



# **VOICES OF YOUTH Indigenous Leaders 2023**

## **Celebrating Leadership in Indigenous Education**

Interim report of the Senate Standing Committee  
on Indigenous Peoples

The Honourable Brian Francis, Chair  
The Honourable David M. Arnot, Deputy Chair



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*Ce rapport est également offert en français.*

## Description of Cover Image



The cover page of this report represents the 2023 Voices of Youth Indigenous Leaders event where youth spoke about Indigenous education. There are various graphic elements representing images of importance to First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.



Paula MacDonald, from Pasqua First Nation in Saskatchewan, testifies before the Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples on June 7, 2023.

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# The Committee Membership



The Honourable  
**Brian Francis**

*Chair*



The Honourable  
**David M. Arnot**

*Deputy Chair*

## The Honourable Senators



Michèle Audette



Mary Coyle



Margo Greenwood



Nancy J. Hartling



Patti LaBoucane-Benson



Yonah Martin



Dennis Glen Patterson



Donald Neil Plett



Karen Sorensen



Scott Tannas

**Ex-officio members of the committee:**

The Honourable Marc Gold, P.C. and/or The Honourable Patti LaBoucane-Benson  
The Honourable Donald Neil Plett and/or The Honourable Yonah Martin

**Other Senators who have participated in the study:**

The Honourable Renée Dupuis  
The Honourable Kim Pate  
The Honourable Wanda Thomas Bernard

**Research and Education, Library of Parliament:**

Brittany Collier, Analyst  
Sara Fryer, Analyst

**Senate Committees Directorate:**

Andrea Mugny, Committee Clerk  
Florence Blanchet, Administrative Assistant

**Communications, Broadcasting and Publications Directorate:**

Jérémie Spadafora, Communications Officer



Senators and participants of Voices of Youth Indigenous Leaders 2023 pose in the Red Chamber.



Dina Koonoo of Pond Inlet, Nunavut, testifies before the Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples on June 7, 2023.



# Order of Reference

## **Extract from the *Journals of the Senate* of Thursday, March 3, 2022:**

The Honourable Senator Francis moved, seconded by the Honourable Senator Cordy:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples be authorized to examine and report on the federal government's constitutional, treaty, political and legal responsibilities to First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples and any other subject concerning Indigenous Peoples;

That the documents received, evidence heard and business accomplished by the committee since the beginning of the First Session of the Forty-second Parliament be referred to the committee; and

That the committee submit its final report no later than December 31, 2023, and that the committee retain all powers necessary to publicize its findings for 180 days after the tabling of the final report.

The question being put on the motion, it was adopted.

***Interim Clerk of the Senate***  
**Gérald Lafrenière**

## **Extract from the *Journals of the Senate* of Thursday, October 26, 2023:**

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Francis, seconded by the Honourable Senator Gerba:

That, notwithstanding the order of the Senate adopted on Thursday, March 3, 2022, the date for the final report of the Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples in relation to its study on the federal government's constitutional, treaty, political and legal responsibilities to First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples and any other subject concerning Indigenous Peoples be extended from December 31, 2023 to September 1, 2025; and

That the committee be permitted, notwithstanding usual practices, to deposit with the Clerk of the Senate its reports relating to this study, if the Senate is not then sitting, and that the reports be deemed to have been tabled in the Senate.

The question being put on the motion, it was adopted.

***Interim Clerk of the Senate***  
**Gérald Lafrenière**



# Introduction

1.

# Introduction

In 2016, the Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples (the committee) invited Indigenous youth leaders to appear as witnesses on National Indigenous Peoples Day. This initiative became an annual committee event, currently known as Voices of Youth Indigenous Leaders (VYIL).<sup>1</sup> As part of this event, the committee selects Indigenous youth from across the country to come to Ottawa, participate in activities, including meetings with senators, and provide testimony about their priorities at an official committee meeting.

For the 2023 edition of VYIL, the committee asked Indigenous youth to submit a short text outlining their educational experiences in public, private, traditional and non-traditional Indigenous education systems as well as through post-secondary institutions. This year, the committee received 123 applications from Indigenous youth. A list of Indigenous youth who agreed to have their applications shared publicly on the [committee's website](#) is included in appendix 2.

## **Eight Indigenous youth leaders were invited to appear before the committee on 7 June 2023:**

- **Audrey-Lise Rock-Hervieux**, Innu, from the community of Pessamit in Quebec, is the creator of the blog *Maman Autochtone*. Audrey-Lise Rock-Hervieux works for the film production company Terre Innue and Puamun Meshkenu, a non-profit organization that supports Indigenous youth.
- **Bertram Bernard or Muin Ji'j**, Mi'kmaw from Eskasoni First Nation in Nova Scotia, is a two-spirit business researcher working as a Special Projects Coordinator for the Information Governance and Data Projects team at the Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq. Bertram Bernard is also co-founder and Chief Operating Officer of Pride Eskasoni.
- **Chante Speidel**, Swampy Cree from the Treaty Four Territory in Sapatawayak Cree Nation in Saskatchewan as well as Hunkpapa Lakota from the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe in South Dakota, is currently a student at the University of Saskatchewan. Chante Speidel is also a youth advisor for the Oyateki Partnership and manages her own youth-led organization known as Techa Oaye.
- **Dina Koonoo**, Inuk from Pond Inlet, Nunavut, manages the Early Years — Inunnguiniq program for Pirurvik Preschool in Pond Inlet.

