



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

THE EXPERIENCE OF INDIGENOUS VETERANS

Report of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs

Marie-France Lalonde, Chair

**NOVEMBER 2025
45th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION**

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons

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Chair**

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NOTICE TO READER

Reports from committees presented to the House of Commons

Presenting a report to the House is the way a committee makes public its findings and recommendations on a particular topic. Substantive reports on a subject-matter study usually contain a synopsis of the testimony heard, the recommendations made by the committee, as well as the reasons for those recommendations.

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THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS

has the honour to present its

THIRD REPORT

Pursuant to its mandate under Standing Order 108(2), the committee has studied the experience of Indigenous Veterans and has agreed to report the following:

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS	1
THE EXPERIENCE OF INDIGENOUS VETERANS	3
Introduction	3
Portrait of Indigenous Veterans in Canada	4
Issues Related to Métis Veterans	9
Raising Awareness of the history of Indigenous Participation in Canada's Military Operations	10
Collaboration with Indigenous Organizations	11
Culturally Appropriate Services	14
Identifying as a Veteran	16
Role of Community Organizations	17
Other Issues	18
Conclusion	19
APPENDIX A: LIST OF WITNESSES	21
REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE	25
SUPPLEMENTARY OPINION OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA	27

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of their deliberations committees may make recommendations which they include in their reports for the consideration of the House of Commons or the Government. Recommendations related to this study are listed below.

Recommendation 1

That Veterans Affairs Canada submit to the Committee a document detailing the number of veterans who have received a payment under the Métis Veterans Recognition Payment Contribution Agreement as well as a list of commemorative initiatives funded under the same agreement. 10

Recommendation 2

That Veterans Affairs Canada support opportunities for meetings and exchanges between Indigenous veterans' organizations. 14

Recommendation 3

That Veterans Affairs Canada, in collaboration with the Department of National Defence and Indigenous veterans' organizations, establish a peer support program for Indigenous military personnel and veterans. 16

Recommendation 4

That the Government of Canada include in its communications for Indigenous peoples a question like "Have you served in the Canadian Armed Forces or the Royal Canadian Mounted Police?" to help veterans more easily identify themselves as veterans and that, with their consent, this information be shared with Veterans Affairs Canada. 17



THE EXPERIENCE OF INDIGENOUS VETERANS

INTRODUCTION

In February 2019, the Committee released an important report entitled *Indigenous Veterans: From Memories of Injustice to Lasting Recognition* (the 2019 Report). It contained 12 recommendations to which the government responded favourably in May 2019. Five years later, Committee members wished to assess the progress made in implementing these recommendations. They also sought to explore possible intersections between issues affecting Indigenous veterans and those affecting Black veterans. It soon became clear, however, that the distinct historical contexts surrounding Indigenous and Black participation in Canada's military operations since Confederation warranted separate examination.

Indigenous peoples maintain ancestral ties to the lands and communities that form present-day Canada, while Black veterans, whose origins are highly diverse, have experiences that could be less unified by a shared historical trajectory. Although both groups have faced similar instances of discrimination, the meanings of these experiences differ, and each must therefore be considered in light of its own injustices. For this reason, this report focuses exclusively on Indigenous veterans and on the new issues raised in testimonies heard in 2024. Issues concerning Black veterans will be addressed in a separate report.

- The first section of this report provides a statistical overview of Indigenous veterans in Canada, highlighting the notable representation of Métis and women.
- The second section examines issues specific to Métis veterans. A few months after the Committee's 2019 Report was tabled, an agreement was reached between the Government of Canada and the Métis National Council, representing the most significant development since that time.
- The third section discusses commemoration efforts aimed at increasing recognition of Indigenous participation in Canada's military engagements. The historical record of this participation was well established in the 2019 Report, as noted by Danielle Teillet, historian at the Canadian War



Museum.¹ It will therefore not be revisited in this report. However, efforts remain necessary to ensure that its significance is fully recognized by Canadians.

- The fourth section explores the challenges posed by limited collaboration among the many organizations that support Indigenous veterans, which has resulted in a proliferation of bilateral agreements despite numerous shared concerns.
- The fifth section describes initiatives by Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) to respond to the pressing need for culturally appropriate services, including traditional healing practices.
- The sixth section considers the reluctance of some Indigenous veterans to identify as veterans, particularly among those whose military service did not involve combat deployment.
- The seventh section highlights the invaluable contribution of community organizations through examples of initiatives led by Indspire and the Last Post Fund in support of Indigenous veterans.
- The eighth and final section lists issues raised during the study that could not be examined in detail by the Committee.

The Committee members would like to thank those who contributed to this study and hope that the content of this report adequately reflects the concerns of Indigenous veterans.

PORTRAIT OF INDIGENOUS VETERANS IN CANADA

According to the [2021 Census](#), of the 461,240 veterans living in Canada, 23,075 (5.2%) identify as Indigenous. This is higher than the proportion of Indigenous peoples in the overall Canadian population (4.4%). This difference is mainly due to the higher proportion of Métis and women veterans among Indigenous veterans.

1 Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs ACVA), *Evidence*, 4 November 2024, Danielle Teillet (Historian, Canadian War Museum), 1645.

Table 1—Demographics of Indigenous Veterans in Canada (2021)

Category	Number / Share	Total Population
Total veterans	461,240	N/A
War veterans (Second World War and Korea)	25,500 (5.5%)	N/A
Modern veterans (post-Korea)	435,740 (94.5%)	N/A
Women veterans ²	70,765 (15.3%)	N/A
Men veterans	390,475 (84.7%)	N/A
Indigenous veterans	23,075 (5.2%)	4.4%
First Nations veterans	10,950 (2.5% of veterans)	2.5%
Metis veterans	10,440 (2.3% of veterans)	1.6%
Inuit veterans	755 (0.2% of veterans)	0.2%
Indigenous women veterans	4,385 (6.2% of women veterans)	4.3%
Indigenous men veterans	17,760 (4.8% of men veterans)	4.1%
First Nations women veterans	2,325 (3.3% of women veterans)	2.6%
First Nations men veterans	8,625 (2.3% of men veterans)	2.4%
Metis women veterans	1,895 (2.7% of women veterans)	1.6%
Metis men veterans	8,550 (2.3% of men veterans)	1.6%
Inuit women veterans	170 (0.2% of women veterans)	0.2%
Inuit men veterans	585 (0.2% of men veterans)	0.2%

Of these 23,075 Indigenous veterans, 10,950 (2.5%) identify as First Nations and 755 as Inuit (0.2%), proportions that are roughly equivalent to their representation in the Canadian population. There are also 10,440 veterans who identify as Métis, representing 2.3% of all veterans, compared to 1.6% of the Canadian population.

