

Additionally, newcomers to Canada can experience anti-Black bullying from teachers, staff, and peers. If Black youth seek to address their problems with their bullies, which may lead to arguments and physical fights, what might be overlooked or punished lightly for non-racialized youth is viewed very differently when it comes to Black students: A fight may lead to assault charges.

“I want to walk on the streets freely, go to the park, go to the cinema – it’s very hard to be Black and be safe – I think a community that is actually safe for me is what I envision.”
-Youth Advisory Committee Member-

However, as well as experiencing over-policing, Black youth are also subject to under-policing — that is, not receiving adequate police service when there is a genuine need. An example of under-policing is Black students being bullied by peers or teachers and their accounts not being believed or taken seriously by the school administration (Department of Justice, 2023).

In fact, Black youth are often assumed guilty and not believed even when they are the victims of crimes (Loppie et al., 2020; Owusu-Bempah & Jeffers, 2021).

Another route for Black youth to become involved in the criminal justice system is through the over-policing of their home communities, which tend to be marked by high levels of poverty, crime, and greater numbers of racialized or newcomer residents. These areas may be seen or labelled as “improvement areas” or “at-risk neighbourhoods” and, as such, are proactively policed by law enforcement in an effort to reduce crime. Such neighbourhoods have a heavy police presence, which can lead to:

- Racial profiling
- Discriminatory stop and search practices
- Mobilizing municipal by-laws and other discretionary laws to differentially punish Black youth
- Police reliance on child welfare agencies
- Treating mental health issues within the criminal justice system rather than through appropriate channels (Government of Canada, 2022b).

CASE STUDY

“In Ontario, there are five times more Indigenous boys and four times more Black boys in the young male jail population than what they represent in the general young male population.

Furthermore, research shows that there is a concentration of youth violence and criminality within marginalized communities, such as Indigenous and Black communities, suggesting youth criminality is linked to alienation, economic inequality and growing anger and resentment, especially among young, low-income, racially marginalized men” (Tewelde, 2018).

"Just as over-policing has a significant impact on Aboriginal peoples attitudes toward the police, under-policing also plays a great role in fostering a deep distrust of police. Under-policing and over-policing are really two sides of the same coin." — Rudin, 2016

Police attitudes towards Indigenous people in Canada are no better. As well as over-policing Indigenous populations in very much the same way as Black populations, which reinforces negative attitudes that Indigenous people, like Black people, are violent or prone to criminal behaviour. Indigenous people are also under-policed, where they are "seen as less worthy victims by the police, and thus requests for assistance are often ignored or downplayed" (Rudin, 2016).

Law enforcement in Thunder Bay, Ontario, for example, is notorious for what has been referred to as "deadly racism" and has been called-out time and time again for failing to act when investigating violent crimes towards its Indigenous citizens, which, although undercounted by official sources, are thought to make up just under a quarter of the region's total population (Jago 2021; Hobson 2023; Rinne 2022; Turner 2021).

Black and Indigenous experiences with law enforcement mirror one another in that they are both over-policed through racial profiling, hyper surveillance, and proactive law enforcement, and under-policed when they have legitimate problems that require assistance (CBC 2020; Mosca 2023). Both demographics have also reported excessive violence from police, which can turn deadly.

If Indigenous experiences with law enforcement mirror those of Black experiences, it is no surprise, then, that Indigenous individuals are also overrepresented in Canada's justice system (Government of Canada, 2019). In 2018/2019, Indigenous adults accounted for 31% of admissions to provincial/territorial custody and 29% of admissions to federal custody while representing approximately only 4.5% of the adult population. These proportions were virtually unchanged from the previous year (Statistics Canada, 2020c).

"We need police out of our communities and schools replaced with mental health supports and de-escalation training for community members." - Youth Advisory Committee Member



DID YOU KNOW?

- An Indigenous person in Canada is more than ten times more likely to be shot and killed by a police officer than a white person (Morin, 2021).
- Indigenous women are more likely to be victims of crime. (Government of Canada, 2019).
- Between 2013 and 2017, a Black person in Toronto was nearly 20 times more likely than a white person to be involved in a fatal shooting by the Toronto Police Service (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2018a).

Residents of distressed urban neighborhoods have complained about ineffective policing for centuries, including officers' rudeness, slow response times and lack of empathy for crime victims. Some residents of high-crime neighborhoods have long concluded that police are either incapable of keeping them safe or unwilling to do so" (Brunson, 2020).

Furthermore, despite a general decrease in incarceration rates across Canada, it remains a troubling reality that Indigenous youth continue to be overrepresented within the justice system. As reported by Statistics Can:

- In 2018, Indigenous youth represented 8.8% of the youth population in Canada. Meanwhile, Indigenous youth represented 43% of youth admissions to correctional services in 2018/2019 (Table 9).
- Indigenous youth are overrepresented in both custody and community supervision, representing 47% of custody admissions and 40% of community admissions in 2018/2019 in the reporting jurisdictions (Government of Canada, 2020c).

Canada's history of over-policing Black and Indigenous populations has led to a swath of social

issues that create a cradle-to-grave experience of inequity for these communities.

The school-to-prison pipeline presents a grim reality for Black and Indigenous youth. Regrettably, the alternatives available are not significantly better. Even if they manage to navigate the systematic targeting they face in educational institutions and avoid involvement in the criminal justice system as they grow older, they still encounter overrepresentation and inadequate support within other systems. These persistent challenges can be traced back to the profound impact of colonialism in Canada, which continues to shape and perpetuate these inequities. Recognizing the root causes of these issues is essential in order to implement comprehensive and transformative solutions that address the systemic impact of colonialism on the lives of Black and Indigenous youth.

DID YOU KNOW? In the last five years in Canada,

- 54% of Black youth and adults aged 15 to 44 **experienced discrimination**
- 83% of Indigenous youth aged 15 to 34 **experienced discrimination**
- 21% of Indigenous people and 16% of Black people said it was when dealing with police (Statistics Canada, 2022b).
- Black youth aged 15 to 34 were more likely to report experiencing discrimination than adults (Statistics Canada, 2023).
- In 2019, a survey found discrimination was more common among the Indigenous population than populations who are both non-Indigenous and non-visible minority (33% versus 16%): For First Nations people, 44% had experienced discrimination in the five years preceding the survey, as had 24% of Métis and 29% of Inuit (Statistics Canada 2022b).

How Colonialism Continues to Impact Today's Youth

“There needs to be acknowledgement of the intergenerational trauma caused by colonization and the separation of families and its continuing impact on our grandparents, parents and communities. Historic injustices caused by racism and oppression continue to contribute to low education achievement, underemployment and substandard living conditions for many.” (Ontario Advocate for Children and Youth, 2019, p. 49)

Colonial practices and worldviews have always treated racialized individuals as other, or lesser, than the white, Western European or non-racialized demographics. While colonialism is perhaps thought of as something belonging to the distant past, it continues to affect our societies today in deep-rooted, systemic racism and in the form of intergenerational trauma passed down between racialized individuals and communities.

Intergenerational trauma — trauma that is passed down from one generation to the next — for Black and Indigenous youth has different sources: For Indigenous youth, it stems from Canada’s attempts at genocide, including but not limited to the Indian residential school and day school systems and the Sixties Scoop (Seto 2020); for Black youth in North America, intergenerational² trauma stems from the legacy of slavery, segregation, and even immigration (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2018b; Hasford et. al, 2018).

Intergenerational trauma has far-reaching effects, permeating each generation through various manifestations such as mental health challenges, unhealthy coping mechanisms, and self-destructive behaviors. These can include conditions like post-traumatic stress disorder, substance use disorders, domestic violence, abuse, and strained family relationships. These deeply ingrained consequences highlight the urgent need for culturally sensitive support, healing, and interventions to break the cycle of intergenerational trauma and foster healthier outcomes for individuals and communities affected by it.

Black and Indigenous youth exist in systems in which they are already racially profiled and over-policed by society’s watchful, prejudiced eyes. This lays the foundations for intergenerational trauma to be used against them: They are viewed negatively through ingrained stereotypes. Some may see Black and Indigenous as troublemakers with behavioural problems; others may assume they are prone to violence and criminal activity; yet others may think they are prone to substance use or mental health issues without understanding — or even caring to understand — the reason why.

Consequently, as we will explore further, compared to their non-racialized peers, Black and Indigenous youth face discriminatory practices within the school system, endure overrepresentation within the child welfare and criminal justice systems, and do not face the same trajectory for success in education, employment, and income. This systemic pattern perpetuates a lifelong cycle of inequity, which will persist unless Canada takes resolute and transformative actions to alter these outcomes.

“We need more culturally based groups ‘cause we don’t do many ceremonies out here [...] There is so much residential school trauma. People forget that the last residential school closed in 1995. We had our heritage beaten out of us. We need more help with culturally based groups. Being a Native in Ontario, there are not many cultural groups around here. If there are more groups around here in Ontario that would be more helpful.”
-Youth Advisory Committee Member

² It is also important to note that the Indigenous population in Canada is not homogenous: First Nations (status and non-status), Metis, and Inuit people all have their own distinct cultures, languages, and histories, also have their own unique experiences of colonization (Statistics Canada, 2022d). Equally significant is the recognition that Black communities in Canada are also not a monolith. They encompasses a diverse range of ethnicities with distinct histories and unique experiences in the country.

The Child "Welfare" System

“Child welfare is the largest pipeline into other violent systems, such as homelessness, prison, and poverty.” – Cheyanne Ratnam, co-founder and executive director of the Ontario Children’s Advancement Coalition, and a former youth under state guardianship (Doucet, 2020)

As we have seen, both Black and Indigenous populations experience over-policing and discrimination due to systemic racism. One of the impacts of this hyper surveillance, coupled with Black and Indigenous youth living in statistically lower-income housing areas with higher rates of food insecurity and inadequate housing, drives dramatically higher rates of Black and Indigenous youth being apprehended and taken into foster care, which ultimately leads to long-term overrepresentation in care. However, in yet another system in which they are overrepresented, they are also underserved, lacking agency support and family and cultural connections that would enable them to thrive.

Driving factors for apprehension by Children’s Aid Societies

1) Systemic racism: Research has shown that systemic racism is a key factor in Black and Indigenous children being apprehended by Children’s Aid Societies.

2) Poverty: Another factor behind the high apprehension rates of Black and Indigenous youth is their socio-economic circumstances.

- “Black and Indigenous households are nearly three times more likely to be food insecure than non-racialized households.” (Feed Ontario, 2021, p. 18).
- The 2011 National Household Survey shows that 38% of Indigenous children in Canada live in poverty, compared to 7% of non-Indigenous children. (Government of Canada, 2023a.)

- In 2021, 20% of Indigenous youth aged 15 to 24 and 13% of those aged 25 to 34 were not living in suitable housing (Statistics Canada 2021f, incomplete data).
- Between 2009 and 2012, Black Canadian youth aged 12-17 reported moderate or severe household food insecurity 3.0 times more often than white Canadian youth (Government of Canada, 2020).

3) Unsuitable Housing: Housing quality is generally lower among Black and Indigenous populations and can be cramped, overcrowded, or need major repairs. For example, in 2016, almost three times as many Black Canadians (20.6%) reported living in housing below standards compared to white Canadians (7.7%). Additionally, among Black Canadians:

- 12.9% were living in crowded conditions (compared to 1.1% of white Canadians)
 - 8.4% were living in homes in need of major repairs (compared to 6.2% of white Canadians)
 - 28.6% were living in unaffordable housing (compared to 16.1% among white Canadians).
- (Government of Canada, 2020)

For Indigenous people in 2021:

- Approximately one in six (16.4%, or 295,745 people) lived in a dwelling in need of major repairs
- Indigenous people were almost three times more likely to live in a dwelling in need of major repairs (16.4%) than the non-Indigenous population (5.7%)
- On reserves, over one in five First Nations people (21.4%, or 224,280 people) lived in crowded housing, with 12.9% living in housing with a one-bedroom shortfall, 4.8% living in housing with a two-bedroom shortfall and 3.8% living in housing with a shortfall of three or more bedrooms.

(Government of Canada, 2022c)

Quick Facts: Black and Indigenous Youth in Care

"There is evidence that racial discrimination is a factor in over-representation of First Nations children in care." (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2018b.)

- A 2018 report found Black children represent seven percent of the child population but represent nearly 14 percent of the child welfare service population in Canada.
- Black children are 2.2 times more likely to be investigated by children's aid societies
- Once investigated, Black children were 2.5 times as likely to be substantiated and 3.5 times more likely to be placed in out-of-home care (Based on Bonnie and Facey with support from King et al., 2022)



"[C]hild welfare institutions in Canada evolved within a context of white supremacy and anti-Black racism. It says that these ideologies intertwined with child welfare policy and practice, and have resulted in the racial over-representations that have emerged over time. The African Canadian Legal Clinic attributes over-representation in part to economic vulnerability and the over-monitoring of Black people due to racist stereotypes that are deeply embedded in society." (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2018b)



- In Canada, 53.8% of children in foster care are Indigenous, but account for only 7.7% of the child population according to Census 2021 (Government of Canada, 2023a).
- Indigenous children were 2.9 times more likely to be investigated by children's aid societies
- Once investigated, Indigenous children were nearly three times as likely to be substantiated and 15.3 times more likely to involve a placement in out-of-home care (Based on Crowe and Schiffer with support from Fallon et al., 2021).

“Toronto also has the highest rate of child poverty among large Canadian cities; parts of the city with higher proportions of racialized children have child low-income rates above 50%. Factors such as concentrated poverty, poor community design and space for community building, and an overall lack of positive economic opportunities all contribute to isolation, discouragement, and increased risk of youth involvement in violence.” (REVIVE, 2018, p. 6)

How does being apprehended by child “welfare” agencies benefit Black and Indigenous youth, anyway?

