

**NINTH SPECIAL MEETING ON BEST PRACTICES USED BY EACH OFFICIAL PUBLIC DEFENSE INSTITUTION
OF THE REGION TO GUARANTEE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ACCESS TO JUSTICE IN DEFENSE OF THEIR
HUMAN RIGHTS**

April 30, 2021

Intervention of Canada

- Canada considers access to justice to be a fundamental value of our justice system, flowing from our country's respect for the rule of law.
- With this in mind, the Government of Canada is working to advance a people-centered approach to justice that puts consideration of the individual at the heart of justice responses.
- We are mindful that Indigenous peoples in Canada face additional barriers to accessing justice.
- As we recognize these ongoing challenges, Canada is focusing on several initiatives aimed at promoting access to justice for Indigenous peoples.
- First, we are supporting an Indigenous Justice Program, which assists Indigenous peoples in assuming greater responsibility for the administration of justice in their communities, and aims to reflect Indigenous values within the justice system. These community-based programs are grounded in the principles of restorative justice and Indigenous legal traditions, and are designed to reflect the culture and values of the communities in which they are situated.
- Second, we are applying Canada's commitment to reconciliation through our approach to civil litigation involving the implementation of Indigenous rights under the Canadian Constitution.
- Third, we are working to transform our criminal justice system in order to reduce the disproportionate rate of incarceration and victimization of Indigenous peoples.
- We acknowledge that these steps are only a start, and that we have much more work ahead. Canada remains strongly committed to a renewed nation-to-nation relationship with Indigenous peoples based on recognition of rights, respect, co-operation and partnership.
- In our efforts to promote access to justice for Indigenous peoples, we will continue to be guided by Sustainable Development Goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, by Article 40 of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, and by the recommendations relating to justice that were issued by the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2015.
- Thank you.