



FIRST VOICE
Urban Indigenous Coalition

MEDIA RELEASE

First Voice Proposes Solutions to Systemic Problems in Policing

Monday, July 18, 2022

St. John's, NL — First Voice today released a draft report prepared by the Working Group on Police Oversight. Entitled *[Building Trust, Restoring Confidence](#)*, the report details systemic problems in policing in Newfoundland and Labrador and the inadequacy of existing oversight mechanisms to address them. These problems include widespread community mistrust of both the RNC and the RCMP; little to no accountability from the leadership of both police forces; a convoluted process for filing complaints against police officers; and a critically flawed practice of engaging police to investigate police in both criminal and non-criminal matters.

The draft report puts forward 26 specific Proposals for Change, grouped into three core areas. With the overall objective of laying the groundwork to implement two Calls for Justice issued by the MMIWG Inquiry in 2019, the report proposes that the provincial government: (1) establish a new civilian-led police oversight board to provide independent, high-level policy direction to police; (2) strengthen and streamline the public complaints process to make it more accessible to the public; and (3) improve confidence in SIRT-NL by making it truly independent of both police forces that operate in the province.

The Proposals for Change have the support of a wide range of organizations, including First Light, the St. John's Status of Women Council, the Newfoundland and Labrador Human Rights Commission, the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women, the Safe Harbour Outreach Project (SHOP), and YWCA St. John's. The project is funded by the Law Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador in collaboration with Mitacs, with in-kind support provided by the Schulich School of Law at Dalhousie University.

Following today's release of the draft report, First Voice will be launching a public consultation process as the Working Group finalizes its recommendations. Community groups, organizations, and members of the general public are invited to submit written feedback on the draft report directly to policing@firstvoicenl.ca. Submissions must be received no later than September 1, 2022. The Working Group's final report is expected in the fall.

Working Group Co-Chair Catherine Fagan will hold a virtual media availability tomorrow, Tuesday, July 19, 2022, at noon NDT to answer questions about the draft report.

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About First Voice

Launched in 2019 by First Light in collaboration with Indigenous Services Canada, First Voice is a coalition of 12 organizations representing Indigenous Peoples, service providers, and all levels of government working together to advance truth and reconciliation in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador. Our work focuses on promoting and supporting local implementation of the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), the Calls for Justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG), and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).