In addition to being overrepresented in the child welfare system, Black and Indigenous youth both in and aging out of foster care are under-served. Black and Indigenous youth have specific histories and cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Yet, they do not always receive the culturally sensitive and appropriate services that would benefit them. For instance, in focus groups for this report, Indigenous youth described encountering service workers who lack or have little understanding of how intergenerational trauma caused by events like the Sixties Scoop have informed and continue to inform the lives of many Indigenous children today. Other youth discussed a lack of culturally appropriate programming within the system.

Youth also described feelings of frustration at being suddenly “thrown into the real world” with little or no additional support from children’s aid services. One Indigenous participant said she felt completely ignored and neglected by service workers, and it was like pulling teeth to get information for and support from services that are supposed to be designed to help her.

Research has shown the consequences of children being taken into foster care include higher rates of homelessness, lower levels of post-secondary education, high unemployment and low income when employed, the increased prevalence of chronic health issues, and involvement in the criminal justice system. (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2018b, at 4.4.). So, how does being apprehended in the first place benefit youth? Rather than taking Black and Indigenous children from their families, should Canada not, instead, provide the tools and resources within their home communities that would benefit them?

DID YOU KNOW?

- 41% of the children and youth in the care of the Children’s Aid Society of Toronto are Black, but only 8.2 % of Toronto’s population under the age of 18 is Black. (Contenta et al., 2014)
- Lower income Black and Indigenous youth are often clustered by geography and income. Research on Toronto neighbourhoods found that Black people are about 2.2 times more likely to live in a low-income neighbourhood than a middle-income neighbourhood and 4.3 times more likely to live in a low-income neighbourhood than a high-income neighbourhood (Hulchanski & Maaranen, 2018; Owusu-Bempah & Jeffers, 2021)
- “Several studies using Canadian child welfare data over time have found that neglect is reported as the main reason Indigenous children enter the child welfare system, which is associated with household and caregiver risk factors that stem from chronic family concerns, such as poverty, poor and unsafe housing, substance use, mental health issues, and social isolation. The rate of ‘neglect only’ investigations for First Nations children is six times higher than that of non-Aboriginal children.” (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2018b)

“[C]olonization is not over. It has a new name. Children are still being separated from their communities. Foster care is the new residential school system. The suicide epidemic is the new form of Indigenous genocide.” — Mumilaaq Qaqqaq, Nunavut MP (Somos 2021)

“There’s so many things that can help, but I don’t get updated on it. I literally have to fight to see the opportunities.”
-Youth Advisory Committee Member-



“I have been so broken by this system. I just don’t feel heard.”
-Youth Advisory Committee Member-

CASE STUDY: FOSTER CARE THE NEW RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL SYSTEM IN CANADA

Indigenous children in Ontario are 168 per cent more likely to be taken into care than white children (Palmer, 2017). In fact, the disproportionate numbers of Indigenous children in foster care has been likened to a "modern day residential school system," as there are three times more Indigenous children in care today than at the height of the Indian residential school system (Somos, 2021; Palmer, 2017).

In 2007, Indigenous activist Cindy Blackstock and the Assembly of First Nations filed a human rights complaint alleging the federal government had discriminated against Indigenous children by providing less funding and poorer services than it did for non-Indigenous children. In 2016, the government was found guilty, and ordered to pay \$40,000 compensation to each plaintiff in the case.

On April 5, 2023, it was announced that a revised final settlement agreement totalling more than \$23 billion was reached by the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), Moushoom and Trout class actions plaintiffs, the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society, and Canada regarding compensation for First Nations children and families (Government of Canada, 2023b).

Hitting the Glass Ceiling: The Impact of Policing on Education, Employment, and Income

“Ontario’s education system operates in a way that maintains inequalities and does not equitably support all students.” – Glogowski and Rakoff, 2019.

As we have seen thus far, the act of over-policing has negative impacts on Black and Indigenous youth by creating higher rates of apprehension by child welfare agencies than their non-racialized peers, increased run-ins with the law in heavily policed neighbourhoods, and the added contradiction of being under-policed when it really counts. However, this hyper surveillance, experienced by Black and Indigenous youth — which is, without a doubt, rooted in racial prejudice — has a ripple effect beyond the criminal justice and child welfare systems. And it is important to note that the act of policing does not always come from the police. It can be performed by teachers, members of the public, employers, and landlords, to name a few (Elliott, 2020).

The rest of this report will demonstrate how the combination of over-policing and under-serving further impacts Black and Indigenous youth throughout their lives. We will begin with a glance at education and employment. While each demographic experiences education inequity differently, both are hindered and negatively impacted by it as they move into the workforce.

An underlying issue behind education inequity is poverty. As we have seen, Indigenous and Black youth are generally from lower-income households than their non-racialized peers. This creates disadvantages from the get-go; Black and Indigenous students have fewer financial means to effectively pursue their education, resulting in fewer career university degrees, fewer opportunities, and a lower income bracket when they are employed, thus perpetuating the cycle of poverty.

Throughout their high school experience, Indigenous and Black youth are often encouraged to take “applied or basic courses instead of academic level

courses and apply to college rather than university” (Ontario Advocate for Children and Youth, 2019, p. 56). They also can face racial profiling and prejudice from their peers and teachers, resulting in less positive high school experiences that inform their self-worth and subsequent decision to pursue higher education.

Youth in lower-income households also identified issues with virtual learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, as they did not have access to the same resources as their peers in higher-income households, such as their own computers. As a result, racialized youth were left trying to participate and complete their work on their cell phones, and, to make matters worse, they did not always have access to a strong internet connection.

As a result of these compounded issues, fewer Black and Indigenous students have university degrees compared to their non-racialized peers, which puts them at a further disadvantage as they enter the workforce. The inequities continue as they pursue employment, resulting in very different job and networking opportunities and generally lower income, thus perpetuating the cycle of inequity in which they and their families are entrenched.

Racism in the Classroom

A 2019 Pathways to Education report found that racial prejudice directly impacts Black students in high school. In yet another environment where they are both over-policed and under-serviced, Black students often face mistrust and low expectations from their teachers and school administration, which results in disproportionate suspensions, expulsions, and higher rates of leaving high school before graduating (Glogowski and Rakoff, 2019).

“Our parents came here as immigrants, and they really instilled it into their kids to go to school. Not just to loaf and wait but to get an education and get a job, and do something for themselves, even if it’s tough. It’s hard, but we’re still trying our best and getting our education to move forward.”

-Youth Advisory Committee Member-

In fact, Black students often have their first experiences with the criminal justice system while in school. The report also found:

- Black youth felt discriminated against by teachers and discouraged from taking challenging courses;
- They were often viewed with suspicion, monitored more heavily, and punished more severely than other students;
- Black students demonstrate higher rates of leaving high school before graduating, lower post-secondary enrollment rates, and overrepresentation in precarious work when they begin employment;
- Students who feel overly monitored by their superiors develop tougher demeanours, which leads them into more conflict later in life, strengthening the school-to-prison pipeline.

(Department of Justice, 2023)

According to the Toronto District School Board, during their high school years, through excessive policing, 42% of Black students have been suspended at least once compared to 18% of non-racialized students; they dropped out of high school at twice the rate of non-racialized students (20% versus 11%). In 2017, approximately 43% of Black students did not apply to university (Toronto Metropolitan University, 2021).

Issues faced by Indigenous students in schools differ slightly from their Black peers. However, they are also rooted in racial prejudice. A recent [Alberta study](#) showed that in one school district, 30 percent of Indigenous-identifying students were considered chronically absent in the 2017-2018 school year, and of the population of Indigenous students living on-reserve, 80% were chronically absent from school in that district. One of the reasons for the high levels of absenteeism of Indigenous students was found to be cross-cultural anxiety exacerbated by having non-Indigenous teachers and experiences of racial prejudice (Fowler, 2020).

However, this issue is not exclusive to Alberta. Recently, in an article published by the [Toronto Metropolitan University](#), Caleb Wesley discussed being an Indigenous student in North Bay, Ontario, where his class teacher intentionally sat Indigenous children so they would be at a disadvantage: “She put all the Indigenous students in the back of the class or along the wall so that our visibility was blocked. I remember sitting behind a filing cabinet so I couldn’t see the board.” Wesley said his teacher’s treatment created “reverberating effects” on his mental health (Grady, 2023).

As well as acting with overt prejudice, as in the example listed above, teachers, school administrations, and even those who create the curriculum can act in more insidious — yet no less offensive — ways. For instance, in 2022, a four-year-old student at a Niagara region school in Ontario was sent home with an offensive worksheet depicting stereotypical images of “little Indians” holding ice cream cones. (Nickerson, 2022). This is yet another example of Indigenous students being under-served in areas where service is most required to succeed; instead of receiving support, they can face unchecked, deep-rooted racism as they try to complete their studies. How, we ask in disbelief, could a teacher even consider disseminating a worksheet perpetuating damaging [Indigenous stereotypes](#)?

Unsurprisingly, facing excessive policing and racial discrimination throughout their school career can negatively impact Black and Indigenous youth as they enter post-secondary education and the workforce. For instance, while most Black students aspire to obtain a university degree, due, in part, to the lack of support they receive in school, they are also less likely than their non-racialized peers to believe they can get one: In 2016, 94% of Black youth aged 15 to 25 said they would like to get a bachelor’s degree or higher; however, only 60% thought they could. (Statistics Canada, 2023).

“Access to education is an inherent and a treaty right for Indigenous Peoples in Canada yet the Government of Canada has time and time again failed to live up to its obligations. Instead of honouring the treaties and promises made by the Queen and the government, they created the residential school system to eradicate Indigenous culture and assimilate Indigenous peoples into Euro-Canadian society. The weaponization of education against Indigenous Peoples has resulted in the mass alienation of Indigenous Peoples from the education system, and a general distrust of public institutions.” – Michael Mihalicz, professor and Indigenous advisor at the Ted Rogers School of Management (Grady, 2023).

Access to Educational Funding

As a result of a lack of financial support as they move through education, in part because of their socio-economic backgrounds, Black and Indigenous students are often left behind compared to their non-racialized peers, who usually come from higher-income families. In 2017, the Canadian Federation of Students – Ontario reported:

- Only 11% of Ontario’s Indigenous population held a university certificate, diploma, or degree, compared to 29% of the total Ontario population;
- 24% of Ontario’s Indigenous population had no certificate, diploma or degree compared to 11% of the total Ontario population;
- 27% of Ontario’s Indigenous population held a College, CGEP or other certificate or diploma compared to 24% of the Ontario population.

While more than 80% of Indigenous students are educated in the public school system, as they age out of high school, financial barriers prevent many of them from attending college or university. (People for Education, 2017.) In the mid-1990s, the federal government capped increases to the Post-Secondary Student Support Program funding by two percent annually, regardless of how many students applied for aid. As a result, by 2007, over 22,500 Indigenous students had been left behind in their post-secondary education (Canadian Federation of Students Ontario, 2017).

In response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s [Calls to Action](#) regarding Indigenous

education, in the 2022-2023 school year, Ontario’s Ministry of Education allocated \$120.5 million in the Indigenous Education Grant, which is intended to fund “programs and initiatives to support the academic success and well-being of Indigenous students, as well as build the knowledge of all students and educators on Indigenous histories, cultures, perspectives and contributions.” (TRC, 2015). However, since the Ontario government appears to be behind in collecting and reporting race-based and Indigenous student data, it is not clear if funding is being allocated where it is most needed (Youth Rex, 2023).

In fact, as Douglas Sinclair of Indigenous Watchdog recently explained in a 2022 conversation about the Education Calls to Action, the data is simply not there.

"It comes down to the government narratives around funding: 'Look how much money we're spending, look at what we're doing, we're doing a great job.' But there's a lack of data to validate government claims. When they say federal funding matches the provincial funding, there's nothing to indicate that's actually the case. There's a lack of transparency generally. And if there is funding, is it effective? They don't identify what those results are other than at a really high level" (Jewell and Mosby, 2022, 21-23).

In 2016, 27% of Black children were living in a low-income situation, compared to 14% of children in the rest of the population. (Statistics Canada, 2020d).

CASE STUDY: DECOLONIZING THE CURRICULUM

Police-involved deaths are a distressing reality for the Black and Indigenous communities in Ontario:

- In 2015, Andrew Loku, a 45-year-old Black man in Toronto, was fatally shot by the police while holding a hammer in an apartment building. (Gillis, 2015)
- In 2018, Joey Knapaysweet, a 21-year-old Indigenous man, was shot and killed by police in Timmins, Ontario. (Perkel, 2018)
- In 2020, D'Andre Campbell, a 26-year-old Black man in Brampton, Ontario, was shot by the police during a mental health crisis when he called 911 for help. (Nasser, 2020)
- In 2020, Regis Korchinski-Paquet, a 29-year-old Indigenous-Black-Ukrainian Canadian woman, tragically died in Toronto during a domestic disturbance call to the police. (Gillis, 2020)

Black and Indigenous individuals in Canada, comprised 27 percent of those fatally shot by the police since 2000, even though they represent just 8.7 percent of the Canadian population. (Gillis, 2023)

In 2020, after the killings of George Floyd by U.S. police and sudden and increased awareness from the general public of the Black Lives Matter movement, Black parents began calling on Ontario to decolonize its curriculum (Hill et al., 2020; Waliji 2020).

Parents of Black Children, an advocacy group that began with fighting racism within the school boards in the York region and later expanded its efforts across the province, argues that school curricula were founded during a period of colonization, and are therefore framed from a Eurocentric perspective.

