



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Jenica Atwin

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
FREDERICTON

April 19, 2021

**The Honourable Miller
Minister of Indigenous Services**

**cc. The Honourable Chagger
Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth**

**House of Commons Ottawa,
Ontario Canada
K1A 0A6**

Re: Racism at Indigenous services Canada

Dear Ministers,

It is with great concern that I'm writing to you today to talk about the systemic racism that Indigenous employees experience at Indigenous Services Canada (ISC).

A recent article from the APTN has shone light on the ever-present existence of racism in both these institutions. The issues brought up in this article range from racism, sexism, bullying, "insidious revenge" and fear leading to suicidal ideation in some cases. The testimonies relayed are worrisome, spread over decades and are backed up by internal records, notes, emails, grievances and whistleblower court filings.

Harassment and devaluation of the person seem to be common, but the lack of support for those who have faced such behavior is also a real problem. From an employee explaining how a violent altercation in the workplace triggered flashbacks of the domestic abuse she lived, to the young post-graduate joining ISC three times, because that's where she hoped she could push for change, only to leave because of repeated harassment. There are clear signs of a serious problem. None of the people quoted in the article felt safe enough to file a formal grievance against the perpetrators "because of the repercussions.". This common thread of being left alone is all the more clear with this [internal survey](#), showing that 22 percent of respondents at Indigenous Services reported experiencing harassment in the workplace, but less than one percent filed grievances.

Deputy Minister Daniel Quan-Watson and Indigenous Services Associate Deputy Minister Valerie Gideon have acknowledged that this is an issue, even going as far as saying they have witnessed it. But acknowledging this issue is not enough anymore, Indigenous peoples already have to face systemic racism most of their lives. The last place they should worry about facing such circumstances is in the services that aim to help them.

I will leave you with the words of Malcom Saulis, a Wolastoqey Elder from Tobique First Nation in New Brunswick, “The worst thing that could happen is that you speak empty words.” that shows it is time to take this issue seriously and act to implement the change in our institutions to respect the basic rights of everyone living in Canada.

I look forward to hearing from you and I hope to see your government take significant action on this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Atwin', written in a cursive style.

Jenica Atwin
Member of Parliament for Fredericton

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