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1 This event was formerly known as Youth Indigenize the Senate.



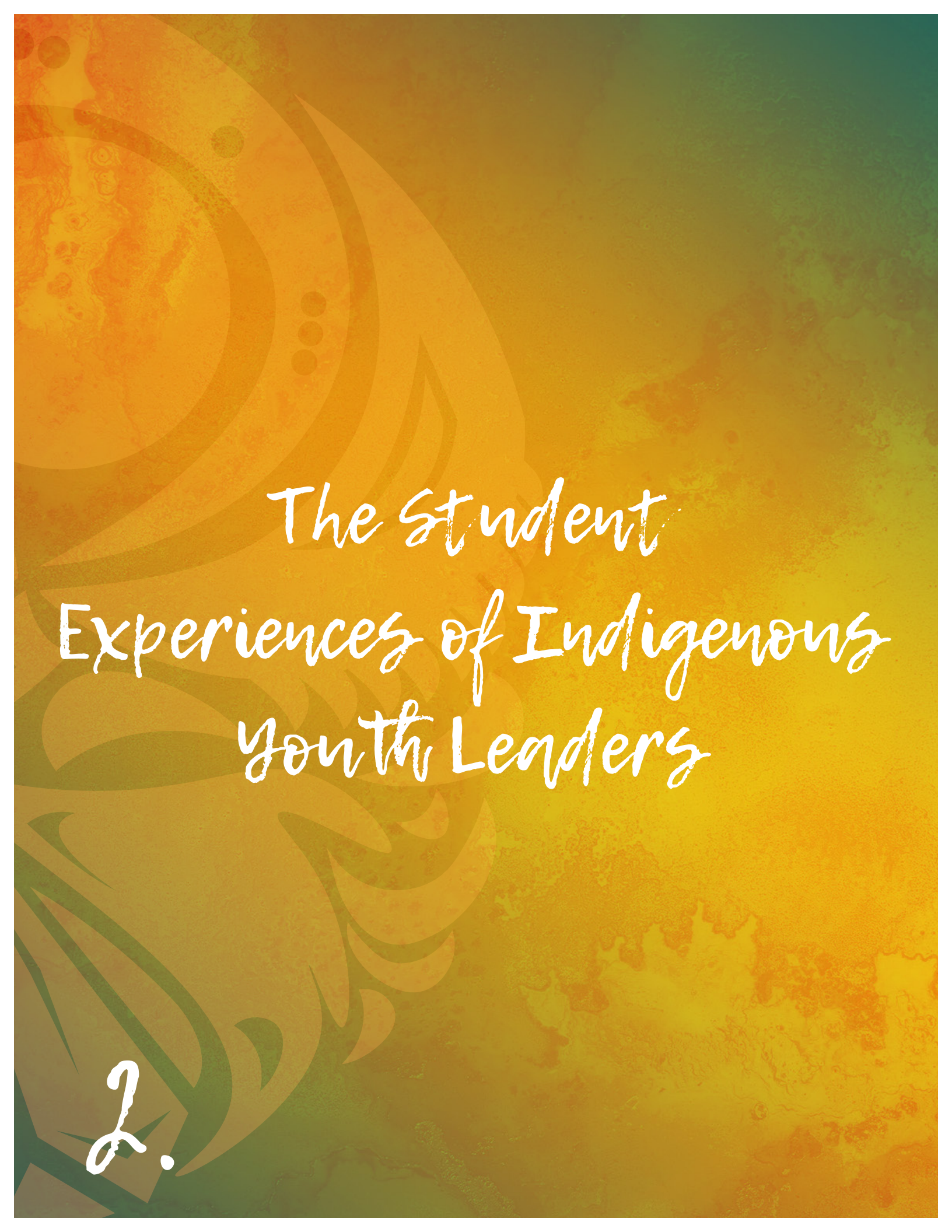
- **Dylan Adam**, Métis from Princeton, British Columbia, is a youth representative for the Vermillion Forks Métis Association and a student at the University of British Columbia Okanagan.
- **Helaina Moses**, whose traditional name is Hqzhá, is from the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyak Dun in Mayo, Yukon. Helaina Moses is a councillor for her First Nation and has nine years of environmental monitoring experience.
- **Katherine Merrell-Anderson**, Métis from Elizabeth Métis Settlement, Alberta, is a registered social worker and a transition coach with Braided Journeys in Edmonton Catholic Schools.
- **Paula MacDonald** is a Saulteaux-Cree Deaf woman from the Pasqua First Nation in Saskatchewan. Paula MacDonald recently graduated from Carleton University and is an advocate for the Indigenous Deaf youth community across Canada and a volunteer for the Deaf Indigenous of Canada Committee.