Kearie Daniel, one of the founding members of Parents of Black Children, began to realize the school curriculum was not inclusive when her daughter's identity as a Black girl changed throughout the course of the school year. "[A]t the beginning of the year when she said she drew herself, she drew herself as Black, as she was. By the end of the year, she was drawing herself as white, or colourless even, with yellow hair and blue eyes," she told CBC News (Waliji 2020).

Now, others have lent their voice to the conversation, calling for schools to fight against the potential erasure of Black history in education. Professor Charmain Brown at York University agrees Black history should be incorporated directly into courses. "I think if we're going to truly be honouring all learners and all experiences and thinking of Canada, all the contributors to Canada, Indigenous, Black, Japanese, Chinese, and all the communities that we have that make Canada who it is, we have to honour all those voices," Brown said.

While Ontario has made some progress in providing equitable education in ending streaming in Grade 9 and a ban on suspensions for students in junior kindergarten to Grade 3, activists say it needs to do more to reduce the harm done to Black children. Decolonizing the curriculum is a necessary step in that harm reduction.

Efforts to increase awareness of Indigenous history are also being made by the Ontario government. On September 29, 2021, Education Minister Stephen Lecce promised to devote more money and time to Indigenous education in Ontario's schools with the development of a new mandatory social studies curriculum for Grades 1-3 that will include an introduction to the residential school system and the Indigenous relationship to the land. The curriculum was set to be ready for the 2023-2024 school year (McGillivray, 2021).

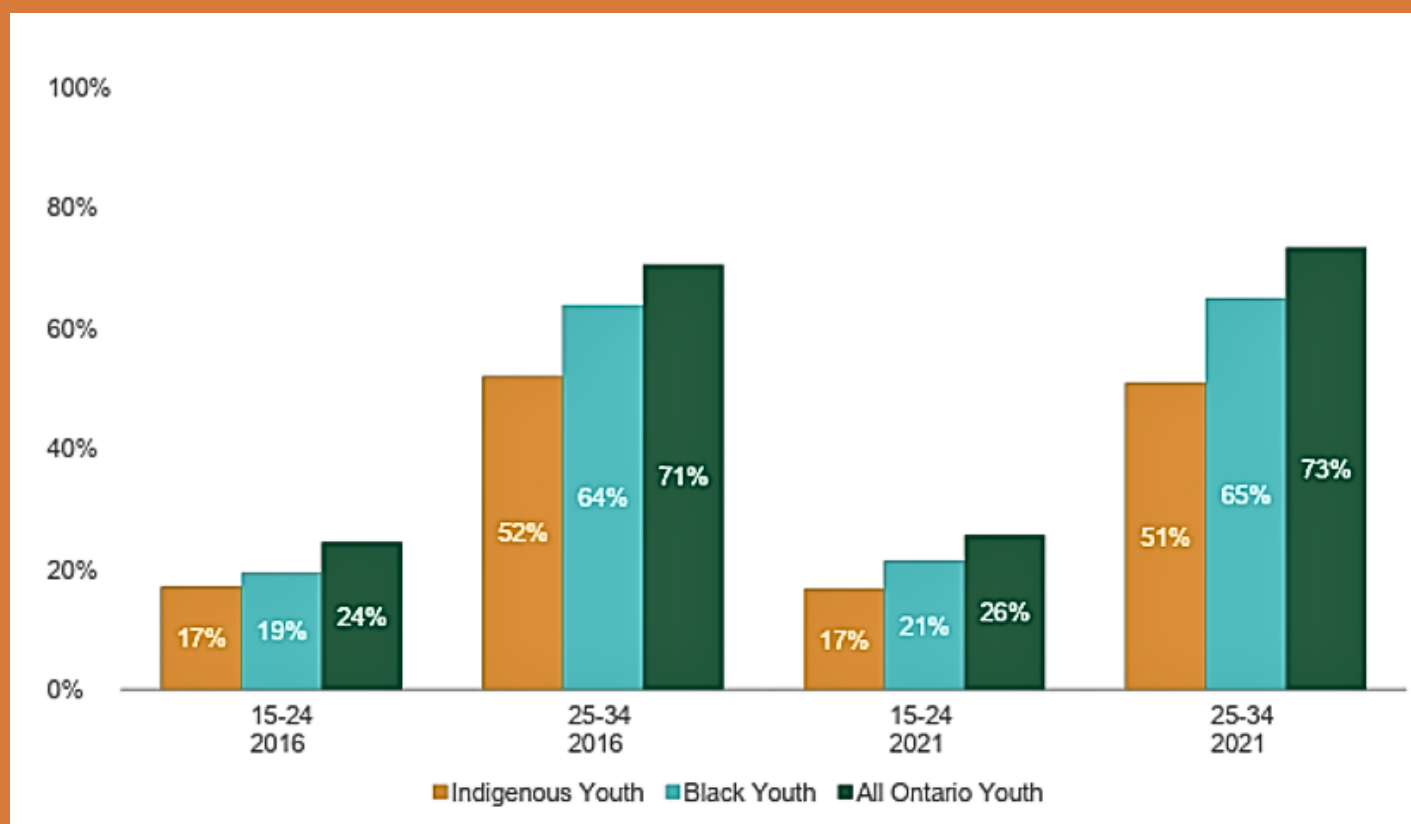
Following a release from the government, for the 2021-2022 school year, \$23.96 million was to be invested into "targeted supports for First Nation, Métis and Inuit students" to pay for "culturally appropriate and safe education opportunities" for them (News Ontario, 2021). Ontario was also set to begin offering Inuktitut as a language option for Ontario students.

The increased pressure on the Canadian government to decolonize the curriculum and incorporate more lessons about Indigenous history and culture came about after over 200 unmarked graves were discovered at a former residential school site on Tk'emlups te Secwépemc First Nation in Kamloops, B.C., which drew attention to Canada's continued disregard of Indigenous peoples and their history (Dickson and Watson, 2021). As of 2022, of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action, which were published in 2015, only 13 have been completed, and only two were completed in 2022. At this rate, it will take 42 years, or until 2065, to complete all the Calls to Action (Yellowhead Institute, 2022).

Clearly, more action is needed.

How Inequity Shows Up in Education

Black and Indigenous youth have lower levels of completion of post-secondary education in both age groups and in the two most recent Censuses. The below chart shows the post-secondary completion rate of Black and Indigenous youth compared to the rest of the student population in Ontario.



Source: Statistics Canada 2016a, 2016c, 2021a, and 2021c

“The first time I ever saw a Black professor was in college. It was great to see someone like me in that role.”
-Youth Advisory Committee Member

Going into the workplace

As we have seen with the child welfare and criminal justice systems, Black and Indigenous youth face barriers in high school, which stem from the co-occurring actions of over-policing and under-serving.

These compounded acts of racism hinder their educational achievements, create negative high school experiences, and ultimately lower their self-worth.

But how do the simultaneous events of over-policing and under-serving impact Black and Indigenous individuals as they enter the workforce? This section will paint, in broad strokes, a picture of how Black and Indigenous youth continue to face race-based inequality as they enter employment due to their experiences of over-policing and/or under-serving in other areas of their lives. Specifically, we will look at discriminatory hiring practices and how even those that seem to work in favour of Black and Indigenous applicants — enter “the diversity hire” — can sometimes perpetuate racism within the workplace even when it seeks to do the opposite.

From what we have seen in this report, it should come as no surprise that, across Canada, hiring practices generally favour white applicants. Another unsurprising fact: Black and Indigenous youth typically have lower employment levels than their non-racialized peers (Collie, 2019).

- The unemployment rate for Black youth in Toronto and Ontario is 28%, which is two times higher than the national average of 14.3%. (CABRAC, 2022)
- According to Statistics Canada, in 2016, among Indigenous youth aged 15 to 24, the unemployment rate was 23%, compared to 15.1% for non-Indigenous youth. While some youth did not enter the labour market because they were attending school, when only those who were not attending school were considered, Indigenous youth were still less likely to be

employed than their non-Indigenous counterparts (47.8% versus 72.0%) (Statistics Canada, 2021k).

In the focus groups held for this report, Black youth discussed how systemic racism and discriminatory hiring practices created gaps in their employment history. One participant recalled his experiences of job searching and being subject to prejudiced hiring practices. He vividly remembered being in a group of other candidates, all of whom were called to come back the next day to start on the job. The other candidates were told when they could come in to start work. He was ordered abruptly and rudely to return the next day and for work. However, when he came back, he was told to leave since they said they did not recognize him.

Discriminatory hiring practices are yet another example of how Black and Indigenous youth can be policed — this time, by potential employers through pre-existing racial bias. Dr. Eddy Ng of Dalhousie University has theorized that certain cultural and ethnic groups are associated with different types of work and that Black Canadians, for example, are often wrongly associated with low-level jobs, such as janitorial work, because of their socio-economic background — presumed or otherwise (Collie, 2019). However, it is also important to consider the intersectionality of discrimination (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2008). A Black youth may be more likely to be discriminated against by a future employer through a combination of their ethnicity as well as their age, compared to an older Black man with a more extensive education and/or employment history.

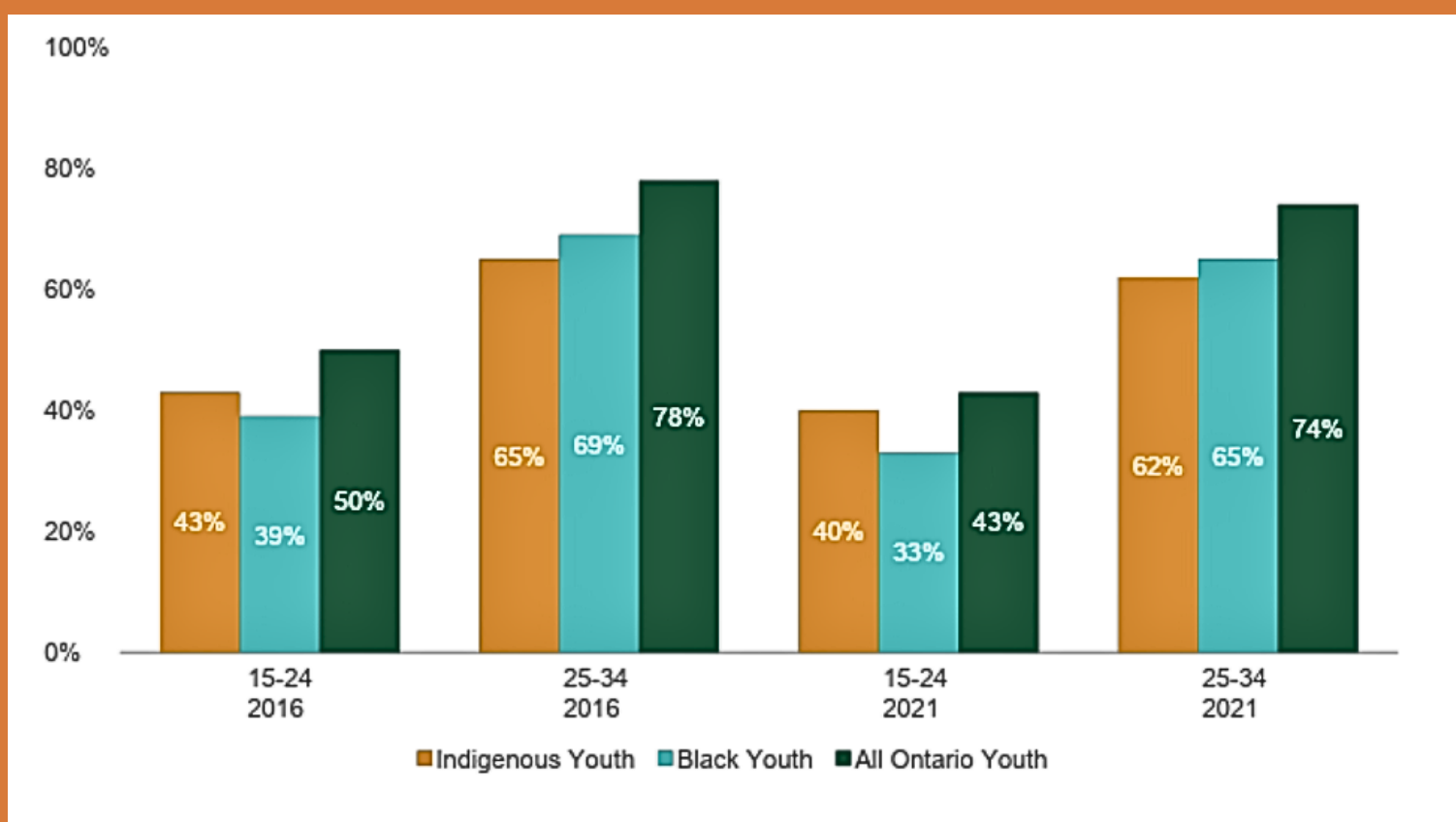
One youth in focus groups for this report also discussed having Black friends with more “traditional African sounding names.” These women, the participant said, use Western names when applying for jobs to avoid racial bias in the application process. “Women with these [African] names are seen as more aggressive than an Ashley or Patricia.”

“I’ve experienced a lot of racism and discrimination. This place I’m working now, I don’t think a lot of them like my colour. They don’t say it openly. I need to provide for myself and I don’t feel welcome or safe.”

-Youth Advisory Committee Member

How Inequity Shows Up in Employment

Black and to a lesser extent Indigenous youth are less likely to be employed at age 15 to 24 than all youth. Both Black and Indigenous youth are less likely to be employed at age 15 to 34 as per the two most recent censuses, as shown in the employment rates below.



Source: Statistics Canada, 016a, 2016e, 2021g, 2021h

“It’s hard to find a job that isn’t minimum wage, it’s hard to be able to go to school because it costs so much.”
-Youth Advisory Committee Member

Through just a few examples, we can see how policing manifests itself in hiring practices through racial bias and discrimination.