Of the 461,240 veterans living in Canada, 70,765 are women, representing 15.3% of the total. Among them, 4,385 identify as Indigenous, accounting for 6.2% of all female veterans, compared to 4.7% of all male veterans who are Indigenous. Of these Indigenous

² Private dwellings only for this category and all the ones after that one in the figure. Total number of veterans living in private dwellings is 444,520.



female veterans, 2,325 identify as First Nations, representing 3.3% of all female veterans, compared to 2.6% of the Canadian population. A total of 170 Indigenous female veterans identify as Inuit, which is consistent with their representation in the population. In addition, 1,895 female veterans identify as Métis, representing 2.7% of all female veterans, compared to 1.6% of the Canadian population.

However, such a statistical picture masks what may be the main obstacle to the full recognition of Indigenous veterans and their access to VAC services. This obstacle lies in the belief that injustices experienced in the past persist today. Several powerful testimonies spoke to this experience, including that of Marie Blackburn, Executive Director of the Veterans Association Food Bank:

I had a woman veteran who required shelter after her house had burned down. We usually call Veterans Affairs first to see if they can help with some of the assistance. The Veterans Affairs worker said to me that she couldn't give her the money directly because they just drink it away. I asked if that's because she's Indigenous and she said ... yes.

When I encouraged the woman to talk to Veterans Affairs, she was terrified to report anything because she didn't want to lose the benefits she had.³

According to Ms. Blackburn, the ongoing relationship between her organization and the department has helped ease these perceptions.⁴

Tommy Wayne Benjamin, an Indigenous veteran who works with Ms. Blackburn's organization, shared his experience during basic training in Cornwallis, Nova Scotia, in 1982:

I was assaulted at 2:30 in the morning by training staff. I was grabbed by my ankle and thrown to the floor from the top bunk I was assigned to. I was asleep at the time.

Today I have back problems. I had concussion issues at the time. I still managed to serve with those conditions.

One by one, the First Nations recruits were breaking down, and some of them were crying because they were unfairly picked on. For the Inuit recruits, their last names were being mocked by the training staff during this time.

3 ACVA, *Evidence*, 7 November 2024, Marie Blackburn (Executive Director, Veterans Association Food Bank), 1110.

4 ACVA, *Evidence*, 7 November 2024, Marie Blackburn (Executive Director, Veterans Association Food Bank), 1110.

Racism and discrimination continued throughout my time in the military. I left the military early because of the abuse that I was serving under, the abuse that was happening to me and my fellow First Nations recruits and members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

In my transition out of the military, I had a lot of difficulties. I still do today. I had a lot of difficulties with alcoholism and drug addiction, not to mention anxiety, social anxiety, a history of homelessness, unemployment and poverty—the list could go on forever. I experienced it. I lived it.

In 2007, as part of a clinic that First Nations people go to in Calgary, they sent me for a diagnosis. Within half an hour, the results came back that I had chronic complex post-traumatic stress disorder from my experience in the military.

... I always say that my mum didn't get the same person back that she sent to the military.

Today, I have to say that this is my fifth time applying for benefits with the Veterans Association Food Bank in Calgary, with their Veterans Association set-up and with David J. Thompson, who is the Aboriginal liaison engagement officer who reviewed my file and said that I should have been on benefits in 2015.⁵

His testimony most likely reflects the experiences of many Indigenous veterans. Mr. Benjamin also recalled the cruelty faced by a fellow recruit, Thomas, who was undergoing basic training at the same time:

One individual still haunts me to this day. I use that word compassionately, because they went after him. I remember his first name was Thomas, and he was from Kuujjuaq, I believe; they were just unmerciful to him and to all of us who, at that time, were known as Indians and Eskimos. This poor chap came to me and cried to me, and I couldn't help him because I couldn't help myself with what was going on. This was just happening, one by one, to all the Indian and Inuit veterans who were serving.

... For me, it was a sense of duty to serve my country. You can't serve your country with a criminal record. I didn't have a criminal record when I went into the military, but I sure got one when I came out.

One of the reasons I can say I'm doing better is because of this person here [Marie Blackburn] and her organisation. She has helped me and countless other veterans a lot, including non-Aboriginal veterans. It's a brotherhood and a sisterhood when we get together after being in the service. There is, I guess, a lot of forgiving, but there's probably not any forgetting.

5 ACVA, *Evidence*, 7 November 2024, Tommy Wayne Benjamin (Shop Assistant, Veterans Association Thrift Store, Veterans Association Food Bank), 1115–1120.



That was my experience, and I can't deny it.⁶

As part of his work as a historian at the Canadian War Museum, Michael Petrou conducted approximately 200 interviews with veterans from a variety of backgrounds, including 26 Indigenous veterans. The testimonies he gathered confirm the injustices they faced:

At least two Indigenous veterans spoke of being called traitors for serving in the Canadian military. One responded by saying that he felt sorry for the person who made this accusation, because that person would never know the love and joy he felt from serving.

Everyone has different reasons. Some Indigenous veterans have spoken of serving because of their love for the land. I often think of an Indigenous veteran from down east, a Mi'kmaq, whose explanation was rooted in history. He said that his people had signed treaties with the British Crown and now the Canadian Crown. By serving, he was simply upholding his end of the bargain. I think there's an implication there about upholding the other end of the bargain as well.⁷

Mr. Petrou's findings were echoed by Debbie Eisan of the Assembly of First Nations Veterans Council, who recalled a history of discrimination including the denial of benefits, the loss of status, and Indigenous Veterans' deliberate exclusion from commemorative and Remembrance Day activities.⁸

Despite these injustices, Indigenous veterans continue to express pride and honour in having defended the values shared by Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians alike. This reflects the spirit of reconciliation, where such pride and honour form the foundation of a fair and lasting future. In a round table with Indigenous veterans,⁹ the Atlas Institute confirmed that this can only be achieved if trust between Indigenous veterans and VAC is rebuilt.