The committee wishes to thank the Indigenous youth who participated in this year's event for sharing their stories, experiences, priorities and hopes for the future with us. The committee agrees that Indigenous youth have powerful voices and vital perspectives that are essential to our work. Over the years, Indigenous youth have contributed greatly to the committee's work by highlighting their leadership initiatives and recommendations for change.

The following report outlines what the committee heard from Indigenous youth leaders during two meetings held on 7 June 2023. The first part of the report highlights youth experiences, challenges and visions for the future of Indigenous education. The second part describes Indigenous youth contributions to their communities and outlines priorities raised by Indigenous youth in the following areas: health and well-being, food security and environmental issues.



Helaina Moses, from Na-Cho Nyak Dun First Nation in Yukon, testifies before the Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples on June 7, 2023.



The Student  
Experiences of Indigenous  
Youth Leaders

2.

# The Student Experiences of Indigenous Youth Leaders

The Indigenous youth who appeared before the committee described their student experiences in elementary, secondary and post-secondary institutions. Some highlighted the importance of traditional educational experiences. Bertram Bernard explained that: “We value our [E]lders. In my community we always say that [E]lders are just as valuable as people who have their PhD because they have so much knowledge.”<sup>2</sup> Helaina Moses told the committee: “I was taught to be an environmentalist at a very young age and taught to harvest for myself and my family. Education is such a valuable tool to be successful for you in your life and for facilitating effective change.”<sup>3</sup> Audrey-Lise Rock-Hervieux explained that land-based learning is an essential component of education: “Learning begins on the land. It’s one of the most beautiful ways for First Nations to feel they belong, to feel connected.”<sup>4</sup>

The Indigenous youth leaders who shared their stories with the committee all overcame significant barriers to achieve academic success. The following section will summarize what the committee heard from Indigenous youth about the challenges they faced during their education and their recommendations for change.

## Overcoming Barriers: The Resilience of Indigenous Youth Leaders

Indigenous youth leaders shared their educational achievements and dreams for the future. Some aspired to give back to their communities by pursuing leadership positions, undertaking further academic research and advocating for other Indigenous youth.<sup>5</sup>

*[W]orking hard toward your dreams can lead you anywhere. You never know; someday, I might be on the other side of this table, listening to the next generation of Indigenous youth leaders sharing their stories.*

**Bertram Bernard**

- 2 Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples [APPA], [Evidence](#), Bertram Bernard, 7 June 2023.
- 3 APPA, [Evidence](#), Helaina Moses, 7 June 2023.
- 4 APPA, [Evidence](#), Audrey-Lise Rock-Hervieux, 7 June 2023.
- 5 APPA, [Evidence](#), Helaina Moses, Paula MacDonald, 7 June 2023; APPA, [Evidence](#), Bertram Bernard and Dylan Adam, 7 June 2023; Helaina Moses, [Brief](#), 7 June 2023.



However, in order to achieve academic success, Indigenous youth had to overcome significant barriers. Any discussion of Indigenous education must be situated within the historical context of the relationship between Indigenous peoples and Canada. From the late 1800s to the 1990s, the federal government and several Christian churches operated a system of residential schools, day schools and other sites for Indigenous children. Hundreds of thousands of First Nations, Inuit and Métis children attended these institutions. Often, these children were forced to leave their families. Some children were forbidden to speak their languages or practice their cultures and experienced physical, emotional, and/or sexual abuse. Residential schools left behind a legacy of intergenerational trauma which continues to affect Indigenous people. For example, some Indigenous youth alluded to high numbers of Indigenous youth leaving school before completion.<sup>6</sup> Bertram Bernard described how the historical legacy of Day Schools affected his family and his educational journey:

*My siblings and I are the first generation of Indian day school survivors because our parents attended the Indian day school in Eskasoni First Nation. They would share the horrors of experiencing abuse in these educational institutions. Although students who attended Indian day schools could go home at the end of the day, they still had the same experience as those in residential schools. My parents didn't have the opportunity to finish high school because of the horrors they experienced at Indian day school. However, they would ensure that their children would finish high school and get much further in their education life. Three out of four of my siblings completed university and acquired our degrees.<sup>7</sup>*

Today, lack of knowledge of this historical legacy continues to affect Indigenous students, many of whom attend school with mostly non-Indigenous peers.

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6 APPA, [Evidence](#), Helaina Moses, Paula MacDonald, 7 June 2023; APPA, [Evidence](#), Katherine Merrell-Anderson, 7 June 2023.