“I never even want to go to any job anymore. [...] The most important thing for me is if they could stop discrimination of colour. In terms of looking for work I was rejected due to my colour. The government should look into that so that there is work for everybody, not just people of particular ethnicity.”
-Youth Advisory Committee Member-

On the other hand, some organizations are committed to creating diversity amongst their body of employees and focus on hiring Black or Indigenous applicants. However, this can lead to unintentional racism within the workplace through **tokenism**.

Tokenism is the practice of hiring a few members of racialized groups for relatively powerless positions to create an appearance of having an inclusive and equitable organization (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2005). It can be seen as yet another example of policing through racial bias, except here, rather than directly excluding the job applicant because of their racial, cultural, or ethnic background, hiring someone because they are from a minority is intended to create a positive outcome: diversity in the workplace. In reality, however, tokenistic hiring does little to promote actual diversity or change. Individuals hired because they are from a marginalized group simultaneously have very little voice in their workplace, and yet, at the same time, they are also seen as representative of the demographic to which they belong. As a result, the individual's thoughts, beliefs, and actions are likely to be taken as typical of everyone within their group.

“Employers need to not tokenize BIPOC people. There needs to be true participation. Space needs to be held that ... belongs to BIPOC youth.”
-Youth Advisory Committee Member-

One Indigenous participant in focus groups for this report described his professional experiences during his internship at a large bank. Since he is often the only Indigenous person in the room, he said he experiences a mix of being both invisible and hyper-visible, often overlooked as Indigenous or targeted as the person who can speak for his whole community by nature of his Indigeneity when it serves the conversation.

“As someone who is in the business and financial space, and as someone who is often the only Indigenous person in the room, the responsibility falls on me to advocate for myself and my community. There really isn't much outside support in this space. In terms of invisibility, there is an issue where people make comments about certain things. Like, say, the Coastal GasLink pipeline with the Wet'suwet'en. I'm here, and there are Indigenous people around you, and you're saying such inaccurate things. And then there's the issue of tokenization – ‘What do you think the organizations can do in terms of Indigenous recruitment’ or, ‘What's the Indigenous opinion on that?’ I'm not sure if there is an ‘Indigenous opinion,’ but I can tell you my opinion on that.”
-Youth Advisory Committee Member-

Implementing anti-racist practices in the workplace involves more than token hiring. In fact, the Ontario Human Rights Commission put forward several examples of how employers and organizations can target racial discrimination at work and create more equitable spaces, which include:

- special programs, corrective measures or outreach initiatives to address inequity or disadvantage;
- empowerment of racialized persons within an organization or institution and outside it, for example, through formal mentoring arrangements, internal committees to address equality issues, community consultation, etc.
- internal and external surveying to receive feedback on issues of racism and racial discrimination; for example, exit interviews or surveys help determine whether racial discrimination or harassment was a factor in a person's decision to leave; employee or client satisfaction surveys can help assess whether employees or clients believe they are receiving equal treatment.

³The Ontario Human Rights Commission article cited here is over a decade old; however, the sentiments within remain the same and were echoed by youth participants in focus groups held for this report.

“It’s hard to find a job that isn’t minimum wage, it’s hard to be able to go to school because it costs so much.”

- Youth Advisory Committee Member-

- anticipating resistance to change and developing strategies to overcome any opposition that may arise
- seeking partnerships with others, including other institutions of a similar nature, to identify best practices
- mandatory education, training and development initiatives, including effective training of all staff on the anti-racism vision statement and policy and developing specific skills and knowledge of those with additional responsibilities for human rights including any part of the “directing mind” of the organization, human resources staff and human rights advisors. Additional training should also be made available to those in the organization responsible for proactive, ongoing monitoring or implementing organizational change.

Implementing practices like this, rather than simply hiring marginalized individuals to fill some diversity quota, is key to dismantling structural racism within the workplace.

“We need to look at the root causes of poor welfare, like poverty, food insecurity, barriers to integration into Canadian society, the inability to obtain the fruits of the Canadian dream.”

-Youth Advisory Committee Member-

Perpetuating Income Inequity and the Poverty Cycle

As a direct result of structural and systemic racism within society, Black and Indigenous youth generally grow up in unsuitable housing and experience poverty and food insecurity more than the non-racialized population. We have seen that they do not always have the financial ability to pursue their education as far as their non-BIPOC peers; then, once they enter the workforce, they are likely to face further inequity in discriminatory hiring practices that either cut them out of the candidate pool entirely or risk them being tokenized in the workplace.

All these experiences are the impacts of lives governed by the co-occurring racist actions of over-policing and under-serving Black and Indigenous populations.

In focus groups for this report, youth mentioned grappling with the cyclical nature of poverty and disenfranchisement, noting how it is hard to escape the cycle without external supports. They discussed having low income and wanting a good job to make more money but not being able to afford school or training to land jobs where they would earn more.

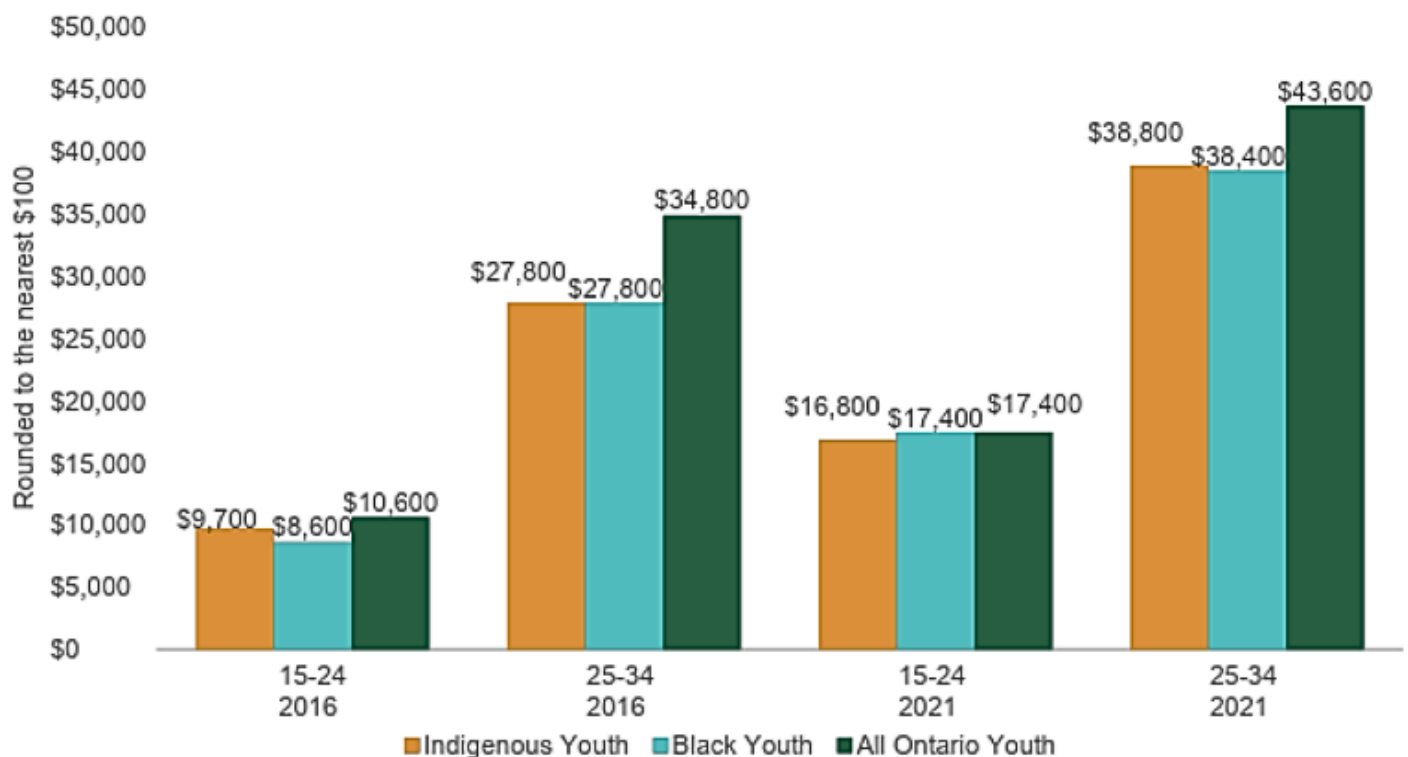
Youth also expressed frustration with being expected to have a certain amount of expertise to be considered for a job, but not being able to gain that expertise if they have family to take care of, or if no one will hire them because they have not been able to invest in themselves and meet the hiring criteria. A few others discussed the physical and emotional toll of working multiple jobs to make ends meet.

Youths cannot pursue their goals and dreams until they are more financially stable. However, due to the circumstances outlined in this report, many do not have the funding or support to pay their bills, deal with debt, become a homeowner, or run their own business.

How Inequity Shows Up in Income

In 2016, Black and Indigenous youth had lower income than all Ontario youth age 15 to 24, but there was little difference in 2021.

As demonstrated in the chart below, Black and Indigenous youth had lower income compared to all Ontario youth age 25 to 34 over the last two censuses.



Source: Statistics Canada 2016a, 2016d, 2021i, 2021j
*Not adjusted for inflation

“I invest in business and it doesn’t work out and I just give up because there is no support from nowhere. It’s not easy and I have bills to pay and family issues to attend to. It’s very hard right now. It’s not easy. Going out every day, looking at how you can do your job, like four jobs a day...”

-Youth Advisory Committee Member-

Healthcare, Mental Health, and COVID-19

Members of racialized communities “are more likely to experience inequitable living and working conditions that make them more susceptible to COVID-19, such as lower incomes, precarious employment, overcrowded housing, and limited access to health and social services.”

– Public Health Agency of Canada, 2021

So far, we have acknowledged the detrimental impact of over-policing of Black and Indigenous youth that leads to negative socioeconomic outcomes in their later lives. These outcomes, in turn, have profound repercussions on the quality of the social determinants of their health.

Social determinants of health are the non-medical factors that significantly influence a person’s overall well-being and health outcomes. These factors include socioeconomic status, education, neighborhood and physical environment, employment, and social support networks, as well as access to health care (Artiga and Hinton, 2018).

For Black and Indigenous communities, the socioeconomic factors driving unequal access to and experiences within healthcare are the result of systemic and structural racism. Let’s have a quick look at a few of them:

1) Black and Indigenous youth are more likely to live in **lower-income neighbourhoods and/or make less money** than their peers when they enter the workforce. Poverty is associated with poorer physical and mental health, and significant health inequalities have been observed for those with lower socioeconomic status, with health outcomes progressively worsening with every step of lower socio-economic status (Government of Canada, 2022, June 14).

2) Being in a lower socio-economic bracket can create bias from healthcare professionals, whereby negative perceptions of patients from doctors impacts doctor-patient communication. (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2004).

3) Experiencing racial profiling and discrimination from the general public and through experiences of being over-policed both in and out of their home communities can create disempowerment and increased stress, a driving factor in poor health outcomes (Harrel et. al, 2003).

4) Unemployment is a driving factor in accessing healthcare, and unemployed people have worse health and lower life expectancies than those with jobs (OHRC, 2004). Black individuals in Canada have high unemployment rates, and being unemployed prevents them from accessing healthcare services that are paid for or would be covered by employer insurance plans (Mental Health Commission, 2021).

5) Underrepresentation of Black and Indigenous service providers. Black physicians represent only 2.3% (Wilson, 2023) of Ontario’s population, and less than 1% of healthcare specialists and practitioners in Canada identify as Aboriginal (Ohler, 2018). A driving factor in the underrepresentation of Black and Indigenous healthcare professionals is a lack of access to wealth that can pay for medical school (Jones, 2023). Studies have shown that ethnic matching of service providers and patients “generally increases service utilisation and reduces drop-out rates” (OHRC, 2004). Additionally, culturally-appropriate services are beneficial to their respective populations. Evidence shows access to Indigenous-focused healthcare improves health outcomes for the Indigenous population; however, these healthcare models may not always be available to those who would benefit due to a lack of resources or infrastructure (Allen et al., 2020).

“Racist discourses permeate Canadian society, including in the consciousness of nurses, doctors, social workers, unit clerks, and receptionists. Many settler Canadians continue to believe the myth that ill health, disease, injury and death are often one’s own fault. There is little understanding of the social determinants of health and the role that the history of colonization, cultural oppression, socio-economic disparities, discrimination, racism, and Western organizational culture have on Indigenous peoples’ health.” – Brenda L Gunn, Associate Professor, Robson Hall Faculty of Law, University of Manitoba.

It is equally crucial to acknowledge that members of Black and Indigenous communities are subjected to further disadvantages in accessing healthcare due to discrimination within the medical system. This is yet another direct impact of over-policing stemming from systemic and structural racism, and it results in further under-serving of these communities in yet another area where they need it most.

As a result of inequity in accessing healthcare, Black and Indigenous demographics fared worse during the COVID-19 pandemic than non-racialized ones. A racialized community northwest of downtown Toronto with high numbers of Black youth — the community’s high school has the largest Black student population in Canada — and an average household income of \$27,984, which is close to half of the average of the rest of the city, became what was described as “the epicenter for COVID-19 infections” during the pandemic: The community’s COVID-19 infection rate was “10 times that of the least infected parts of the city” (James in Young Ontarians United, 2021, p. 19).

Outside of urban centres, racialized individuals faced poor health and social outcomes as a result of the pandemic due to a lack of access to basic infrastructure. The Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs noted that Indigenous communities in northern Ontario in more remote and rural areas struggled with “high unemployment, including among youth, and a lack of opportunities for meaningful economic participation and economic development” during the pandemic (Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, 2022).