6 ACVA, *Evidence*, 7 November 2024, Tommy Wayne Benjamin (Shop Assistant, Veterans Association Thrift Store, Veterans Association Food Bank), 1145.

7 ACVA, *Evidence*, 21 November 2024, Michael Petrou (Historian, Veterans' Experience, Canadian War Museum), 1110.

8 ACVA, *Evidence*, 25 November 2024, Debbie Eisan (Community Events Manager, Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre, Assembly of First Nations Veterans Council), 1545.

9 ACVA, *Evidence*, 25 November 2024, Gabrielle Dupuis (Director, Research Partnerships, Atlas Institute for Veterans and Families), 1110.

ISSUES RELATED TO MÉTIS VETERANS

In 2002, an agreement was reached between the Government of Canada and First Nations to provide ex gratia payments. These payments were intended to compensate First Nations veterans for being excluded from certain benefits available to other veterans, including disability pensions, spousal allowances, education allowances and priority allocation of Crown land after the Second World War and the Korean War. This agreement followed a similar agreement reached in February 2000 with merchant navy veterans, who had also been excluded from programs offered after the Second World War. The merchant navy agreement provided for lump-sum payments ranging from \$5,000 to \$20,000.¹⁰ The maximum amount of \$20,000 per veteran was subsequently set aside to compensate First Nations veterans.¹¹ It is estimated that approximately 1,300 First Nations veterans or their survivors benefitted from this payment.¹²

A few months after the February 2019 Committee report on Indigenous veterans was tabled, an agreement was reached between the Government of Canada and the Métis National Council for a \$30 million recognition payment to Métis veterans. The payment was established to recognize “the experiences of Métis Veterans before and after the war as well as support commemorative initiatives.” Among other things, it provided for the payment of \$20,000 to a Métis veteran or survivor of the Second World War. The Métis National Council is responsible for administering and distributing these payments.

According to a [briefing note for the Minister](#) dated 5 December 2019:

Métis Veterans were excluded from the 2002 First Nations ex-gratia payments as previous research conducted by the Department found no evidence that Métis Veterans had not received the demobilisation benefits to which they were entitled.

... While the research suggested that Métis Veterans and their dependents received the benefits they were entitled to after the Second World War, it could be concluded that the disadvantages Second World War Métis Veterans faced prior to and after the War could have negatively impacted the success of their demobilisation compared to other Canadian Veterans.

According to a [briefing note dated 2 December 2024](#), as of 29 June 2021, 75 recognition payments had been made, totalling \$1.5 million of the \$30 million allocated under the agreement. However, the [Métis National Council’s financial statements](#) report no payments in 2019, 21 payments in 2020, 4 payments in 2021, no payments in 2022, 5 in

10 See Veterans Affairs Canada’s [1999–2000 Performance Report](#), p. 20.

11 See the statement by the Hon. Rey Pagtakhan, Minister of Veterans Affairs, in [Hansard, 21 June 2002](#), 1155.

12 See Veterans Affairs Canada’s [2003–04 Performance Report](#), p. 20.



2023 and 2 in 2024, for a total of 32 payments. Its [2021–2022 Annual Report](#) mentions the development of commemorative projects but provides no further details. In other annual reports, no additional information is given on commemorative projects funded under the Métis Veterans Recognition Payment.

It is therefore difficult for Committee members to assess whether this agreement has fully addressed the claims of Métis veterans. To ensure that the significant contribution of the Métis to Canada’s past and present military engagements is properly recognized, the Committee recommends:

Recommendation 1

That Veterans Affairs Canada submit to the Committee a document detailing the number of veterans who have received a payment under the Métis Veterans Recognition Payment Contribution Agreement as well as a list of commemorative initiatives funded under the same agreement.

RAISING AWARENESS OF THE HISTORY OF INDIGENOUS PARTICIPATION IN CANADA’S MILITARY OPERATIONS

Historically, Indigenous peoples in Canada have been among the most active participants in the country’s military engagements, both in major conflicts of the 20th century and in more recent operations. The designation of 8 November as National Indigenous Veterans Day has contributed to raising awareness of this participation.¹³ However, according to Danielle Teillet, who produced a documentary on the subject, this recognition remains limited among the general population:

We talked about why we have Indigenous Veterans Day, for example, which is coming up on 8 November ... There’s a lack of awareness. A lot of people, I think, question why we have a separate day for indigenous veterans. It’s an interesting question, but I think it comes down to having knowledge about the historical foundations. Some of the stuff I spoke about and elaborated on a little bit more in the documentary was about the complete lack of recognition of the contributions of indigenous service people, fundamentally the sacrifices they made, the lack of support, the lack of recognition for status Indians, and the lack of full citizenship rights until after the Second World War, until 1960.¹⁴

13 For an account of the events leading up to the creation of National Aboriginal Veterans Day, see the testimony of Randi Gage (Manitoba Chapter, Chair of Unified Veterans of Manitoba, Aboriginal Veterans), 7 November 2024, 1740.

14 ACVA, *Evidence*, 4 November 2024, Danielle Teillet (Historian, Canadian War Museum), 1655.

In [response](#) to Recommendation 12 of the 2019 Report on commemoration, the Department emphasized the importance of its commitment:

Veterans Affairs Canada has supported commemorative activities and memorials dedicated to our Indigenous Veterans and fallen heroes. Since 2016-17, Veterans Affairs Canada has entered into 22 partnerships (totalling approximately \$130,000) with organizations to support commemorative initiatives with an Indigenous focus. For example, Veterans Affairs Canada has recently partnered with the Nipissing First Nation for their Mikwendmaadaa Memorial Project in the amount of \$25,000, for the construction of a new memorial in their community. ... the Department will review its eligibility criteria for war memorial funding, in light of concerns brought forward in the report.

According to Amy Meunier of VAC, the criteria for these programs were revised in 2021, and funding was increased.¹⁵ Local organizations can obtain funding to erect a monument or hold a commemorative ceremony.

Several other organizations wish to contribute to raising awareness of the history of Indigenous veterans. Caitlin Bailey, from The Vimy Foundation, highlighted the significant demand from educators for digital educational materials relating to Indigenous military service.¹⁶ To meet this need, according to Gabrielle Dupuis, Director of Research Partnerships at the Atlas Institute, the institute has “initiated a project with the aim to co-develop these products in collaboration with a first nation, Inuit and Métis advisory council.”¹⁷

Together, these initiatives give hope that, in the near future, the Canadian public will have a greater appreciation of the remarkable contributions of Indigenous peoples to Canada’s military engagements.