7 APPA, [Evidence](#), Bertram Bernard, 7 June 2023.



*In my journey through kindergarten to Grade 12, the biggest challenge I faced was a sense of otherness, not seeing myself reflected in the environment or any other students and feeling separate from my peers. For many years in my education, I was the only or one of the few Indigenous students in my classes...In university, my feelings that I did not belong intensified and frequently overwhelmed me. I questioned whether my acceptance was a result of checking the FNMI box on the application form to fill a First Nations, Métis and Inuit quota for the system or whether I had earned my place based on my merit and credentials.*

**Katherine Merrell-Anderson**

Indigenous youth endured racism and discrimination at school rooted in their peers' lack of knowledge of Indigenous peoples.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, Katherine Merrell-Anderson explained that it is common for Indigenous people to be asked to teach non-Indigenous peers about Indigenous peoples and provide supplementary information for the curriculum.<sup>9</sup> Some undertook this challenge, as for example, in school projects, Bertram Bernard educated others about the concept of “two-eyed seeing” where an individual views a topic through the lens of an Indigenous and Western worldview.<sup>10</sup>

*I dedicated myself to wearing a ribbon skirt every day for 365 days to raise awareness for missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. While attending this White-dominated [high] school, I wasn't originally labelled as being Indigenous. However, because I walked into the space now wearing a ribbon skirt and being proud, I had to navigate through the racism that I hadn't received before. Really, I relied on prayer, and I relied on faith and hope, because being so embedded in traditional knowledge and growing up with so much culture and understanding, I knew that a lot of this racism and discrimination was not coming because they hated me. They disliked me because they were not knowing or understanding why I was walking the way that I did in that ribbon skirt and why I found it important to wear a ribbon skirt that day.*

**Chante Speidel**

8 APPA, [Evidence](#), Bertram Bernard and Katherine Merrell-Anderson, 7 June 2023; APPA, [Evidence](#), Chante Speidel, 7 June 2023.

9 APPA, [Evidence](#), Katherine Merrell-Anderson, 7 June 2023.

10 APPA, [Evidence](#), Bertram Bernard, 7 June 2023.



The committee heard that courses on Indigenous peoples/history were limited or absent in some schools across the country.<sup>11</sup> For example, Dylan Adam explained that: “when I was in high school, we never had specific courses about Indigenous issues, especially Métis culture. In social studies classes, we went over the Red River Resistance in a few classes, but that was the extent of it.”<sup>12</sup> While some Indigenous youth advocated for more land-based education and cultural programming, funding for knowledge keepers and access to land may pose challenges for the realization of these initiatives.<sup>13</sup>

However, in some cases, Indigenous cultural activities were part of the student experience. Dina Koonoo noted that her high school offered Inuktitut classes and Elders would share cultural stories with students. Chante Speidel explained that Saskatoon Public Schools purchased land for cultural programming and land-based learning.<sup>14</sup> While other schools offered cultural activities, they were not always accompanied by cultural teachings and explanations about why certain activities took place. Katherine Merrell-Anderson told the committee:

*Although my school arranged cultural learning opportunities for Indigenous students, albeit infrequently, explanations were not provided as to why we were participating in those activities, the most common of which was smudging, which was not regularly practised at the time and not allowed inside our school building. While standing outside on a cold spring day, participating in a smudging ceremony that I did not understand, I thought of my peers who were inside and warm. As a fourth-grader, the experience felt more like punishment than reward, and it left me without the cultural teachings I was meant to receive.<sup>15</sup>*

Some Indigenous youth also experienced additional barriers, including the loss of loved ones and health concerns while pursuing their studies.<sup>16</sup> Indigenous youth living in remote communities may have to leave their communities to pursue secondary or post-secondary education.<sup>17</sup> The committee also heard about Nunavut-specific challenges,

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11 APPA, [Evidence](#), Dylan Adam, 7 June 2023; APPA, [Evidence](#), Audrey-Lise Rock-Hervieux, 7 June 2023.

12 APPA, [Evidence](#), Dylan Adam, 7 June 2023.

13 APPA, [Evidence](#), Chante Speidel, 7 June 2023.

14 Ibid.

15 APPA, [Evidence](#), Katherine Merrell-Anderson, 7 June 2023.

16 APPA, [Evidence](#), Dina Koonoo, Dylan Adam, 7 June 2023.

17 APPA, [Evidence](#), Dina Koonoo, 7 June 2023; APPA, [Evidence](#), Paula MacDonald and Helaina Moses, 7 June 2023.

as Indigenous youth who wish to pursue post-secondary education have difficulty accessing adequate housing and face long wait times for student financial assistance.<sup>18</sup> Further, Dina Koonoo explained that access to child care is a barrier for some students wishing to pursue their education: “Child-care support is one of the biggest struggles our community faces. More people want to attend school so they can attend college, but most people have children, and this is one of the biggest challenges for education.”<sup>19</sup>