Clearly, discrimination in healthcare has a direct impact on the quality of care Black and Indigenous individuals receive and further exacerbates the challenges they face in achieving equitable health outcomes. By addressing these systemic disparities and fostering a more inclusive and unbiased medical system, we can work towards ensuring that individuals from Black and Indigenous communities receive the quality of care they deserve and are not further disadvantaged by discriminatory practices.

CASE STUDY: RACISM IN HEALTHCARE

Stories of anti-Indigenous racism in healthcare have made headlines across Canada — most notably with the deaths of Bryan Sinclair in 2008 and Joyce Echaquan in 2020. Sinclair died from a treatable bladder infection after waiting over a day in an emergency room for a catheter change (Geary, 2017); before Echaquan’s death, video footage showed she was subjected to racist remarks and ridicule from hospital staff, and her treatment was found to be delayed because healthcare providers wrongly assumed she was going through withdrawal (Nerestant, 2021).

While similar stories for Black individuals have not made headlines in the way that those of Sinclair and Echaquan have, advocates continue to call out anti-Black racism in healthcare (Rodriguez, 2021). A recent study in Toronto showed that while accessing healthcare, Black individuals reported feeling discriminated against because of their racial background and said they felt talked down to by professionals or that they were not having their complaints taken seriously. These are just some examples of how Black individuals receive unequal healthcare compared to non-racialized demographics (Mahabir et. al. 2021).

Quick Facts: Mental Health for Black Youth

Black youth are more likely to access mental health care for the first time through the justice system or emergency department, and they wait longer for mental health care than other populations in Canada (Government of Canada, 2021).

38.3% of Black Canadian residents with poor or fair self-reported mental health used mental health services compared with 50.8% white Canadian residents (between 2001 and 2014). (Mental Health Commission, 2021).



A 2020 report showed that among Black-Caribbean populations, wait times for mental health care averaged 16 months, whereas wait times for white populations averaged seven (Mental Health Commission, 2021).

“[D]espite the higher prevalence of mental illness found in low-income areas (where Black populations disproportionately reside), these communities often have fewer mental health programs and services.” (Mental Health Commission, 2021).

Quick Facts: Mental Health for Indigenous Youth



Between 2011 and 2016, the suicide rate among Indigenous people in Canada was three times higher than in non-Indigenous populations, and the highest rates were among Indigenous youth aged 15 to 24 years old (Seto, 2020).

The 2017 Aboriginal Peoples Survey asked respondents if they had been diagnosed with any long-term mental health conditions. Close to one in five Indigenous youth had been diagnosed with a mood disorder (19.3%) and nearly one in four had been diagnosed with an anxiety disorder (24.3%) (Statistics Canada, 2021k).

In 2017, less than half (48.9%) of Indigenous youth reported their mental health was good or excellent (Statistics Canada, 2021k).

Young Indigenous women are more likely to have a chronic health condition than men. They are also more likely than Indigenous young men to have adverse mental health outcomes. (Statistics Canada, 2021k).



Race doesn't put you at higher risk. Racism puts you at higher risk.
(Wallis, 2020, para. 4)

Mental Health and the COVID-19 Pandemic

In addition to receiving unequal access to general healthcare, it should come as no surprise that Black and Indigenous populations suffer more with their mental health and face greater barriers in accessing mental healthcare compared to the rest of the population.

Some of the barriers that prevent Black and Indigenous youth from accessing adequate mental health care include but are not limited to, a lack of representation in mental healthcare or a lack of cultural awareness or sensitivity from healthcare providers, a sense of personal failure for suffering a mental health problem in the first place (Kalambay, 2023), and a lack of access to services compared to the non-racialized population. However, we must also recognize the legacy of colonialism and intergenerational trauma (Seto, 2020), which can have a direct impact on mental health in itself, and understand that a lack of access to trauma-informed care has been shown to worsen both physical and mental health outcomes (Allen et. al, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic was a difficult hurdle in the lives of Canadian youth (Statistics Canada, 2021k), affecting their mental health through isolation and lockdowns, online school issues, barriers to finding employment — or losing their jobs entirely — because of lockdowns, and seemingly never-ending cycles of discouraging news. While the pandemic's effect on youths' education, employment, and income added further stress to their day-to-day lives, the mental weight of COVID-19 was felt even more acutely by Black and Indigenous populations in Ontario.

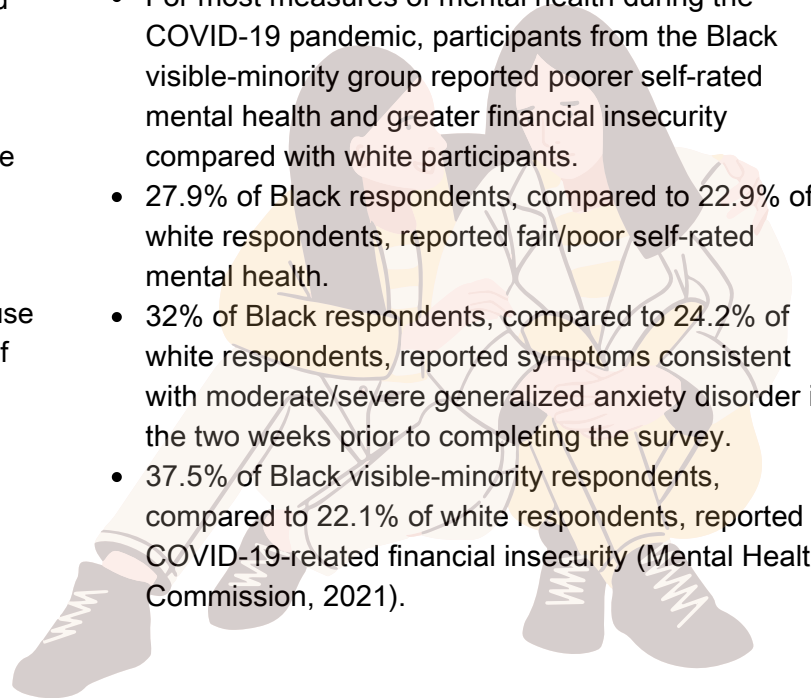
A Statistics Canada crowdsourcing data initiative of

Indigenous participants found that during the pandemic:

- 38% reported fair or poor mental health. This is more than double the 2017 Aboriginal Peoples Survey, where 16% of the Indigenous adult population reported fair or poor mental health.
- More Indigenous participants reported fair/poor mental health than non-Indigenous participants (38% compared to 23%).
- Higher proportions of Indigenous participants reported their mental health is “somewhat worse” or “much worse” since the start of physical distancing (60% compared to 52%).
- 40% of Indigenous participants described most days as “quite a bit” or “extremely” stressful; 41% reported symptoms consistent with moderate or severe anxiety, compared to 27% and 25% of non-Indigenous participants, respectively (Statistics Canada, 2021k).

The results were similar amongst the Black population in data collected for a 2020 Statistics Canada survey:

- For most measures of mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic, participants from the Black visible-minority group reported poorer self-rated mental health and greater financial insecurity compared with white participants.
- 27.9% of Black respondents, compared to 22.9% of white respondents, reported fair/poor self-rated mental health.
- 32% of Black respondents, compared to 24.2% of white respondents, reported symptoms consistent with moderate/severe generalized anxiety disorder in the two weeks prior to completing the survey.
- 37.5% of Black visible-minority respondents, compared to 22.1% of white respondents, reported COVID-19-related financial insecurity (Mental Health Commission, 2021).

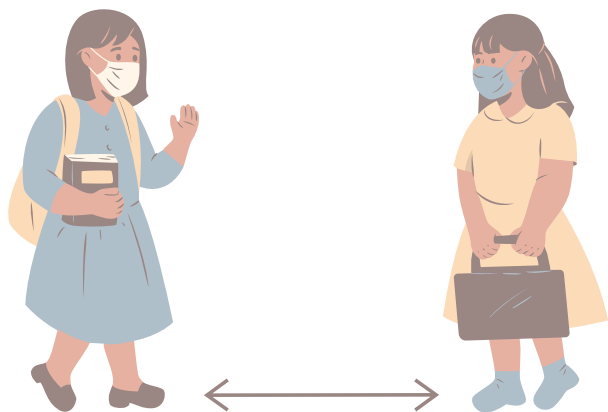


"Youth living in the poorest households were less likely to report excellent or very good mental health and more likely to report having seriously contemplated suicide in their lifetime." (Garriguet, 2021, p. 10)

The issues that are already felt by Black and Indigenous youth in their day-to-day lives, including being overrepresented in the child welfare system, difficulties in school and with employment, and in accessing healthcare in general, became suddenly worse with the addition of a global disease.

For example, racialized students struggled during the pandemic due to suddenly having to switch to learning remotely — something their households were not necessarily prepared for or equipped to deal with due to their socio-economic circumstances.

A 2021 report from the Toronto Metropolitan University showed that the pandemic impacted racialized students' education negatively as many did not have access to adequate technology for home-schooling — many reported trying to use their phones rather than computers to complete their work — lived in households that did not have equal access to the internet, and they or their family members worried about paying internet and phone bills (Toronto Metropolitan University, 2021).



Another factor behind worsened mental health during the height of COVID-19 stemmed from child welfare services being impacted by lockdowns and social distancing measures, which "reduced or eliminated many aspects of their care, including visits by family, social workers and inspectors.

as well, safeguards such as criminal record checks on caregivers faced delays" (Office of the Ombudsman of Ontario, 2021, p. 41).

In an area in which Black and Indigenous youth are already under-served, the impacts of COVID-19 not only ensured those barriers remained firmly in place, but actively strengthened them.

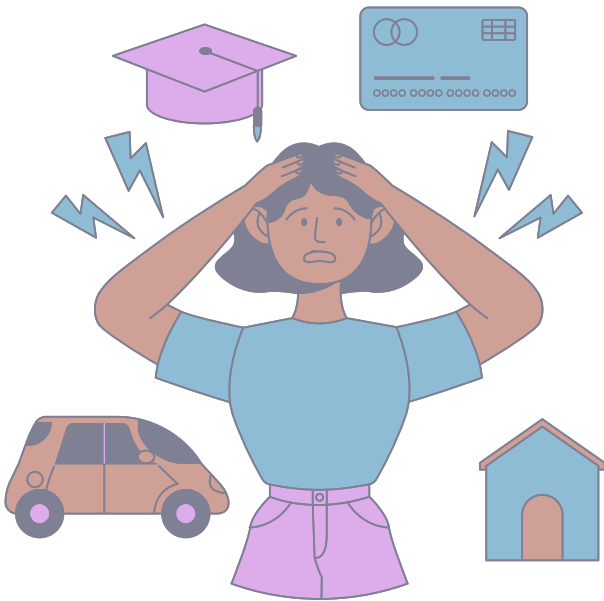
Additionally, despite the heightened need for mental health services, research found that for racialized individuals, as with their access to and experiences with healthcare in general, there were often "cultural and linguistic barriers to [accessing] services, such as gaps in representation from mental health professionals from shared ethno-racial backgrounds and a lack of culturally safe and tailored mental health supports were identified throughout the data" (Sanford et al., 2022).

What we have seen painted in this section, in broad strokes, are some of the inequities Black and Indigenous populations face when accessing and receiving healthcare in Ontario. Yet, even in this quick glance, it is extremely clear that Black and Indigenous youth are still under-served in an area where they need it most. Canada's ongoing racism towards Black and Indigenous populations has created the socio-economic factors leading to worsened health outcomes for these demographics — poverty, barriers in education and employment, apprehension by child welfare services, and overrepresentation in the justice system, to name a few.

But even when Black and Indigenous populations try to access healthcare, the services they receive are very different compared to the general population: They face economic, linguistic, and cultural barriers in accessing healthcare in the first place; there are not enough resources or services available to them; there is a lack of Black and Indigenous or culturally sensitive service providers; and they receive very different — demeaning or even deadly — experiences when they are finally able to get in the door. It is abundantly clear that Ontario needs to do more to serve the healthcare needs of these demographics.

Racialized Housing Discrimination in Ontario

“Homelessness and inadequate housing are directly linked to embedded patterns of discrimination, colonization, racism and marginalization.” – Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation, National Right to Housing Network, and Social Rights Advocacy Centre.



So far, this report has shed light on the alarming reality that Black and Indigenous youth are subjected to disproportionate representation and overrepresentation within both the child welfare and criminal justice systems. This troubling phenomenon can be attributed to deeply ingrained systemic racism, over-policing, socio-economic factors, and the intergenerational trauma stemming from Canada's colonial history. These factors intertwine to create a complex web of challenges that perpetuate the inequities faced by Black and Indigenous youth in these systems. We have also seen that even if they avoid becoming entangled in one or both of those broken systems, Black and Indigenous youth are more likely to face over-policing elsewhere: They can struggle in school and in finding employment because of discrimination, and they have unequal and inequitable access to both mental and physical healthcare, which results in generally poorer health outcomes than the rest of the population. But the experiences of inequity due to the combined forces of over-policing and under- serving do not end there.

According to a 2021 report to the United Nations General Assembly and Human Rights Council, *Housing Discrimination and Spatial Segregation in Canada* (hereafter *Housing Discrimination Report*), Black and Indigenous populations in Ontario continue to experience inadequate housing based on systemic racism and ongoing discrimination. For example, some landlords police prospective tenants by using screening methods to exclude potential renters based on their names and perceived ethnicity, thus eliminating them before they have even had the chance to view the unit (CERA, 2021).

In other instances, racial discrimination can happen more overtly: in person. In 2019, at the end of her college program, Dehani Mpoyi began an apartment search in Toronto. When she arrived at an apartment viewing, the landlord told her the unit had already been filled. Mpoyi asked a Caucasian friend to enquire about the unit; that friend had no trouble getting a viewing and was told by the landlord that the place was still available (Alini, 2021).