COLLABORATION WITH INDIGENOUS ORGANIZATIONS

Organizations representing Indigenous veterans, like those representing veterans more generally, often act as intermediaries between applicants and department officials. According to Wendy-Anne Jocko, interim Vice President of Aboriginal Veterans Autochtones, submitting an application to VAC with the support of an organization is advantageous: “With any issue that I encountered when I made the application to VAC,

15 ACVA, *Evidence*, 7 November 2024, Amy Meunier (Assistant Deputy Minister, Commemoration and Public Affairs Branch, Department of Veterans Affairs), 1640.

16 ACVA, *Evidence*, 25 November 2024, Caitlin Bailey (Executive Director, The Vimy Foundation), 1705.

17 ACVA, *Evidence*, 25 November 2024, Gabrielle Dupuis (Director, Research Partnerships, Atlas Institute for Veterans and Families), 1110.



I always went through the Legion headquarters in Ottawa, so I always had an advocate. It seems to me that if you have an advocate, VAC seems to take your situation a little more seriously. There are other veterans I know of, indigenous and non-indigenous, who have tried to do things themselves and have come up against certain obstacles.”¹⁸

Collaboration with these organizations also allows the department to raise awareness of its services. For example, VAC has been able to extend its commemorative programs for Indigenous veterans to smaller communities. Mr. Benjamin also praised VAC’s initiative to integrate Indigenous liaison engagement officers into its staff: “... it takes away—I want to say—the paperwork. More or less, it takes away the stress of having to apply and the disappointment of being turned down because of having done something or left something out, or maybe because of not being aware of the process.”¹⁹

Ms. Meunier, from VAC, recounted the many initiatives undertaken by members of this team:

In its first year, VAC’s indigenous veterans engagement team conducted over 80 in-person engagements with indigenous communities and veterans. This included participation in five trade shows, conferences and annual meetings, as well as presentations to CAF leadership, to Canadian Rangers, to Indigenous leadership opportunity year participants and to the RCMP.

The team also made more than 40 community visits, attended six festivals and powwows, and took part in two international events. Notably, they supported a delegation of families and community members who travelled to the Netherlands to commemorate indigenous soldiers at their graves through the indigenous legacy project.²⁰

Chief Warrant Officer Joel Pedersen serves as Senior Operations Officer with the Indigenous Veterans Engagement Team:

For the majority of indigenous members whom we have been able to work with, we’ve been able to facilitate and assist them with their questions and also assist them with their files. We’re finding that a lot of the engagement with leadership in the first

18 ACVA, *Evidence*, 7 November 2024, Wendy-Anne Jocko (Interim Vice President, Aboriginal Veterans Autochtones), 1730.

19 ACVA, *Evidence*, 7 November 2024, Tommy Wayne Benjamin (Shop Assistant, Veterans Association Thrift Store, Veterans Association Food Bank), 1135.

20 ACVA, *Evidence*, 7 November 2024, Amy Meunier (Assistant Deputy Minister, Commemoration and Public Affairs Branch, Department of Veterans Affairs), 1620.

nations, Métis and Inuit communities has been really significant and we look forward to continuing these meaningful engagements²¹.

Despite these efforts, members of smaller organizations may not always identify with the priorities of larger national organizations, which typically serve as the Government of Canada's primary liaisons. Todd Ross, a Métis veteran, proposed holding open forums to allow for more sustained interaction between members of various Indigenous veteran organizations: "There's been tremendous support from the indigenous veterans community, but we're just getting to meet each other. ... Having more opportunities across organizations, I think, is incredibly important, opportunities to have dialogue and to find out what the common problems are and where we can support each other."²²

For John Belanger, a Métis veteran, such forums would provide an opportunity to highlight the unique experiences of Indigenous peoples from different communities. While he noted that the priorities of the Métis are similar to those of other Indigenous communities, their experiences may differ, as evidenced by the important historical role of the Métis in transmitting coded messages.²³

The issue of communication between VAC and Indigenous veterans' organizations was addressed in the 2019 Report, and the Committee recommended the following:

Recommendation 11 – That Veterans Affairs Canada take steps to bring together representatives from associations representing Indigenous veterans so that it can share information about its programs and help create an environment where they can regularly communicate their various concerns.

In his [response](#), the Minister stated:

Work is under way within the Department to improve communications and consultation with Indigenous Veterans' Associations. ... At present, three out of the six ministerial advisory groups maintain Indigenous representation. ... The Department also invited representatives from Indigenous Veterans' associations to participate in the 2018 national stakeholder and regional stakeholder summits. These forums provide opportunities to share information about Veterans Affairs Canada's programs and

21 ACVA, *Evidence*, 7 November 2024, CWO Joel Pedersen (Senior Operations Manager, Indigenous Veterans Engagement Team, Department of Veterans Affairs), 1630.

22 ACVA, *Evidence*, 4 November 2024, Todd Ross (As an individual), 1715.

23 ACVA, *Evidence*, 21 November 2024, John Belanger (Veteran, Métis Nation-Saskatchewan), 1220. See also 21 November 2024, Mervin Bouvier (Minister of Veterans Affairs, Métis Nation-Saskatchewan), 1250. On Cree code talkers during the Second World War, see: <https://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/cree-code-talkers>.



services and for issues and concerns to be raised and discussed among other stakeholders and departmental officials, including the Minister of Veterans Affairs.

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN), through its Veterans Council, is an important partner for VAC. Debbie Eisan, a member of this Council, outlined the main elements of a letter of understanding signed with the department in April 2023:

The letter of understanding focuses on four key pillars. The first is access and expanded outreach activities for First Nations veterans and their families. The second is establishing clear points of contact for First Nations veterans' matters at VAC. The third is increasing Indigenous representation in commemoration-related activities. The fourth is supporting the establishment of a historical record of First Nations veterans and soldiers who have served in times of war, military conflicts and peace, including those undocumented by Canada.²⁴

These objectives align with those raised by Métis veterans who appeared before the Committee.

Expanding opportunities for collaboration would likely enhance VAC's ability to respond to the claims of Indigenous veterans. The Committee therefore recommends:

Recommendation 2

That Veterans Affairs Canada support opportunities for meetings and exchanges between Indigenous veterans' organizations.

CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE SERVICES

Several witnesses emphasized that rebuilding trust between Indigenous veterans and VAC requires services that are more culturally appropriate. In this regard, Ms. Meunier of VAC highlighted the department's recent efforts:

Veterans Affairs Canada has been working to improve indigenous veterans' access to culturally appropriate services. We're working with other government organizations to create a process that ensures indigenous veterans can smoothly connect with programs, such as traditional healing and elder services. This approach respects the vital role of indigenous communities in identifying and delivering culturally specific supports.

Our department signed a letter of understanding with the Assembly of First Nations in April 2023 that highlights joint priorities in veteran engagement, outreach and commemoration. In 2019, we signed a Métis veterans recognition payment contribution

24 ACVA, *Evidence*, 25 November 2024, Debbie Eisan (Community Events Manager, Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre, Assembly of First Nations Veterans Council), 1550.

agreement to address concerns raised by the Métis National Council with regard to the treatment of Second World War Métis veterans.²⁵

In collaboration with the Department of National Defence, VAC has developed peer support programs, initially for operational stress injuries and more recently to address the specific needs of women veterans. Ms. Jocko suggested that a similar program be created for Indigenous veterans:

I needed aftercare, counselling and bereavement support. I was put in touch—I can't remember what program it was—with a peer. However, it was not a peer. A civilian woman called me, not a veteran and not even a currently serving member of the forces. To me, that is not a peer. On top of that—and I apologize—she was not Indigenous. When you're in a situation like that, you don't want to have to start, at the point of contact, explaining what happened to you along the way. She had no clue about military service. She had no clue about being an Indigenous person.

... I didn't even care if it was a male veteran who phoned me, as long as it was an indigenous veteran.²⁶

The AFN Veterans Council also expressed its support for establishing such a peer support program.²⁷

Other testimony suggested that trust during initial contact with a support program may depend not on Indigenous or veteran identity but on an understanding of the intersection of these identities. For some individuals, however, the assurance of speaking with someone who is both Indigenous and a veteran could be the deciding factor in whether they seek help. As Ms. Eisan explained: “The issues now facing indigenous people are when they come out of uniform, and they have to look for care from a spiritual perspective. Our culture and our way is through spirituality, especially when we have to come through very difficult times.”²⁸

This spiritual dimension is a fundamental aspect of Indigenous culture, and departmental services should adapt accordingly. It would be difficult for non-Indigenous staff to fully understand this dimension of health and healing through awareness-raising alone.

25 ACVA, *Evidence*, 7 November 2024, Amy Meunier (Assistant Deputy Minister, Commemoration and Public Affairs Branch, Department of Veterans Affairs), 1610.

26 ACVA, *Evidence*, 7 November 2024, Wendy-Anne Jocko (Interim Vice President, Aboriginal Veterans Autochtones), 1730.

27 ACVA, *Evidence*, 25 November 2024, Alan Knockwood (Member, Assembly of First Nations Veterans Council), 1600.

28 ACVA, *Evidence*, 25 November 2024, Debbie Eisan (Community Events Manager, Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre, Assembly of First Nations Veterans Council), 1625.



Members of Indigenous organizations providing such services could therefore serve as intermediaries and help foster this understanding among VAC staff. As Ms. Eisan noted:

I try to get them to go to Veterans Affairs for services. ... They need to be treated from a cultural way, from a cultural perspective. You cannot treat them the same way you treat other veterans. No disrespect to other veterans, but the way we are brought up is through sharing circles and through sweat lodges.²⁹

Moreover, according to the results of a round table hosted by the Atlas Institute, incorporating traditional healing methods can support the recovery of veterans experiencing mental health challenges.³⁰

The Committee therefore recommends:

Recommendation 3

That Veterans Affairs Canada, in collaboration with the Department of National Defence and Indigenous veterans' organizations, establish a peer support program for Indigenous military personnel and veterans.

IDENTIFYING AS A VETERAN

In the U.S., the term “veteran” is commonly used in everyday language to describe anyone who has participated in combat operations. In Canada, the term has traditionally referred to veterans of the First and Second World Wars. Legally, however, it applies to anyone who has completed basic training in the Canadian Armed Forces, regardless of deployment. Historical usage, along with numerous references in American television and film, may have caused this meaning of the term to become prevalent in Canada. This appears to be the case among Indigenous veterans.

In its [response](#) to Recommendation 4 of the 2019 Report, the Department wrote: “The Department understands that many modern-day Veterans do not feel as though they are Veterans, as they did not see combat.” According to Ms. Meunier of VAC, “in some instances, individuals did not recognize they were veterans themselves and therefore

29 ACVA, *Evidence*, 25 November 2024, Debbie Eisan (Community Events Manager, Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre, Assembly of First Nations Veterans Council), 1640.

30 ACVA, *Evidence*, 25 November 2024, Gabrielle Dupuis (Director, Research Partnerships, Atlas Institute for Veterans and Families), 1110.

were not coming forward to seek support, and also that perhaps government hadn't treated them well in the past, and so there's hesitancy or reticence to engage."³¹

To help remove barriers that may prevent Indigenous veterans from accessing VAC services, the Committee recommends:

Recommendation 4

That the Government of Canada include in its communications for Indigenous peoples a question like "Have you served in the Canadian Armed Forces or the Royal Canadian Mounted Police?" to help veterans more easily identify themselves as veterans and that, with their consent, this information be shared with Veterans Affairs Canada.

ROLE OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Community organizations play an invaluable role in supporting those they serve, filling gaps left by government programs at the local level. The same is true for organizations that support Indigenous veterans. Earlier sections of this report highlighted such organizations, including the Veterans Association Food Bank and The Vimy Foundation. Two others, Indspire and the Last Post Fund, also presented their activities to the Committee. In 1996, following a recommendation by a Senate committee, the Government of Canada established the [Aboriginal Veterans Scholarship Trust](#). With an initial investment of \$1.15 million, the fund was entrusted to Indspire, which also administers several other programs supporting the education of Indigenous students. Since 1996, the organization has awarded more than \$1.3 million in post-secondary scholarships to 400 Indigenous learners or their family members.³²

Yvan Guy Larocque, a Métis veteran from Manitoba, received an Indspire scholarship that enabled him to pursue studies in economics and law. He is now clinical counsel at the University of Manitoba's Faculty of Law and continues to serve in the Reserve Force.