The committee heard about the challenges faced by deaf Indigenous youth, who must often decide whether to attend school within or outside their communities. If children attend school in their community they may grow up in their culture, but may be unable to learn sign language due to a lack of resources and limited sign language interpreters. Costs of sign language interpretation may be prohibitive for communities and interpreters “aren’t necessarily knowledgeable around Indigenous culture and need additional training to be able to meet the needs of an Indigenous deaf child.”<sup>20</sup> In Paula MacDonald’s view, resources are limited regardless of where a deaf Indigenous child attends school and it is unclear which level of government will cover the costs of services, such as interpretation for deaf youth either on or off reserve.<sup>21</sup>

According to Paula MacDonald, despite the existence of Indigenous sign languages, American Sign Language has become a dominant language. In her view, learning American Sign Language is important to allow deaf Indigenous youth to pursue their education.<sup>22</sup> Further, should deaf Indigenous youth wish to pursue post-secondary education, they must also learn English and have sign language interpretation.<sup>23</sup> However, Indigenous perspectives may be missing in education for deaf Indigenous children given the small number of Indigenous interpreters.<sup>24</sup>

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18 APPA, *Evidence*, Dina Koonoo, 7 June 2023.

19 Ibid.

20 APPA, *Evidence*, Paula MacDonald, 7 June 2023.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.



## “I Want a Better Future”<sup>25</sup>: Reforming Indigenous Education

Indigenous youth identified steps that could be taken by various levels of government and educational institutions to improve the experiences of future generations of Indigenous students. Some Indigenous youth called for changes to course curricula, including the need for culture, language and land-based learning at all levels.<sup>26</sup> Some Indigenous youth described growing up with a strong connection to their culture and the land, whereas others learned about their culture later in life, at times during their post-secondary studies.

Indigenous youth also called for curriculum changes to ensure all students learn about Indigenous peoples. For example, Katherine Merrell-Anderson called for the implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s Call to Action 62. It calls on the federal, provincial and territorial governments to work with residential school Survivors, Indigenous peoples and educators to, among other matters, develop age appropriate curriculum on topics such as residential schools, and provide funding for teacher education on the integration

of Indigenous knowledge into the curriculum.<sup>27</sup>

Other Indigenous youth made recommendations related to Call to Action 62 including for improved teacher training. Paula MacDonald expressed the need to increase the number of deaf and hard-of-hearing educators who can teach in American Sign Language.<sup>28</sup> Audrey-Lise Rock-Hervieux suggested that teacher training should be reviewed to ensure teachers have knowledge of Indigenous affairs.<sup>29</sup> Dina Koonoo called for additional teachers and daycare staff to support students trying to finish high school in Nunavut.<sup>30</sup>

Indigenous youth also called for more funding and resources to support students pursuing their education. Dylan Adam shared how funding for Métis post-secondary education supported his educational journey. He emphasized the importance of continuing to fund Indigenous post-secondary education to ensure other Indigenous students can access educational opportunities.<sup>31</sup> Dylan Adam also called for resources for Indigenous communities to provide safe cultural spaces and information to youth

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25 APPA, [Evidence](#), Audrey-Lise Rock-Hervieux, 7 June 2023.

26 Ibid; APPA, [Evidence](#), Helaina Moses, Chante Speidel, 7 June 2023.

27 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action](#); APPA, [Evidence](#), Katherine Merrell-Anderson, 7 June 2023.

28 APPA, [Evidence](#), Paula MacDonald, 7 June 2023.

29 APPA, [Evidence](#), Audrey-Lise Rock-Hervieux, 7 June 2023.

30 APPA, [Evidence](#), Dina Koonoo, 7 June 2023.

31 APPA, [Evidence](#), Dylan Adam, 7 June 2023.

about post-secondary education.<sup>32</sup> Paula MacDonald explained that people need to understand the resources and supports required for deaf Indigenous children.<sup>33</sup> Dina Koonoo emphasized the need for more options for college courses within communities, enabling individuals to pursue their education close to home.




Inuk Elder Ruth Kadlutsiak, sitting at the Clerk's table, lights a qulliq and describes its history and use in front of Voices of Youth Indigenous Leaders participants, senators, Senate staff and other guests in the Red Chamber.

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32 Ibid.

33 APPA, [Evidence](#), Paula MacDonald, 7 June 2023.





Paving the Way  
for the Next Generation:  
Indigenous Youth Leaders'  
Contributions to their  
Communities

3.

