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**Explore what children’s views reveal about the ways discrimination acts through the collective bodies set up in society for children and youth people?**

I work on our newly formed Indigenous Team alongside members of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe communities. I often witness young people experience micro aggressions from individuals and organizations who are part of larger systems. A participant at Shaking the Movers shared, “do not invalidate micro aggressions, do not ignore it! Growing up in an ignorant environment will make you grow up to be an ignorant adult”. Therefore, it is my responsibility to strive to walk as an ally. To not only recognize my own ignorance, but also assist my colleagues in recognizing theirs.

It is not okay when a young person comes to me in tears when they have not been allowed to smudge in their school, at the hospital or in the very building that is responsible for their generational trauma.

As Canadians, we are a society whose very existence began through colonization. We are rooted in a deep oppression - a genocide our country often ignores. The actions of settlers predetermined the life of Indigenous people and imposed the prejudices that many non-Indigenous Canadians have ingrained in them today. It began with treaties, followed by residential schools, then the sixties and seventies scoops. We know that there are more Indigenous children in the child welfare system today, than at the height of residential schooling (Blackstock, 2003). We live within systems of injustice created to marginalize and trap people into a life of vulnerability and dependence.

Today, young people in BC are calling on “politicians and policy-makers [to] work to meaningfully recognize and take action on the TRC’s 94 Calls to Action”.

As I continued to think of this, I thought Greg Ritchie. I am sure most of you know, but on January 31st, Ottawa police fatally shot 30-year old Ritchie.

- Greg Ritchie was a member of Saugeen First Nation
- Greg practiced his culture and traditions.
- Greg grew up in child welfare and was survivor of the Sixties scoop (rabble.ca) (1950’s-1980’s)
- Greg struggled with mental illness and chronic homelessness.

How many systems failed Greg Ritchie?

- Child Welfare
- Education
- Health
- Justice
- Okay, let us just say all of them…
Now, let us look at the recommendations of young people and how if implemented could have affected Greg Ritchie’s life.

**East Coast (Kolopehtuwan-mip youth summit):**

- Specifically, wanted to addressed drugs and alcohol within their communities:
  - The spoke about practicing their traditional ways (smudging and prayer; Sweat lodge; traditional teachings)
  - They spoke about education, formal and informal. A library on reserve.
  - They talked about having foster homes within their communities
  - They spoke about respect – (respecting each other and the animals)

**Shaking the Movers - Quebec:**

- Having no tolerance for discrimination; that police need to treat everyone equally.

**Inclusive Early Childhood Services System Project:**

- That we should never assume someone else’s capability.
- More acceptance and education.
- Understanding – “teachers and school officers (anyone) need to stop seeing the disability before the see the person”.

**Shaking the Movers – Ottawa**

- Educating people on their rights
- The need to recognize when someone is struggling with mental health
- To understand history, as to not repeat it
- Bring awareness to important issues – advocacy.

**Shaking the Movers – Toronto**

- Spoke about equal rights, regardless of age, gender, etc.
- They spoke about how perpetuating labels leads to ignorance, racism and discrimination.
- They also spoke about education – highlighting, “…it makes me so angry, because if you look at residential schools, that was only brought up in the curriculum this year.

**Shaking the Movers – BC**

- City planners and developers should increase consideration of community needs to social connectively, inclusion, and sense of belonging when planning and developing areas.
- Create safe spaces for people learn and engage in dialogue on the topics of bullying and racism.
- Police forces should be well acquainted with the neighborhoods they work in and should put effort into building positive relationships with citizens.

Now, I don’t know if all these recommendations were implemented, whether it would have saved Greg Ritchie’s life. However, I can almost guarantee that:
• if police knew Greg Ritchie, and police knew the neighborhoods and its citizens;
• if there was a foster home in Saugeen FN (if Greg had never been taken at all);
• if there was more acceptance, and understanding of mental illness, and a focus on inclusion rather exclusion;
• if our school systems taught us about residential school and we grew up with an understanding generational trauma

We cannot live in the ifs, but we must learn. What happen to Greg has happened one too many times. Too many lives were changed on Jan. 31st. Youth have provided us with the answers; and it is now up to us to listen and hear.