I credit most of my success to the values the CAF instilled in me through basic training and through my work in various domains in the Canadian Armed Forces.

31 ACVA, *Evidence*, 7 November 2024, Amy Meunier (Assistant Deputy Minister, Commemoration and Public Affairs Branch, Department of Veterans Affairs), 1620.

32 ACVA, *Evidence*, 25 November 2024, Yvan Guy Larocque (Board of Directors, Clinical Counsel, University of Manitoba Faculty of Law, Indspire), 1115.



... I was able to pursue an education that I would not have been able to pursue without the support of both the Canadian Armed Forces and Indspire. I am very fortunate.³³

The Last Post Fund is well known for administering VAC's Burial, Funeral and Interment Program. Maria Trujillo said that its Indigenous Veterans Initiative provides "indigenous veterans in an unmarked grave with a grave marker and a traditional name inscription when the traditional name is available. We will also go back retroactively to add a traditional name that may not have been added to grave markers that the Last Post Fund or Veterans Affairs previously placed."³⁴ The inscriptions are engraved in traditional languages, and a Cree artist designed seven symbols that can be featured on the gravestones. Approximately 270 gravestones have been installed in 45 communities.

OTHER ISSUES

Other issues were raised during the Committee's study but not explored in depth. Some are common to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous veterans, while others are more specific. They are summarized here to reflect what Committee members heard and to acknowledge the possibility that they may resurface as key issues.

- Delays in processing disability benefit claims continue to affect both Indigenous and non-Indigenous veterans.³⁵
- Cost of living issues continue to affect all veterans.³⁶
- According to Debbie Eisan of the Assembly of First Nations Veterans Council, family involvement in support programs is a concern for all veterans, but it takes on particular significance when considering the cultural and historical context of Indigenous veterans.³⁷

33 ACVA, *Evidence*, 12 December 2024, Yvan Guy Larocque (Board of Directors, Clinical Counsel, University of Manitoba Faculty of Law, Indspire), 1150.

34 ACVA, *Evidence*, 25 November 2024, Maria Trujillo (Project Coordinator, Indigenous Veterans Initiative, The Last Post Fund), 1120.

35 ACVA, *Evidence*, 7 November 2024, Tommy Wayne Benjamin (Shop Assistant, Veterans Association Thrift Store, Veterans Association Food Bank), 1140. See also the testimony of Richard Blackwolf (National President, Canadian Aboriginal Veterans and Serving Members Association), 7 November 2024, 1105.

36 ACVA, *Evidence*, 7 November 2024, Marie Blackburn (Executive Director, Veterans Association Food Bank), 1125.

37 ACVA, *Evidence*, 25 November 2024, Debbie Eisan (Community Events Manager, Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre, Assembly of First Nations Veterans Council), 1630.

- Richard Blackwolf, National President of the Canadian Aboriginal Veterans and Serving Members Association, noted that Indigenous veterans discharged for medical reasons who do not have a home reserve are at higher risk of homelessness or substance use issues.³⁸
- Indigenous veterans may face compounding challenges, including those associated with being women veterans, having limited access to culturally appropriate services or traditional healing practices and reduced access to all VAC services in remote communities.³⁹
- Ms. Jocko raised the situation of Indigenous band members, most notably those from the Michel Band, who have been disenrolled and have therefore lost their official Indigenous status. Many are veterans.⁴⁰
- Gabrielle Dupuis, of the Atlas Institute, said that many First Nations veterans living on reserves were unaware of who is responsible for covering mental health care for veterans and their family members.⁴¹

CONCLUSION

As noted in the early sections of the 2019 Report, Indigenous veterans in Canada suffered serious injustices despite their significant participation in the major conflicts of the 20th century. For First Nations veterans, extensive historical research led to a 2002 settlement under which the Government of Canada paid \$20,000 to 1,300 veterans or their survivors. This settlement addressed the historical component of First Nations veterans' claims.

In June 2019, a few months after the Committee's report on Indigenous veterans was tabled, a similar agreement was reached with Métis veterans. However, the historical research underpinning this agreement has not been made public, the number of

38 ACVA, *Evidence*, 7 November 2024, Richard Blackwolf (National President, Canadian Aboriginal Veterans and Serving Members Association), 1105. See also the testimony of Alan Knockwood (Member, Assembly of First Nations Veterans Council), 25 November 2024, 1550.

39 ACVA, *Evidence*, 25 November 2024, Debbie Eisan (Community Events Manager, Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre, Assembly of First Nations Veterans Council), 1545. See also testimony of Randi Gage (Manitoba Chapter, Chair of Unified Veterans of Manitoba, Aboriginal Veterans), 7 November 2024, 1655.

40 ACVA, *Evidence*, 7 November 2024, Wendy-Anne Jocko (Interim Vice President, Aboriginal Veterans Autochtones), 1745.

41 ACVA, *Evidence*, 25 November 2024, Gabrielle Dupuis (Director, Research Partnerships, Atlas Institute for Veterans and Families), 1110.



payments issued remains unclear and the commemorative projects intended to be funded through the \$30 million agreement have not been identified. Consequently, there is a risk that the significant contribution of the Métis to Canada's military history may not receive due recognition. The Committee therefore believes that the Government of Canada should clarify the status of this agreement's implementation.

Because Indigenous veterans live in communities spread across the country, ongoing collaboration is challenging. Despite the opportunities provided by modern communication tools, interaction among veterans' organizations remains limited, which hinders potential synergies on shared issues. Greater integration, if deemed desirable by these organizations, would help VAC adapt its programs to the cultural specificities of Indigenous peoples and could facilitate the establishment of a peer support program for Indigenous veterans, as many organizations have recommended.

Indigenous veterans in Canada should not encounter barriers to identifying as such. However, past injustices and perceived distinctions between those who have served in combat operations and those who did not may discourage this identification. While the government cannot fully eliminate these barriers, it should, at a minimum, encourage all federal institutions to ask Indigenous individuals with whom they interact whether they have ever served in the Canadian Armed Forces in any capacity. This would support VAC's efforts to reach Indigenous veterans entitled to its services.

Issues surrounding the experiences of Indigenous veterans are far from fully resolved. Nonetheless, the efforts undertaken by the Government of Canada, the work of community organizations and the commitment of Canadians to advancing reconciliation with Indigenous peoples in all its forms over the past few decades offer hope for a future in which Indigenous veterans will be treated with fairness on a lasting basis.