# Paving the Way for the Next Generation: Indigenous Youth Leaders' Contributions to their Communities

Some Indigenous youth leaders are contributing to improving Indigenous education outcomes for future students through their work in the school system. For example, Katherine Merrell-Anderson described her work with Braided Journeys in Edmonton Catholic Schools:

*As a transition coach, I strive to offer guidance and support and to create an inclusive, welcoming space where my students see themselves and their culture reflected and celebrated in a school setting...Returning to my former school district as an employee has been a healing experience for me, and it feels as though I have come full circle and can ensure that my students will have a better experience than my own.<sup>34</sup>*

Dina Koonoo shared her experience supporting parents and their young children as a manager with Early Years — Inunnguiniq. As part of the program, an Elder is available to support parents by sharing child rearing experiences. Children also go on field trips and participate in cultural activities. Dina Koonoo noted that: “We’re trying to teach them [the children] about how the outside world is because some of the parents can’t afford Ski-Doos, and we’re providing those opportunities for them to help their children understand our culture as well.”<sup>35</sup> Others are using their education to address community challenges. For example, Bertram Bernard’s Master’s thesis involved conducting surveys with community members about how to increase economic development opportunities in Eskasoni First Nation.

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34 APPA, [Evidence](#), Katherine Merrell-Anderson, 7 June 2023.

35 APPA, [Evidence](#), Dina Koonoo, 7 June 2023.



Other Indigenous youth described their leadership roles within their nations or communities. For example, as youth representative for a Métis chartered community, Dylan Adam noted that: “I have been able to make new connections with the Elders in my community and I continue to learn from them. This has allowed me to become the leader that I am today. Our group has contributed to our community by hosting sports events, traditional crafting workshops and offering local food hampers during difficult times.”<sup>36</sup>

In addition to their community leadership initiatives, some youth acted as role models, mentors, and advocates for others. For example, Helaina Moses described mentoring a student in the environmental monitoring training program at Yukon University and giving presentations to high school students about her environmental monitoring work.<sup>37</sup> Chante Speidel works as a youth adviser for the Oyateki Partnership where she leads an advisory circle to support youth attending three post-secondary institutions in Saskatoon. She also gives presentations to non-Indigenous people through the Speaker’s Bureau of the Office of the Treaty Commissioner and is the founder of Techa Oaye, a non-profit youth organization that provides space for Indigenous youth to celebrate their language, cultures and successes.<sup>38</sup> Additionally, Bertram Bernard shared his work as an advocate and role model for 2SLGBTQ+ community members. Paula MacDonald described her advocacy for deaf Indigenous youth through the Canadian Association of the Deaf.

*We have to think about future generations. They have the opportunity to be the change we want to see in the world. I remember when I graduated from college — I did design engineering — I looked at other role models, and I realized there weren’t any out there...I shouldn’t just focus on myself and getting further ahead just for me. I need to advocate for others.*

**Paula MacDonald**

36 APPA, [Evidence](#), Dylan Adam, 7 June 2023.

37 APPA, [Evidence](#), Helaina Moses, 7 June 2023.

38 APPA, [Evidence](#), Chante Speidel, 7 June 2023.





Elder Simon Brascoupé recites a traditional prayer at the start of the Voices of Youth Indigenous Leaders' opening ceremony in the Red Chamber. Senators Michèle Audette and Brian Francis listen from behind him.

*Additional Priorities  
Identified by Indigenous  
Youth Leaders*

*4.*

# Additional Priorities Identified by Indigenous Youth Leaders

While the theme for the 2023 edition of VYIL was Indigenous education, some youth shared additional priorities related to Indigenous health and wellbeing, including food security and environmental issues.

Helaina Moses explained that the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyak Dun declared a state of emergency concerning the opioid crisis in March 2023, emphasizing that “our young people desperately need support and wellness. We are losing a generation in our homelands of Yukon Territory.”<sup>39</sup> Further, in Helaina Moses’ view, the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to a “wellness crisis” and people are not returning to work.<sup>40</sup> Ultimately, Helaina Moses said, “if your people are not healthy, who will help our nation succeed, and who will our next leaders be? We need to inspire them to find their greatness. This is what my grandparents did for me.”<sup>41</sup> To ensure health and wellbeing, she told the committee that the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyak Dun requires support from “our partners such as the Government of Canada.”<sup>42</sup> In addition, she suggested that individuals who

have gaps in their education due to the pandemic should be accommodated and supported to ensure their success in returning to school or finding employment.<sup>43</sup>

Youth also spoke about other components of Indigenous health and wellbeing, including food security and environmental issues. For example, the committee heard about high food prices and cost of living in Nunavut, which leaves families unable to pay bills and put food on the table.<sup>44</sup>

In terms of environmental concerns, Helaina Moses reminded the committee that connection to land and waters affects the health and wellbeing of Indigenous communities. She explained that mining on the traditional territory of the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyak Dun has affected community lifestyles, harvesting and culture. While the community does have agreements with some mining companies operating on their traditional territory, in her view, these agreements are not always fulfilled and there is a lack of community consultation.<sup>45</sup>