Discrimination against Black renters is a common barrier in access to adequate housing, resulting in highly segregated neighbourhoods in some major urban centers, and perpetuating the socio-economic cycles already in place: Low-income areas with high concentrations of racialized inhabitants (REST Centres). In Toronto, for example:

"[R]acialized individuals are concentrated in low-income neighbourhoods, and Black Torontonians in particular are overrepresented in these neighbourhoods even though half of these residents hold a post-secondary degree.

"Racist and xenophobic attitudes towards immigrants [has] led to negative stereotyping of public housing. One ongoing result of this prejudice is an over-surveillance of low-income neighbourhoods by law enforcement agencies. Whether it be racial profiling, carding, or heavy police presence, enforcement in these neighbourhoods perpetuates attitudes associated with containment and creates invisible boundaries between public housing and other types of housing. Overall, these practices attempt to legitimize surveillance of the surrounding community and the idea that public housing is dangerous, and the people living in it need to be contained" (Living in Colour).

These neighbourhoods, segregated by race, are underdeveloped, experience underinvestment, and are on the periphery of the city. There are fewer job opportunities, city services and insufficient infrastructure like transit, which makes living in these neighbourhoods more difficult and costly to access employment and services" (CERA, 2021, p. 17).

Because of existing socio-economic factors, Indigenous populations also struggle to find suitable housing: The Housing Discrimination Report notes that while Indigenous people accounted for less than 5% of the total Canadian population in the 2016 census, 18% of Indigenous households were in core housing need compared to 12% of non-Indigenous ones.

In focus groups for this report, one Métis participant shared his journey as a young parent to a 17-month-old son, whom he wants to provide a good education and connection to his Indigenous culture. It took him 45 days to find a suitable place to live.

"I was looking and looking, and no one was willing to accept me. They don't want to rent to someone like me. Some people are in school. I'm on financial aid, and I'm in treatment, so I can't get a part-time job right now. My support worker set up one viewing for me, and I needed help with finding places and explaining places for tenants because a lot of people are shy or nervous."

The struggle for adequate housing is a significant challenge faced by both Black and Indigenous populations, as evidenced by their overrepresentation within the justice system. Given these circumstances, it is unsurprising that they are also disproportionately represented among the homeless population.

The intersecting factors of systemic barriers, discrimination, and socio-economic inequities contribute to this unfortunate reality, emphasizing the urgent need for comprehensive solutions to address homelessness among Black and Indigenous communities. For example, even though Indigenous people make up 0.5 % of the total population in Toronto, they comprise 15% of its homeless population. "In fact, one study found that 1 in 15 Indigenous Peoples in urban centres experience homelessness compared to 1 in 128 for the general population. This means that Urban Indigenous Peoples are 8 times more likely to experience homelessness." (Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, 2021.)

Black youth face similar experiences to Indigenous youth in being overrepresented and underserved in the child welfare and criminal justice system as they age (Okonta, 2022). A summary report on Black youth's engagement with Canada's criminal justice system noted that "Black youth on probation or parole as well as those having served full sentences often experienced homelessness and a loss of family support following release" (Government of Canada, 2022b).

While there is less concrete data on the volume of Black youth experiencing homelessness in Canada than there is for Indigenous youth, studies suggest that along with Indigenous populations and the LGBTQ+ community, Black women are at a greater risk of homelessness than non-racialized ones (Statistics Canada, 2022c). Additionally, hidden homelessness — that is, when individuals have to stay with friends or family members because they have nowhere else to go — is harder to quantify than unsheltered homelessness. Therefore, the amount of Black youth currently experiencing homelessness is likely much higher than many Canadians would like to think.

Conclusion

What Do Youth Want and What Must We Provide?

"Equity is different than equality — equality is putting people on the same standards — bringing the white and the Black and putting them in the same place. Equity is actually a very big part that we need in society — it's not the same as equality; blanket solutions will not work for everybody. We need tailored supports."

-Youth Advisory Committee Member-

This project had the privilege of sitting with over 100 Black and Indigenous youth from across Ontario who had the courage to share their stories of perseverance in the face of hardship. young peoples identified the external challenges and barriers they face and actions that can be taken to overcome them.

What young people have experienced in their lives underlines the sad, persistent reality that Black and Indigenous individuals exist within broken systems that discriminate against them from the get-go, resulting in experiences of being simultaneously over-policed and under-served in key areas as they age – most often, in the areas in which they need the most support. As we have seen, compared to their non-racialized peers, Black and Indigenous youth are more likely to grow up in unsuitable housing; they are overrepresented in the child-welfare system; they can have less successful academic careers, facing increased likelihood of school suspensions and expulsions; they experience more run-ins with the law due to over-policing practices in all areas in which they live, learn, and work, and are subsequently overrepresented in the justice system.

And then, even if they are able to stay outside of the child welfare and criminal justice systems, Black and Indigenous youth continue to face inequity in virtually all other forms of society: They have unequal access to employment opportunities, promotions, economic security, housing, and healthcare — all of which stems from being overpoliced and hyper surveilled by a racially biased public — which consequently perpetuates the cycle of inequity in which they live.

The stories participants shared in focus groups for this report underlined that as a result of over-policing stemming from ongoing racial discrimination, they are consistently under-served in the areas they need it most.

However, in discussions for this report, the youth interviewed showed purpose despite circumstance and hope, not skepticism. They believe collective action can rewrite their futures and lead to lasting systemic change. In focus groups for this report, the youth discussed their need for financial assistance, mental health supports, positive Black and Indigenous role models and mentors, and more involvement with community, family, and their culture. The following four core changes identified by youth in discussion groups have informed the Calls to Action at the end of this report.

What Do Youth Want?

1) Greater connection to Community, Family, and Culture

"There is a lot of depth and meaning within the ceremonies that we do."

Youth interviewed for this report expressed a strong desire to remain connected to their roots. More Black and Indigenous-specific cultural programming and support services are required for young people to remain connected to their ancestral communities and practices, which will, in turn, foster a strong sense of identity and self-worth, enabling them to have pride in their identities, even in the face of ongoing discrimination.

“So often we are silenced. People are protected by their bubbles, and I am here to pop it.”

“As BIPOC individuals, we learn early that we are stronger with community and that we will get through things as a community.”

- Youth Advisory Committee Member-

2) Mental Health Supports

“There has been a lot of trauma these past few years, and we need supports to deal with it.”

Black and Indigenous youth grapple with intergenerational trauma stemming from colonialism as well as ongoing racial discrimination across all areas of society. It is unsurprising that their mental health has suffered as a result. In focus groups for this report, Black and Indigenous youth identified a need for healthcare practitioners with a greater understanding of their specific experiences. Culturally-informed and trauma-informed mental health supports are key for Black and Indigenous youth when accessing mental healthcare.

3) Financial and Career Support

Black and Indigenous youth live generally in lower socio-economic brackets than their non-racialized peers. More financial support and services, such as teaching financial literacy and providing financial aid where needed, are required for Black and Indigenous youth to excel in the same way as their peers.

“Transitional supports for youth entering adulthood are lacking. Financial literacy – where the heck was that support when I was younger?”

-Youth Advisory Committee Member

Youth also discussed the need for job training, additional school, career mentors, or paid internships that would help them accomplish their goals. Excelling in the world of entrepreneurship was a reoccurring aspect in focus groups, with

several youth already trying to start their own small businesses. However, many youth are unable to pursue their dreams until they are more financially stable.

Youth often mentioned the need for support services such as housing and home bills, educational, employment, income, financial literacy, and childcare. Housing and employment were specifically mentioned as areas where discrimination was built-in to the system.

Youth also want solutions that address the role of economic racism in shaping inequitable experiences of COVID-19 and growing gaps in assets held by different groups.

4) Wrap-around Services

In focus groups for this project, youth called attention to the importance of tailoring supports to their respective demographics and ensuring support systems and services are equitable, coordinated, and fairly distributed, with an emphasis on getting support to those who need it most. Supports should be accessible in communities, affordable, and culturally relevant, and youth must know they are available. Youth identified wrap-around services and programs. —which follow principles of being youth-driven, family-driven, and strengths-based, and they utilize an entire team of people to meet the needs of youth and families — as a solution to counteract the inequity and lack of services they receive.

Wrap-around services provide a holistic, team-based model of care, which would benefit Black and Indigenous youth in core areas. A 2021 study showed that wrap-around services produce more positive outcomes for youth and may hold potential for reducing disparities in outcomes for youth of color with mental health services (Olson et al., 2021).

Calls to Action

We need role models and mentors who look and speak like us to help us build up our skills and confidence. They can be our peers or adults we trust. We need someone in our corner telling us that we can do it and guiding us to supports. We also want to see people who look like us in positions of influence everywhere. In school, at work, and in our political leaders. Leaders need to share power in order to empower our communities. You can't be it if you don't see it."

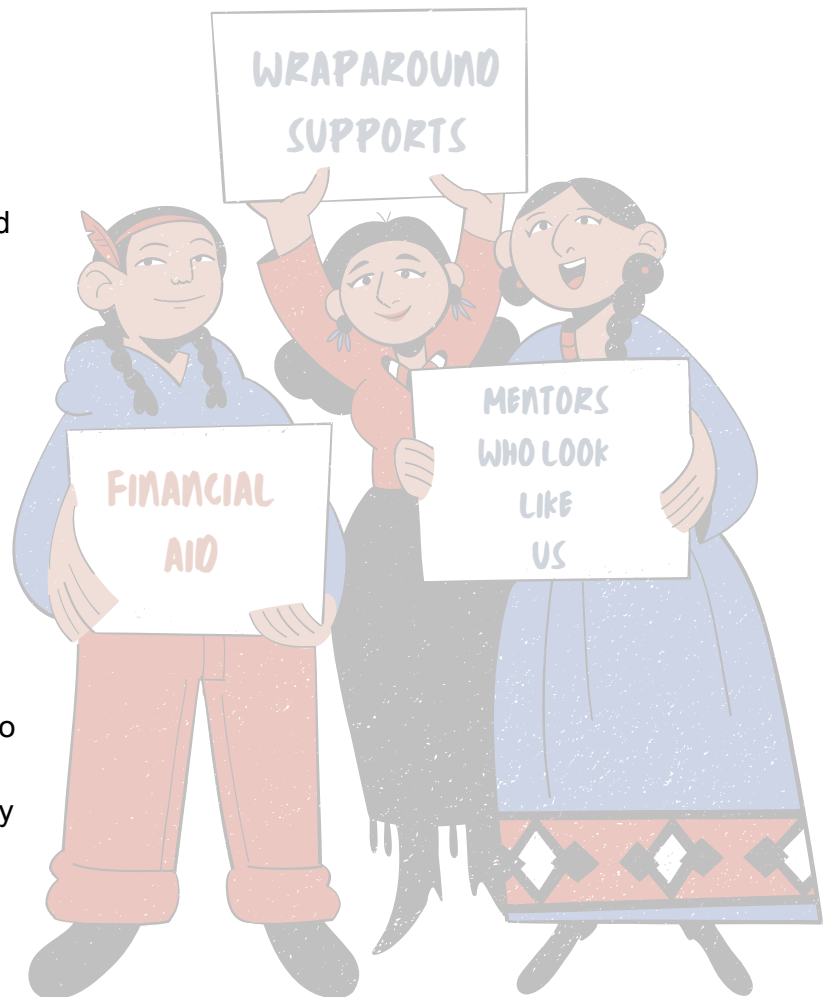
-Youth Advisory Committee Member-

In order to address the systemic racism and resulting inequities that continue to impact all areas of life for Black and Indigenous youth in Ontario, and to provide individual tailored, coordinated, and culturally safe support to youth who need it most, government departments and agencies, philanthropic organizations, community groups, leaders, businesses, and the public must listen and collaborate.

The following Calls to Action are inspired by our discussions with the youth interviewed for this report— calls for meaningful, systemic change across all areas of society.

Our first four Calls to Action, which fall under the theme, Promoting Anti-Racism, Advocacy, and Allyship, are universal.

The remaining calls have been divided into those to be implemented by the government and philanthropic sectors. For those to be addressed by the government, we have arranged the Calls by theme as they have arisen in this report. For the philanthropic sector, Calls are focused on continued advocacy and inclusion, as well as removing barriers to grants and funding.



Calls to Action: Promoting Anti-Racism, Advocacy, and Allyship

We call upon the General Public, Government, and Philanthropic Sector to:

1) Understand and educate others on systemic racism affecting Black and Indigenous youth.

Continuous education and dissemination of knowledge on the historical experiences of Black and Indigenous communities in Canada is crucial to understanding what pushes them to the margins of society, where they are subsequently overrepresented and/or underserved in the Education System, Justice, System, and Child Welfare System. This serves as the first step in eradicating systemic racism in our society.

Understand that these experiences and involvement in all three systems are interrelated and thus require collaborative efforts between and within Government Ministries, the Philanthropic sector, Private Sector and the General Public, to dismantle discriminatory practices that create and perpetuate pathways into these systems, resulting in poor social determinants of health in youth and in adulthood as well as poor overall livelihood outcomes for the youth of these communities and their families now and for generations to come.

2) Act in solidarity and help dismantle systemic racism, discrimination, and other injustices by contributing to and supporting anti-racist attitudes, practices, and policies across different sectors. This involves, for example, the following continued actions:

- Understand the history of and both past and present impacts of racism, and how racism continues to influence all areas of society;
- Examine and confront your own internalized biases and racist beliefs;
- Stand up to everyday racism;
- Have meaningful conversations with others discussing why racism—whether it be overt or covert—is harmful;
- Promote anti-racist beliefs and practices (Sockbeson, 2023).

