



**Press Release**  
**For Immediate Release**  
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**BCAFN Calls for Transformation to Federal Corrections System Following Annual Report of the Office of the Correctional Investigator**

**(xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tseil-Waututh) unceded territory, Vancouver, BC)** – On October 31, 2023, the 50th Annual Report of the Office of the Correctional Investigator was presented in Parliament. An update on the 2013 Special Report titled, *Spirit Matters: Aboriginal People and the Corrections and Conditional Release Act* is included. Correctional Services Canada (CSC) continues to fail to address the over-incarceration of Indigenous people in federal prisons, which increased from 23% in 2013 to 32%. Indigenous women now constitute half of the total female federal inmate population.

“We have long known that the justice system, and the corrections system, are in desperate and urgent need of fundamental transformation. Too many reports, year after year, have shed light on this fact without accountability for decisive action and tangible change. State-run Healing Lodges are funded at a rate nearly two times greater than community-run Healing Lodges which is unacceptable and shows how this system continues to undermine, and undervalue, Indigenous-led approaches to self-determination, restoration and well-being. Canada must collaborate with First Nations to enact the recommendations of the Office of the Correctional Investigator. Transforming the justice system is a critical and urgent component of implementing the *United Nations Declaration Act (UNDA)*,” stated Regional Chief Terry Teegee.

Correctional Investigator, Dr. Ivan Zinger, highlights a fractured system, under-resourced programs, entrenched barriers, discriminatory and often-overlooked experiences of incarcerated Indigenous individuals, and undervalued contributions of Elders who provide spiritual and cultural services in federal prisons. Dr. Zinger also outlined concerns regarding the adequacy and independence of CSC’s investigative process regarding major disturbances, assaults, riots, serious bodily injury and deaths in custody. The CSC must also make progress to uphold rights and ensure the safety of gender-diverse individuals in custody.

The CSC continues to be unresponsive to the needs of Indigenous people and its paternalistic and pan-Indigenous approaches remain overtly prevalent. The report makes 13 recommendations, including, transferring control of Healing Lodges to local communities, creating a new funding model for Section 81 agreements, providing job security and additional funding for Elders, expanding benefits for incarcerated Indigenous individuals through the Pathways Initiative, and developing a national Indigenous decarceration strategy.

The 2022-23 Annual Report, along with two Backgrounders, are available at [www.oci-bec.gc.ca](http://www.oci-bec.gc.ca).

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