39 Helaina Moses, *Brief*, 7 June 2023.

40 Ibid.

41 APPA, *Evidence*, Helaina Moses, 7 June 2023.

42 Helaina Moses, *Brief*, 7 June 2023.

43 APPA, *Evidence*, Helaina Moses, 7 June 2023.

44 APPA, *Evidence*, Dylan Adam, 7 June 2023.

45 APPA, *Evidence*, Helaina Moses, 7 June 2023.



Moreover, in 1993, the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyak Dun signed a modern treaty including self-government provisions. However, Helaina Moses raised concerns about the implementation of the modern treaty, given the effects of mining on the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyak Dun's traditional territory. She explained:

*These agreements held the promise of special management areas, shared areas, land use planning, environmental and development assessment process and [were] intended to inform the regulatory process. Those promises, the promise to establish certainty within the processes, are yet to be fulfilled. Our primary concern is that even if we started land planning for our traditional territory, today the cumulative effects have impacted our rights.<sup>46</sup>*

*Indigenous people know the land better than anyone, and our ancestors have travelled in the Yukon for generations. Much of our ancestor's known knowledge has been passed down for generations. Working together to restore the land and water is a common interest we share and benefits research for both communities and First Nations communities.*

**Helaina Moses**

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46 Ibid.



Katherine Merrell-Anderson, from Elizabeth Métis Settlement in Alberta, testifies before the Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples on June 7, 2023.



Senators Margo Greenwood and Patti LaBoucane-Benson listen to testimony during a Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples meeting as part of Voices of Youth Indigenous Leaders.

# Conclusion

5.

## Conclusion

The committee wishes to congratulate these eight youth leaders who are making a difference in their communities. As in previous years, Indigenous youth told the committee about the importance of listening to youth perspectives on matters that affect their lives.

Audrey-Lise Rock-Hervieux explained:

*[T]here is a lot of potential among First Nations youth. If I've been able to prove myself, just imagine what can happen in the future. I'm convinced that Indigenous youth are capable of doing the work you're all doing here right now, and even more. All you need to do is reach out to them, listen to their real needs and give them the right tools for the future."<sup>47</sup>*

The committee recognizes that hearing from Indigenous youth is critical to ensure their input on matters that affect their lives. The committee agrees with Paula MacDonald who stressed that: "often, we are brought to these spaces as young Indigenous youth and are referred to as the leaders of the future. We're doing the work right now. Our voices will only get louder as we age."<sup>48</sup>

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47 APPA, *Evidence*, Audrey-Lise Rock-Hervieux, 7 June 2023.

48 APPA, *Evidence*, Paula MacDonald, 7 June 2023.



# APPENDIX 1 – Biographies of Indigenous Youth Leaders



## Dylan Adam (British Columbia)

Dylan Adam is Métis from Princeton. For the past five years, he has served as the youth representative for the Vermillion Forks Métis Association. In this role, he has helped organize community events and worked to promote Métis culture. Mr. Adam is currently a full-time student at the University of British Columbia Okanagan where he is pursuing a degree in political science.



## Bertram Bernard (Nova Scotia)

Muin Ji'j, or Bertram Bernard, is a Mi'kmaq business researcher and professional from Eskasoni First Nation. He completed a Master of Business Administration degree at Cape Breton University, where he focused his research thesis on improving the socio-economic wellbeing of Indigenous people in Canada. In 2019, Muin Ji'j was accepted into the Harvard School of Business's Leading People and Investing to Build Sustainable Communities certification program. His goal is to become the first Mi'kmaq person to graduate from the Executive Doctorate of Business Administration program. He hopes that he can use his education to help Mi'kmaq communities and mentor youth who wish to follow the same path.





### **Dina Koonoo (Nunavut)**

Dina Koonoo is manager of the early years program for Pirurvik Preschool — an early childhood education centre that blends Inuit and Montessori methods — in Pond Inlet. As part of her role, she facilitates the support of mothers, fathers, infants, toddlers, preschoolers and families. She credits the preschool’s founders, Tessa Lochhead and Karen Nutarak, and her husband as her main sources of inspiration. Ms. Koonoo says she loves working with women and children in her community.



### **Paula MacDonald (Ontario)**

Paula MacDonald is a Saulteaux-Cree Deaf woman and member of Pasqua First Nation in Saskatchewan who currently lives in Ottawa. She’s a new advocate for the Indigenous Deaf youth community across Canada. She volunteers for the Deaf Indigenous of Canada committee and attends several talking circles with Indigenous organizations to share the voices of Indigenous Deaf youth. Her long-term goal is to continue working with Indigenous Deaf communities to improve accessibility and provide expanded resources for the home, school, community and health-care sectors.



### **Katherine Merrell-Anderson (Alberta)**

Katherine Merrell-Anderson is Métis from Elizabeth Métis Settlement. She’s currently based in Edmonton, or Treaty 6 territory, where she supports youth in a school district as a social worker. She works to ensure that her students have a safe environment to connect to their culture. She hopes to help her students envision possibilities where they are empowered to influence change for future generations.