APPENDIX A: LIST OF WITNESSES

The following table lists the witnesses who appeared before the committee at its meetings related to this report. Transcripts of all public meetings related to this report are available on the committee’s [webpage for this study](#).

44th Parliament – 1st Session

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
As an individual Todd Ross	2024/11/04	113
Canadian War Museum Danielle Teillet, Historian	2024/11/04	113
Canadian Aboriginal Veterans and Serving Members Association Richard Blackwolf, National President	2024/11/07	114
Veterans Association Food Bank Tommy Wayne Benjamin, Store Clerk, Veterans Association Thrift Store Marie Blackburn, Executive Director	2024/11/07	114
Aboriginal Veterans Autochtones Randi Gage, Manitoba Chapter, Chair of Unified Veterans of Manitoba Wendy-Anne Jocko, Interim Vice President	2024/11/18	115
Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health Research Dr. Nicholas Held, Assistant Scientific Director Paul Hook, Managing Director, Major (Retired)	2024/11/18	115

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
<p>Department of Veterans Affairs</p> <p>Amy Meunier, Assistant Deputy Minister, Commemoration and Public Affairs Branch</p> <p>CWO Joel Pedersen, Senior Operations Manager, Indigenous Veterans Engagement Team</p> <p>Nathalie Pham, Director General Field Operations, Service Delivery Branch</p>	2024/11/18	115
<p>As an individual</p> <p>Dr. Lynne Gouliquer, Sociologist, Métis Veteran</p>	2024/11/21	116
<p>Canadian War Museum</p> <p>Dr. Michael Petrou, Historian, Veterans' Experience</p>	2024/11/21	116
<p>Legacy Voices</p> <p>Kathy Grant, Historian, Black Veterans' Experience</p>	2024/11/21	116
<p>Métis Nation-Saskatchewan</p> <p>John Belanger, Veteran</p> <p>Mervin Bouvier, Minister of Veterans Affairs</p>	2024/11/21	116
<p>As an individual</p> <p>Dr. Lynne Gouliquer, Sociologist, Métis Veteran</p>	2024/11/25	117
<p>Assembly of First Nations Veterans Council</p> <p>Debbie Eisan, Community Events Manager, Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre</p> <p>Alan Knockwood, Member</p>	2024/11/25	117
<p>Neeginan Centre</p> <p>William Shead, Board of Directors Chairperson</p>	2024/11/25	117
<p>The Vimy Foundation</p> <p>Caitlin Bailey, Executive Director</p>	2024/11/25	117
<p>Atlas Institute for Veterans and Families</p> <p>Gabrielle Dupuis, Director, Research Partnerships</p> <p>MaryAnn Notarianni, Deputy Chief Executive Officer and Executive Vice President, Knowledge Mobilization</p>	2024/11/28	118

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Indspire Yvan Guy Larocque, Board of Directors, Clinical Counsel, University of Manitoba Faculty of Law William Shead, Board of Directors	2024/11/28	118
The Last Post Fund Maria Trujillo, Project Coordinator, Indigenous Veterans Initiative	2024/11/28	118
As an individual Bouchard Dulyx Dorval, Veteran	2024/12/12	122
Atlas Institute for Veterans and Families Meriem Benlamri, Director, Knowledge Mobilization	2024/12/12	122
MaryAnn Notarianni, Deputy Chief Executive Officer and Executive Vice President, Knowledge Mobilization	2024/12/12	122
Indspire Yvan Guy Larocque, Board of Directors, Clinical Counsel University of Manitoba Faculty of Law William Shead, Board of Directors	2024/12/12	122
The Last Post Fund Maria Trujillo, Project Coordinator, Indigenous Veterans Initiative	2024/12/12	122

REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this Report.

A copy of the relevant *Minutes of Proceedings* ([Meeting No. 11](#)) from the 45th Parliament, 1st Session and ([Meetings Nos. 113 to 118 and 122](#)) from the 44th Parliament, 1st Session is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Marie-France Lalonde
Chair

Conservatives Demand Action Instead of Just Words for Indigenous and All Veterans

The time has come for action. For the past 10 years Canadians have grown frustrated with the same tired play book from the Liberal Government. Time and time again they follow the same steps and each time it yields the same lack of results: First the Liberals will announce a grand strategy to tackle an issue affecting veterans, such as homelessness or unemployment, they will then host press conferences and tour the country getting photo ops with veterans. After which, they will forget about the initiative never taking any concrete action - because to them it all optics rather than achievement. In other words – it’s all talk and no action.

During this study members of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs heard from witnesses across Canada from different Indigenous backgrounds and experiences and their message was clear and nearly unanimous - “we are being forgotten”. There are several challenges many Indigenous Veterans are faced with more acutely than most other veterans once they release from the Canadian Armed Forces or RCMP. These often include living in a remote region, having to deal with the bureaucracies of both Veterans Affairs and Indigenous Affairs and having to deconflict benefits or supports from both. It also includes a casual dismissal of culturally significant practices. Indigenous Veterans, like all veterans are all too often forgotten by the Liberal Government.

On top of the unique challenges that Indigenous Veterans face, there are also a plethora of other issues which witnesses brought up during the study. Issues surrounding homelessness, unacceptable wait times at VAC, sanctuary trauma and suicide, as well as the cost of living outpacing benefits were echoed in this study like the ones before it. Conservatives believe that the Liberal Government needs to abandon its reckless spending and bad policies which are driving up the cost of living and putting more veterans than ever on the street and using food banks.

The Liberal Government is content to issue platitudes on how important Indigenous Veterans are to them, but turn a blind eye when veterans, including indigenous veterans, face unprecedented challenges resulting in extensive reliance on food banks and shelters just to survive. One thing is clear – things need to change.

While the committee report titled *Indigenous Veterans: From Memories of Injustice to Lasting Recognition* made some good recommendations, it was not enough which is why the Conservative members of the committee have put this supplemental report forward.

A Call for Action

It's important to note that a study on Indigenous Veterans was conducted by this committee as recently as 2019. While the Liberal Government's response to the report tabled at that time took a favorable tone, little was taken in the way of action – following a common trend. The fact that a second study needed to be fielded, just to remind the Liberal Government about their former commitments to Indigenous Veterans speaks volumes about why there has to be a change. For ten years the Liberals have claimed to care about Veterans, but seldom do they listen or act.

