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There are several issues that really stood out to me when reading the reports. For example, youth talked about how issues of culture, diversity and discrimination are not being discussed enough, especially in settings such as the education system. For example, in the BC report youth talked about how their culture was not understood in their community and that they wanted to know more. Likewise, youth expressed wanting to know more about Indigenous history and culture.

While some youth mentioned that the education system and teachers could be doing more in terms of dealing with discrimination, I found it interesting that some youth stated that this change needs to come from youth themselves. As one young person stated, “Certain youth need to step up and take it upon themselves to continue to push for equal representation and to continue to push till discrimination isn't such a prevalent issue in our society. So if the government doesn’t happen to take us seriously now, we have to keep persisting over and over until they do”

Youth also spoke about feeling disconnected from their communities and various institutions. Going back to my previous point, this might be connected to the fact that youth feel misunderstood in terms of their culture, and lack spaces where they can engage with their culture. As a result, youth discussed wanting their communities to do more in terms of providing opportunities for cultural awareness and understanding, as a way to hopefully address some of the ongoing discrimination that exists.

Many of the issues that emerged in the reports echoed what I have found in my own research. I previously interviewed Indigenous youth about their experiences during court and diversion, and specifically focused on an Indigenous youth court, located in downtown Toronto. Youth in my study expressed that they knew little about their culture, and wanted to learn more. For many of the youth that I spoke to, there existed a feeling that being more connected to their identity and culture would give them the tools to stay out of trouble and change their life around.

Indigenous youth in my study talked about how everyone – including the entire justice system, and all levels of government need to work together to improve experiences of discrimination in institutions such as the education and justice system. However, similar to what was mentioned in one of the STM reports, they also expressed that as young people they too felt that they had to push for this change to happen – and that many adults would not necessarily just change their behaviour. As a result, the participants in my research emphasized the importance of listening to youth voice in order to improve the intuitions and polices that directly impact their lives.

Finally, one thing I found when doing my research, was that even though these youth were talking to me because they were involved in the legal system, they were so willing to share their stories and perspectives. One youth even told me that it when comes to changing institutions, such as the justice system, we need to stop talking to adults, and start listening to youth.