### Helaina Moses (Yukon)

Helaina Moses — whose traditional name is Hqzhá, which means “smart one” — is a 27-year-old member of the Na-Cho Nyak Dun First Nation in Mayo. Her grandparents raised her to be an environmentalist and she now has nine years of environmental science experience. Her grandfather taught her how to hunt, trap and fish, which were skills he learned at a young age because he did not have access to grocery stores or highways. Ms. Moses ran for her local council because she believes her government needs young, strong voices advocating for change. She is passionate about the environment, and she describes herself as a land healer, natural leader and traditional.



### Audrey-Lise Rock-Hervieux (Quebec)

From the Innu community of Pessamit, Audrey-Lise Rock-Hervieux is the creator of the blog [\*Maman Autochtone\*](#). She also works for Puamun Meshkenu, a non-profit organization that supports Indigenous youth, and film production company Terre Innue. She credits both her employers for opening doors and helping her to grow. She hopes that she can use her voice to inspire youth to believe in their abilities and to fully express themselves.



### **Chante Speidel (Saskatchewan)**

Chante Speidel is Swampy Cree from the Treaty Four territory in Sapotaweyak Cree Nation. She's also Hunkpapa Lakota from the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe in South Dakota. She is currently living in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan and studies at the University of Saskatchewan. She prides herself on youth advocacy and leadership. She became a national leader in 2017 at age 15 as the youth ambassador for the Manito Ahbee Festival to raise awareness for missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. Since then, she has had the opportunity to grow and develop as a leader and public speaker across the country. She is also the youth advisor for the Oyateki Partnership and she manages her own youth-led organization named Techa Oaye.



## APPENDIX 2 – List of Written Submissions

The following Indigenous youth agreed to have their submissions shared publicly as a brief on the [committee's website](#):

- Dylan Adam
- Cassidy Augustine
- Naokah Bailes
- Talia Baptiste
- Asha Bear
- Bertram Bernard
- Timothy Bernard
- Makadae-Makoons Boissoneau
- Robyn Boulanger
- Julianna Brinston
- Jordan Brown
- Stephanie Cameron-Johnson
- Tiana Cappo
- Kenton Cardinal
- William Chilton-Petiquay
- Adrien Clarke
- Autumn Cooper
- Benjamin Cooper-Janvier
- Alexandre Daigle Paquette
- Kaelei Daniels
- Mackenzie Deleary
- Cody Demerais
- Stevie-Rae DeMerchant
- Jazmyn-Rae Desjarlais
- Brady Doucette
- Augatnaaq Eccles
- Twyla Etchinelle
- Claudia Flynn
- Tyndall Fontaine
- Amelia Fox
- Joey Giguere-Yapput
- Joannie Gill
- Kevin Good
- Brennan Googoo
- Storm Gould
- Patrick Guno
- Shirley Harper
- Ashton Harry
- Jordan Hendry
- Katelynne Herchak
- Audrey-Lise Rock-Hervieux
- Samantha Jack
- Sarah Jackknife
- Shanelle Jadis
- Kyle James
- Clardean Jerome
- Kaila Johnston
- Danita Johnstone
- Shelbi Jonathan
- Nipawi Kakinoosit
- Bradley Knockwood
- Angela Koe
- Dina Koonoo
- Steve Kootenay-Jobin
- Alicia Rae Kubrakovich
- Mary Ledoux
- Megan Legare
- Crystal Lewis
- Carolene Lucas
- Richard Lush
- Amy Lynch
- Paula MacDonald
- Noah MacDonald
- Jessica Madiratta
- Hilary Maloney
- Tim Masso
- Deanna Matthews
- Em McFadyen

- Riley McKenzie
- Katherine Merrell-Anderson
- Kanes Michell-Thompson
- Erin Miers
- Shane Monague
- Martini Monkman
- Helaina Moses
- Tamara Mullen
- Mina Napartuk
- Zachery Naqvi
- Jonathan Nayler
- Angell Olsen
- Jesse Osborne
- Heather O'Watch
- Audriana Paul
- Peter Paul
- Lauren Petersen
- Shayla Pine
- Marie-Laura Pinette-Audette
- Rachel Power
- Chenille Rich
- Kelly Sark
- Leilani Sharp Chan
- Mariyah Snowshoe
- Mallory Solomon
- Chante Speidel
- Andrew Starblanket
- Dymond Stevens
- Kaylee Sullivan
- Daniell Sunshine
- Hannah Syrette
- Lilly Teare Cunningham
- Ryan Teddy
- Chevaun Toulouse
- Ashley Viznaugh
- Kiishatay (Atlas) Waite
- Ryan Wallace
- Emilio Wawatie
- Caleb Wesley
- Maggie White





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