Homelessness

As part of the study, several organizations testified and many spoke to the issue of homelessness. Shockingly, the Department of Veterans Affairs has no way to track homeless veterans and even though Conservatives on the committee have repeatedly demanded that something be done to this effect, no action has been taken.

The Liberal Government launched its Veterans Homelessness strategy two years ago and to date, no numbers have been given to show any sort of progress and department officials still cite out of date figures for the number of homeless veterans despite academic studies suggesting the number has skyrocketed in recent years.

This disconnect was expressed during the study by witnesses such as Todd Ross, who when asked about whether Indigenous veterans were at higher risk of homelessness, was quoted as saying:

“My assumption would be yes, simply due to the social determinants of health and because there are more issues affecting Indigenous veterans. My assumption is that there would be a higher representation of Indigenous veterans who are homeless.”

His assumptions were not misplaced as other witnesses weighed in on why so many Indigenous veterans end up homeless. The National President of Canadian Aboriginal Veterans & Serving Members Association, Richard Blackwolf said:

“Indigenous veterans forced to leave the military, being discharged mainly for health reasons, having no reserve to return to and having no likelihood of employment, are at the highest risk of becoming homeless.”

Lastly, Alan Knockwood from the Assembly of First Nations Veterans Council also offered his opinion saying:

“Anecdotal evidence suggests that there is currently a lack of culturally appropriate support for first nations veterans, which leads to an increased risk of homelessness and contributes to first nations' overrepresentation in the homeless veteran population.”

When veterans and organizations from coast to coast to coast notice the same disturbing pattern then something needs to be done. It is not acceptable for the Liberal Government to acknowledge the problem, host a press conference to launch a strategy and then never follow up again.

Cost of Living

Sharing some significant overlap with the issue of homelessness, the topic of cost of living was raised throughout the study. Poor policy and government deficits have run up the cost of groceries, fuel, and homes. These basic staples of life are now harder to obtain and retain for Canadians than ever before.

With the study in committee acknowledging the fact that Indigenous veterans face unique challenges, Conservatives would have expected recommendations to be made in the report addressing these concerns.

It was heard from Marie Blackburn, who runs the Veterans Association Foodbank of Calgary, that it is becoming harder and harder to help veterans because the Liberal Government's cost of living crisis has applied pressure to organizations like hers in many ways. When the cost of living goes up, it becomes more expensive to provide for veterans who are in need. When cost of living goes up, it also drives more veterans into crisis or over the edge financially, meaning organizations like the Veterans Association receive more demand and higher costs at the same time. Marie Blackburn put it this way:

"Our numbers over a 6-month period literally tripled in the amount of money we're spending on keeping Veterans housed, clothed, fed and in their homes... it's just like that everywhere."

Once again, there needs to be more than just talk from the Liberals on this issue. While they make grand announcements – more private and charitable organizations are having to pick up the slack where the government is failing, just to ensure veterans are receiving the very basic necessities of life.

Access to Care

Lastly, it was brought up several times during the study that Indigenous people who come from remote regions, especially in the northern stretches of Canada, are often left without any access to services.

The Department of Veterans Affairs must do more to ensure that there is help for Indigenous veterans who live away from large population centers and don't have access to clinics, rehab centers, service offices, or family doctors. There needs to be far more effort made to meet these veterans where they are at instead of ignoring.

Also included in the issue of accessing care is the fact that the backlog at Veterans Affairs Canada continues to persist. Veterans who are already trying to overcome their own unique challenges are now faced with months upon months of wait times from the department just to have their basic claims recognized and approved. Every single one of the 9 different Liberal Ministers of Veterans Affairs over the past ten years has stated that dealing with the backlog at VAC was their priority, however the issue has only gotten worse.

Recommendations

In light of these unaddressed issues surrounding homelessness, cost of living, and access to care, Conservative members of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs are proposing the following recommendations:

- 1. That the Liberal Government stop ignoring the issue of homeless veterans and take action to identify veterans on the streets to help them.**

While Indigenous Veterans are potentially more at risk than other veteran groups to end up on the streets, any efforts made to help them in this area would be beneficial to all veterans. This is an issue that can be fixed if action is taken so Conservatives call on the government to fulfill this recommendation.

- 2. That the Liberal Government stop its out-of-control spending and eliminate its hidden taxes on food which is disproportionately affecting foodbanks who are now providing for record amounts of Canadians.**

The food banks in Canada are doing incredible work helping to feed those in need. Veterans food banks in particular offer more than just food support, but also financial aide and help with housing. When the Liberals continue to tax food and packaging, it drives up costs and hurts Canadians and puts a massive strain on food banks. Raising taxes on the basics while running massive deficits is driving millions of Canadians to foodbanks each month and veterans are feeling the pinch more than most as they often rely on fixed benefits and supports.

- 3. That Veterans Affairs Canada provide a full update to the committee on the progress made on the recommendations from the 2019 report entitled *“Indigenous Veterans: From Memories of Injustice to Lasting Recognition”* with explanations for all of recommendations not acted on.**

If the work of the committee is to be trusted by veterans, then it must be followed up on and completed. Conservatives call on the Government to provide an update on the 2019 study so that Indigenous veterans who are following the work of the committee can remain hopeful.

4. That the Government of Canada do more to ensure that veterans living in remote regions have options for care and can receive their benefits.

It is not acceptable for veterans who served Canada and put everything on the line to be forgotten once they release from the Canadian Armed Forces or RCMP simply because the place they call home isn't found in large urban centres. More accommodations must be made for veterans who cannot easily access clinics, family doctors, or in person service with VAC.

Conclusion

Conservatives know that veterans are tired of seeing study after study ignored by the Liberal Government. Each study has veterans travelling, sometimes from across the country, to share their personal and sometimes painful experiences, hoping that some change will result.

Unfortunately, whether it is the Liberal strategy on homeless veterans, their strategy on veterans unemployment, or care for Indigenous veterans – all veterans get are platitudes and empty promises that do not result in action.

Every study tables recommendations, and every new Minister states their priorities and initiatives, but a year later, a new Minister is appointed and everything is reset. Veterans are not going to keep waiting around so that the Liberals can play politics with the Department of Veterans Affairs and swap out the leadership before they have to answer for any of their promises. Veterans have spoken and Conservatives have listened – enough talk and more action.