- Continue to learn about how racist attitudes, practices, and policies continue to impact minority individuals across all areas of society: Stay on top of the news; be aware of happenings in your work spaces, organizations, communities, and homes.

3) Through ongoing allyship, awareness, and education about racial discrimination in society, help to foster safe and inclusive spaces.

Examples include schools or in the workplace. Black and Indigenous people should be made to feel safe, welcomed, and supported, and where they can discuss any issues they are experiencing without prejudice in order to come to meaningful resolutions.

These spaces should ensure equal and fair treatment as well as equitable practices, which will require the understanding of the diverse needs of individuals and groups to create avenues rooted in liberation and justice so that everyone can access to the same opportunities.

4) Get involved in anti-racist advocacy and education. This may be done by attending protests or supporting organizations and their movements, as well as recognizing months or days dedicated to Black and Indigenous advocacy.

Examples include Black Lives Matter, Defunding the Police, and Black History Month (February) to support the Black community and recognizing The National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (Orange Shirt Day), the National Day for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, National Indigenous Peoples' Day, and Indigenous History Month (June) for the Indigenous community.

Becoming involved in a social movement shows your support and increases awareness regarding ongoing issues within society that require lasting, systemic change.

Calls to Action: Promoting Anti-Racism, Advocacy, and Allyship

To effectively address the needs and aspirations of Black and Indigenous youth, it is essential to place them and their families at the center of advocacy efforts and program design. Youth and their close supports should be empowered to lead these efforts with support from governments and community organizations.

We call upon the government and philanthropic sectors to provide the following:



5) Empower Youth Leadership: Prioritize the leadership of Black and Indigenous youth in designing and implementing programs and policies that directly affect them. Provide opportunities for youth to take on leadership roles, engage in decision-making processes, and actively contribute to the development of solutions that address their unique challenges.

6) Amplify Youth Voices: Create platforms and spaces for Black and Indigenous youth to share their perspectives and experiences openly. Value their voices as experts on their own lives and experiences, and ensure that their input is taken seriously in shaping programs and services.

7) Inclusive Decision-Making: Involve youth in all conversations and decisions related to policies, programs, and services that impact them. Include them in advisory committees, consultations, and decision-making forums to ensure their perspectives are considered at every level.

8) Invest in Youth-Led Initiatives: Allocate funding, training, mentorship, and other resources to support and sustain Black and Indigenous youth-led initiatives. Encourage and enable youth to develop their own solutions and projects that address the issues they face in their communities.

9) Capacity Building and Skill Development: Offer training and capacity-building opportunities to equip youth with the skills and knowledge needed to advocate for their rights and drive positive change. This includes leadership development, policy analysis, communication skills, and community organizing.

10) Culturally Responsive Approaches: Ensure that advocacy efforts and program design are culturally responsive and consider the diverse needs and backgrounds of Black and Indigenous youth. Collaborate with culturally specific organizations to provide tailored support and services.

11) Continuous Learning and Improvement: Engage in ongoing learning and evaluation to understand the impact of youth-led initiatives and make improvements based on feedback from youth and their families.

By centering Black and Indigenous youth and their families in advocacy efforts and program design, we can create more effective and meaningful interventions that address the root causes of challenges these communities face. This approach fosters a sense of ownership and agency among youth, leading to greater empowerment and positive outcomes for their well-being and future success.

Calls to Action: Strategies to Prevent the Prison Pipeline

To prevent Black and Indigenous youth from becoming entrapped in the school-to-prison or child welfare-to-prison pipelines, it is crucial to implement more holistic wrap-around services within the child welfare, justice, and education systems. This approach aims to address the root causes and systemic barriers that contribute to the overrepresentation of young people in these pipelines.

We call upon the Government to provide the following:



1) Early Intervention and Support: Implement early intervention programs that provide support to at-risk youth, addressing their needs before they become entangled in the criminal justice or child welfare systems. This includes access to mental health services, counselling, and mentorship programs to help them navigate challenges and build positive coping mechanisms.

2) Culturally Responsive Practices: Develop culturally responsive practices within schools, child welfare agencies, and the justice system. This involves recognizing and respecting the diverse cultural backgrounds of Black and Indigenous youth, as well as understanding and addressing the impact of historical trauma and colonialism on their experiences.

3) Restorative Justice: Promote restorative justice practices as an alternative to punitive measures within the justice system. These approaches focus on repairing harm, healing relationships, and reintegrating individuals into their communities, rather than perpetuating cycles of punishment and incarceration.

4) Trauma-Informed Care: Train educators, child welfare workers, and justice system personnel in trauma-informed care to better understand and respond to the traumatic experiences many Black and Indigenous youth face. Creating supportive and safe environments can help prevent further harm and re-traumatization.

5) Wrap-Around Support Services: Establish comprehensive wrap-around support services that address the multiple needs of Black and Indigenous youth. This may include housing assistance, academic support, vocational training, and access to recreational and extracurricular activities.

6) Community Engagement and Collaboration: Engage Black and Indigenous communities in the design and implementation of programs and policies that affect their youth. Collaborating with community organizations and leaders can ensure that interventions are culturally appropriate and responsive to the specific needs of young people.

7) Data Collection and Evaluation: Implement data collection and evaluation mechanisms to track the progress and effectiveness of interventions. This helps identify areas of improvement and ensures that resources are directed toward evidence-based strategies.

By integrating these holistic wrap-around services, we can create a more inclusive and equitable system that supports the well-being and success of Black and Indigenous youth, breaking the cycle of school-to-prison or child welfare-to-prison pipelines.

Calls to Action: The Child Welfare System

We call upon all levels of Government to provide the following:



1) Family Preservation and Reunification: Shift the focus of the child welfare system towards family preservation and reunification whenever possible. Invest in resources that support families in crisis, such as parenting programs, mental health services, and addiction treatment, to address the root causes of child removal.

2) Culturally Responsive Services: Ensure that child welfare services are culturally responsive and sensitive to the diverse needs of Black and Indigenous families. Implement trauma-informed care and culturally appropriate practices to support families in a holistic manner.

3) Transparency and Accountability: Enhance transparency and accountability within the child welfare system. Establish mechanisms for families to voice their concerns and grievances, and hold child welfare agencies accountable for their actions and decision-making processes.

4) Foster Care Reforms: Implement reforms in the foster care system to provide stable and nurturing environments for children in care. Ensure that foster parents are adequately supported and trained to meet the specific needs of the children they care for.

5) Education and Life Skills Support: Provide educational and life skills support to youth transitioning out of the child welfare system. Offer resources for higher education, vocational training, and independent living to empower youth to succeed in adulthood.

6) Early Intervention and Prevention: Invest in early intervention and prevention programs that identify and address risk factors for child welfare involvement. Support families at-risk to prevent the need for child removal.

7) Data Collection and Evaluation: Improve data collection and evaluation in the child welfare system to monitor outcomes and identify areas for improvement. Use data to inform evidence-based policies and practices.

8) Support for Kinship Care: Recognize the importance of kinship care and provide support to extended family members or community members who care for children in need. This can be a culturally relevant and supportive option for children who cannot be with their biological parents.

9) Partnership with Community Organizations: Collaborate with community-based organizations and advocacy groups that work directly with Black and Indigenous families. Create partnerships to co-design and implement services that are responsive to community needs and preferences.

By implementing these Calls to Action, the child welfare system and government can work towards creating a more inclusive, supportive, and culturally responsive environment for Black and Indigenous families. These measures aim to empower families to thrive and stay together whenever possible, while also ensuring that children in need receive the best possible care and support.

Calls to Action: Education

We call upon all levels of Government to provide the following:



1) Equity in Education Funding: Ensure equitable distribution of education funding, directing additional resources to schools and districts that serve marginalized communities, including Black and Indigenous students. This will address disparities and improve educational opportunities for all students.

2) Culturally Responsive Curriculum: Implement a culturally responsive and inclusive curriculum that accurately reflects the history, culture, and contributions of Black and Indigenous communities. This will promote a more inclusive learning environment and help students develop a positive sense of identity and belonging.

3) Anti-Racist Training for Educators: Require ongoing anti-racist and culturally responsive training for educators and school staff. This training will help address bias and discrimination in the classroom and foster an inclusive and supportive learning environment.

4) Support Culturally Specific Programs: Provide funding and support for culturally specific programs and initiatives that address the unique needs of Black and Indigenous students. These programs can help improve academic outcomes and provide social and emotional support.

5) Reduce the School-to-Prison Pipeline: Implement strategies to reduce the school-to-prison pipeline, such as restorative justice practices, positive behavior interventions, and de-escalation techniques. This will create a nurturing and supportive school environment that keeps students engaged in learning.

6) Address Disproportionate Discipline: Address disproportionate discipline and suspension rates for Black and Indigenous students by implementing alternative disciplinary approaches that prioritize understanding and support over punitive measures.

7) Diverse Representation in Staff and Leadership: Increase diversity in the teaching workforce and school leadership to provide positive role models for all students and create a more inclusive educational environment.

8) Community Engagement: Foster meaningful engagement with Black and Indigenous communities in educational decision-making processes. Involve parents, guardians, and community members in shaping policies and programs that impact students' educational experiences.

9) Long-Term Education Strategy: Develop a comprehensive, long-term education strategy that includes measurable goals for improving educational outcomes for Black and Indigenous students. Regularly monitor progress and adjust strategies as needed to ensure continuous improvement.

By taking these Calls to Action, the education system and government can work together to create a more equitable and inclusive learning environment for Black and Indigenous students. These measures aim to close the achievement gap, reduce disparities, and empower students to succeed academically and thrive in their educational journey.

Calls to Action: Going into the Workforce

We call upon all levels of Government to provide the following:

1) Mentorship Programs: Establish mentorship programs that connect Black and Indigenous youth with successful role models from their communities.

These programs can provide guidance, advice, and encouragement as youth navigate their educational and career paths.

Having more role models of the same cultural, racial, and/or ethnic background as them provides Black and Indigenous youth a greater chance to thrive in high school and beyond. As such, organizations must prioritize initiatives aimed at identifying and supporting Black and Indigenous mentors and role models.

2) Scholarships and financial support: Offer scholarships and financial support specifically targeted at Black and Indigenous students to alleviate financial barriers to education and ensure they have equal access to opportunities.

3) Career Development Initiatives: Develop career development initiatives that offer internships, apprenticeships, and job shadowing opportunities with Black and Indigenous professionals. This exposure can help youth explore various career paths and gain valuable work experience.

4) Networking Opportunities: Organize networking events and workshops that bring together Black and Indigenous youth and professionals from different fields. These events can facilitate meaningful connections and open doors to potential mentors and career opportunities.

5) Representation in Education: Ensure that Black and Indigenous history, culture, and contributions are accurately represented in educational curricula. This can foster a sense of pride and identity among students and provide positive role models from their own communities.

6) Cultural Safety Training: Provide cultural safety training to educators, employers, and professionals to better understand and support Black and Indigenous students and employees. This fosters an inclusive and supportive environment for their growth and development.

7) Leadership Development: Invest in leadership development programs that empower Black and Indigenous youth to take on leadership roles and advocate for their needs and interests in various spheres.

8) Allyship and Advocacy: Encourage non-Black/Indigenous individuals to actively support and advocate for the needs of Black and Indigenous youth. This includes advocating for diversity and inclusion in educational institutions and workplaces.

9) Peer Support Networks: Create peer support networks and safe spaces for Black and Indigenous youth to connect with their peers and share experiences, challenges, and successes. Black and Indigenous youth should lead the creation and the government should fund and support the networks.

10. Continued Support in the Workforce: Ensure ongoing support for Black and Indigenous individuals as they enter the workforce can include mentorship programs, professional development opportunities, mental health supports, and initiatives to address workplace discrimination.

This will create a positive and empowering environment for the next generation of youth and help them navigate their educational journey and enter the workforce with confidence, enabling them to thrive and contribute to their communities and society at large.

Calls to Action: The Justice System

We call upon all levels of Government to provide the following:



1) Address Systemic Racism: Acknowledge and address the systemic racism that exists within the criminal justice system. Implement policies and practices that aim to eliminate racial bias at all levels, from policing to sentencing.

2) Police Training and Accountability: Implement ongoing training for police officers to foster cultural safety, de-escalation techniques, implicit bias awareness, anti-Black racism and anti-Indigeneity. Establish accountability mechanisms to address misconduct and excessive use of force.

3) Diversion Programs and Community-Based Alternatives: Invest in and expand diversion programs that provide alternatives to incarceration for low-level offences, especially for youth, such as restorative justice programs and community courts. These should focus on rehabilitation, restorative justice, the root causes of criminal behaviour, as well as healing and repairing harm caused by engaging in it.

4) Mental Health and Substance Abuse Support: Enhance mental health and substance abuse support within the criminal justice system. Provide comprehensive mental health assessments and treatment options for individuals who come into contact with the system, prioritizing rehabilitation and support over punishment.

5) Data Collection and Transparency: Enhance data collection and transparency within the criminal justice system to identify racial disparities and hold institutions accountable for their actions. This data should be publicly accessible to promote trust and accountability.

6) Investing in Rehabilitation and Reentry: Increase funding for rehabilitation and reentry programs for incarcerated individuals, with a focus on education, job training, and access to resources that support successful reintegration into society.

7) Review Sentencing Policies: Conduct a comprehensive review of sentencing policies and guidelines to ensure they are fair, equitable, and evidence-based. Aim to reduce overrepresentation of Black and Indigenous individuals in the criminal justice system.

8) Engage with Black and Indigenous Communities: Actively engage with Black and Indigenous communities in trauma-informed ways, to co-create policies and solutions that address their unique needs and concerns. Involve community members in decision-making processes and policy development to ensure their voices are heard and respected.

By implementing the following Calls to Action, the criminal justice system and government can work towards creating a more just and equitable society, where all individuals, regardless of their background, are treated fairly and with dignity. These measures can help reduce racial disparities, foster community trust, and promote rehabilitation and healing rather than perpetuating cycles of harm and incarceration.

Calls to Action: The Philanthropic Sector

The philanthropic sector can play a crucial role in empowering Black and Indigenous youth and supporting initiatives that promote their well-being, success, and agency. Together, these efforts can lead to positive and sustainable changes that uplift and celebrate the diversity and resilience of Black and Indigenous communities.



1) Increased Funding for Youth-Led Initiatives: Philanthropic organizations should increase funding and support for youth-led initiatives that are focused on addressing the needs and aspirations of Black and Indigenous youth. These initiatives should be co-designed and led by young Black and Indigenous people, empowering them to drive positive change in their communities.

2) Culturally Relevant Programs and Services: Invest in culturally relevant programs and services that cater to the unique needs and experiences of Black and Indigenous youth. This includes

initiatives that promote cultural identity, mental health support, education, and career development.

3) Capacity Building for Youth Organizations: Provide capacity-building support to Black-led and Indigenous-led organizations. This includes resources for organizational development, leadership training, and sustainability planning. Offer capacity-building support and resources to help organizations strengthen their grant application skills and overall effectiveness.

4) Equity and Diversity in Granting: Ensure equity and diversity in the granting process, with a commitment to funding organizations that represent and support Black and Indigenous youth. Philanthropic organizations should actively seek out and fund organizations that are rooted in these communities.

5) Collaboration and Collective Impact: Encourage collaboration and collective impact initiatives that bring together multiple stakeholders, including youth, community organizations, and philanthropic partners, to address systemic issues faced by Black and Indigenous youth.

6) Data and Impact Measurement: Prioritize data collection and impact measurement to understand the outcomes of funding and programs for Black and Indigenous youth. Use this data to inform future grantmaking decisions and improve the effectiveness of initiatives.

7) Support for Youth Civic Engagement: Invest in programs that promote youth civic engagement and leadership, enabling Black and Indigenous youth to participate in advocacy, policy development, and community decision-making.

Calls to Action: The Philanthropic Sector

8) Mentorship and Role Model Programs: Create mentorship and role model programs that connect Black and Indigenous youth with successful individuals from their communities. These programs can offer guidance, support, and positive examples for young people to look up to.

9) Addressing Systemic Barriers: Philanthropic organizations should advocate for and support initiatives that address systemic barriers and inequities faced by Black and Indigenous youth, both within the philanthropic sector and society at large.

10) Youth Representation in Philanthropic Organizations: Actively involve Black and Indigenous youth in philanthropic organizations' decision-making processes. This includes having Black and Indigenous youth representatives on advisory boards, involving them in grant review panels, and hiring them as decision-making staff.

We believe that the following **Calls 11-18** can foster a more inclusive, accessible, and equitable grant application process. Reducing barriers to accessing grants will enable a broader range of organizations to access essential funding and resources, ultimately leading to more effective and impactful programs benefiting the communities they serve.

11) Offer Multi-Year Funding: Consider offering multi-year funding options to reduce the burden of frequent application cycles on organizations. This enables recipients to focus on program implementation and impact rather than continuous fundraising efforts.

12) Provide Flexible Funding: Provide flexible funding that allows organizations to use the funds in ways that best address their unique needs and priorities. Avoid overly restrictive funding that may hinder innovation and adaptability.

13) Increase Transparency: Enhance transparency in the granting process by providing clear information about eligibility criteria, funding priorities, and decision-making processes. This builds trust and confidence among applicants.

14) Simplify Reporting Requirements: Simplify reporting requirements for grant recipients to minimize administrative burdens. Focus on outcome-based reporting rather than detailed financial and programmatic data.

15) Prioritize Equity and Inclusion: Emphasize equity and inclusion in grantmaking practices. Encourage applications from organizations serving marginalized and underrepresented communities, including Black and Indigenous communities.

16) Engage in Outreach and Support: Proactively engage with potential grantees through outreach efforts, workshops, and webinars. Provide pre-application support and feedback to improve the quality of submissions.

17) Foster Collaboration: Encourage collaboration among organizations to apply for grants together. Cooperative efforts can enhance the impact of projects and leverage collective strengths.

18) Continuous Learning and Improvement: Philanthropic organizations should continuously assess and improve their grantmaking processes based on feedback from applicants. Seek input from grant recipients to identify areas for enhancement.



Closing Reflections from the Youth Advisory Committee

Reading the words of Black and Indigenous young people, while simultaneously reflecting on my own experiences as a Young Black woman, I am hurt, angry and sad, but unsurprised that the state of affairs for Black and Indigenous young people is continuously neglected and not prioritized.

As I read through the quotes and sit with the data, what I am seeing is a repeat of history, a repeat of hurt, a repeat of injustice. The words and the data illustrate a story that there is not enough urgency behind the support of the wellbeing of Black and Indigenous youth and their families. Young people are consistently left behind and forced to make the best of very poorly constructed circumstances.

What the pandemic and the onset of COVID19 has shown us is that the infrastructure of systemic care for most Black and Indigenous youth, their families, and communities in Canada is so deficiently supported that the compounding effects from pervasive oppression, racism, poverty, and a worldwide health crisis pushes Black and Indigenous young people further out to the margins and left them more vulnerable than ever.

Canada, you have made significant commitments. These include the establishment of initiatives to combat anti-Black racism, the implementation of Truth and Reconciliation, and your endorsement of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and sustainable development goals. This underscores the shared responsibility among provinces, cities, and the various systems and institutions operating within these domains to actively fulfill these commitments through advocacy, accountability, and public service.

As you flip through the pages of this report, as a decision maker, as an elected official, as a service worker, as an advocate, or as an ally, I hope that

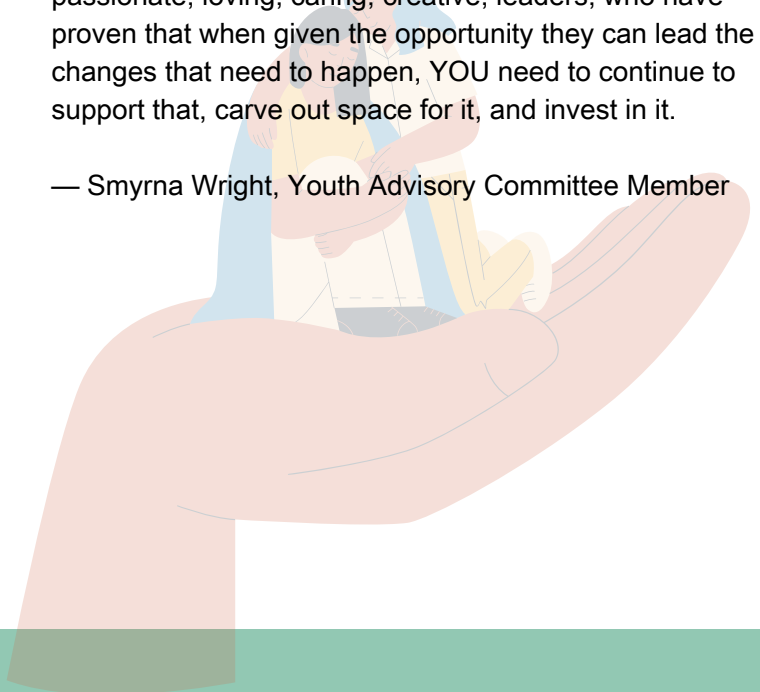
you interrogate what it means to care and show that practically. The work that needs to be done and the recommendations that are outlined in this report require time, they require critical reflection and review, they require the voices of young people to lead the change and be supported through this; it requires monetary investment and it requires urgency.

The themes in this report are not new phenomenon, but the compounding pressure on young people as a result of racism, the pandemic, poverty, inequity and discrimination has amplified the already existing need for change, as the gaps grow bigger and the margins get further the urgency becomes more and more dominant as the days go by. When does this vicious cycle of systemic oppression that follows Black and Indigenous people from babies into their adulthood end?

I am so happy that Black and Indigenous youth are sometimes able to lean into the love of their communities and families to find a way through, but positive development for young people does not have to continuously test the limits of their resiliency.

As you see in this report, Black and Indigenous youth are passionate, loving, caring, creative, leaders, who have proven that when given the opportunity they can lead the changes that need to happen, YOU need to continue to support that, carve out space for it, and invest in it.

— Smyrna Wright, Youth Advisory Committee Member



Definitions of Key Terms

Allyship is an active, consistent, and arduous practice of unlearning and re-evaluating, in which a person in a position of privilege and power seeks to operate in solidarity with a marginalized group. Allyship is not an identity nor self-defined. (The Anti-Oppression Network, 2021).

Anti-racism is the practice of opposing racism and taking proactive steps to promote racial equality. It's different from other approaches that focus on multiculturalism or diversity because it acknowledges that systemic racism exists and actively confronts the unequal power dynamic between groups and the structures that sustain it. Anti-racism involves consistently assessing structures, policies and programs, and through monitoring outcomes, ensuring they are fair and equitable for everyone. (Government of Ontario, 2017, p. 11).

Colonialism occurs when one nation conquers and exploits another, often forcing its own language and cultural values upon its people. Historically, colonial actions and practices such as Western exploration and expansion, have led to western European (white) culture being seen as superior to others and has made society unaccepting of racialized persons (Ahmed, 2007, p. 153). Colonialism has led to ideologies such as white supremacy, and subsequent racist thought and practice has driven disparities and discrimination in services. (Adjei & Minka, 2018; Bonnie, et al., 2022, p. 15).

Discrimination is any form of unequal treatment based on a ground protected by human rights legislation, that results in disadvantage, whether imposing extra burdens or denying benefits. Discrimination can be intentional or unintentional; and it may occur at an individual or systemic level. It may include direct actions or more subtle aspects of rules, practices and procedures that limit or prevent access to opportunities, benefits, or advantages that are available to others. (The 519, 2020).

Equality is the practice of ensuring equal treatment to all people, without consideration of individual and group diversities. (The 519, 2020).

Equity The practice of ensuring fair, inclusive and respectful treatment of all people, with consideration of individual and group diversities. Access to services, supports and opportunities and attaining economic, political and social fairness cannot be achieved by treating individuals in exactly the same way. Equity honours and accommodates the specific needs of individuals/ groups. (The 519, 2020).

Intergenerational trauma is trauma that is passed down from those who directly experience an incident to subsequent generations. (United Way Greater Toronto, 2020).

Indian Residential School System was active from the 1820s to 1996 in Canada, aimed to assimilate Indigenous children into Western society by sending them to Church and government-run boarding schools. Children were punished for practicing their Indigenous culture and language, enduring various forms of abuse. Some students went missing or died. The system's legacy includes cultural disconnection and intergenerational trauma for survivors and their families. (Government of Ontario, 2023).

Racial Profiling is a form of overt racism defined as any “action undertaken for reasons of safety, security or public protection that relies on stereotypes about race, colour, ethnicity, ancestry, religion, or place of origin rather than on reasonable suspicion, to single out an individual for greater scrutiny or different treatment.” (OHRC, 2017, p. 16).

Shortfall is a failure to meet expectation or need. When it comes to housing, a one-bedroom shortfall in a home means that there is one bedroom less than what is required by those living there.

Sixties Scoop refers to the mass removal of Indigenous children from their families into the child welfare system, in most cases without the consent of their families or communities. Between 1960 and 1990, over 20,000 First Nation, Metis, and Inuit children were removed from their family homes. The phenomenon caused Indigenous children to lose their cultural identities, and also feel shame, emotional distress, and confusion due to lack of knowledge about their biological families. Beginning in the 1990s, class action lawsuits against provincial governments have been pursued in Ontario, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba, and are still before the courts (Sinclair and Dainard, 2016).

Social Determinants of Health are the non-medical factors that significantly influence a person’s overall well-being and health outcomes. These factors include socioeconomic status, education, neighborhood and physical environment, employment, and social support networks, as well as access to health care (Artiga and Hinton, 2018). Experiences of discrimination, racism and historical trauma are important social determinants of health for certain groups such as Indigenous Peoples, LGBTQ and Black Canadians.

Structures are “the distinctive, stable arrangement of institutions whereby human beings in a society interact and live together. Social structure is often treated together with the concept of social change, which deals with the forces that change the social structure and the organization of society.” (Wilterdink and Form, n.d.).

Structural Racism refers to the totality of ways in which societies foster racial discrimination through mutually reinforcing systems of housing, education, employment, earnings, benefits, credit, media, health care and criminal justice. (Bailey et al., 2017, p. 1453). These patterns and practices in turn reinforce discriminatory beliefs, values and distribution of resources. Structural racism is almost synonymous with systemic racism, which is defined as the policies and practices that exist throughout a whole society or organization and that result in and support continued oppression based on race.

Tokenism is the practice of making a symbolic effort towards involving an underrepresented group of individuals under the guise of inclusivity or equality, and is often seen within a group, committee, organization, or workplace. The action itself or the type of involvement of the underrepresented is limited, and the false appearance of inclusivity or equality can then be used to promote a false appearance that hides deeper systemic issues within the organization. (The 519, 2020).

Youth are individuals who are in the transitional phase between childhood and adulthood. In Canada, the federal government defines adulthood at 18 years, but the age of majority differs across provinces and territories (Statistics Canada, 2019). Internationally, there is no universally accepted definition for the youth age group. For statistical purposes, the United Nations classifies 'youth' as individuals aged 15 to 24. (United Nations, n.d.).

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