**RACISM, XENOPHOBIA AND HATE IN CANADA**

*Excerpt from Justice Ministries' Report adopted by the 2021 General Assembly*

A previous version of this section of the report, which was originally a section from the 2020 Justice Ministries interim report, has been adapted and expanded into a study guide called "Racism and Hate in Canada" which is now available on the Social Action Hub. This section of the 2021 Justice Ministries report includes updated statistics and material as well as recommendations which are not part of the study guide.

Canada is increasingly racially diverse and the number of Canadians who see this as a positive thing is on the rise – though that number still appears to fall just shy of a majority of Canadians.[28] It is not surprising, then, that despite an encouraging trend, racism and xenophobia continue to be serious problems in Canadian society. In fact, while an increasing amount of Canadians are identifying that racism is a problem that does not belong in Canadian society, there is also an increase in the number of Canadians who are becoming attracted to or recruited by far right racist groups; a recent study found that there are over 6,600 social media channels and accounts based in Canada that are advocating right-wing extremism.[29] This past year (2020) has brought the issue of systemic racism increasingly into the public eye, as crimes based on hate, including race-based hate, continue an upward trend even as more people start speaking out.

**Rising Hate: racist or xenophobic harm and violence**

Recent data from across the country shows that there is an increasing number of people in Canada who escalate racist or xenophobic thinking to acts of hatred or even physical violence. It has become clear, for example, that hate crimes in Canada are on the rise. According to data from Statistics Canada's 2019 report entitled "Police-reported hate crime in Canada, 2017":

- "In 2017, police reported 2,073 criminal incidents in Canada that were motivated by hate, an increase of 47% or 664 more incidents than reported the previous year.
- The increase in the total number of incidents was largely attributable to an increase in police-reported hate crimes motivated by hatred of a religion (+382 incidents) or of a race or ethnicity (+212 incidents).
- Between 2016 and 2017, the number of police-reported crimes motivated by hatred of a race or ethnicity increased 32%, from 666 to 878. Much of this increase was a result of more hate crimes targeting the Black (+107 incidents) and Arab and West Asian populations (+30 incidents). Hate crimes targeting the Black population remained one of the most common types of hate crimes (16% of all hate crimes [reported]).
- Compared with 2016, the number of police-reported hate crimes motivated by religion rose 83% in 2017, from 460 to 842. Hate crimes against all religions saw increases. Police-reported crimes motivated by hate against the Muslim population rose from 139 incidents to 349 incidents in 2017 (+151%). Hate crimes against the Jewish population continued to rise in 2017, from 221 to 360 incidents (+63%)."

It is important to note that these statistics represented reported hate crime; communities who are hesitant to report crimes targeting them due to issues such as mistrust of police or social services will be underrepresented in this data. The data from 2018 has since become available and it has shown a decrease from 2017 but Statistics Canada notes in its study, "Police Reported Hate Crimes in Canada, 2018", that even with that decrease, 2018 still had the highest level of reported hate crimes than any other year in the last ten years except for 2017. As of writing (February 2021) The data for 2019 and 2020 has yet to become available, though preliminary numbers from 2019 show an increase over 2018 that still falls below the record numbers from 2017.[30]

In addition to statistics such as those listed above, there is a deeply concerning rise of white supremacism groups, certainly south of our border but also here in Canada. For example, Barbara Perry, an expert on hate crimes and professor in the Faculty of Social Science and Humanities at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology has noted that there are currently "at minimum" 130 active far-right extremist groups across Canada, which she points out is an increase of around 30 percent from 2015. She adds, "Most of these groups are organized around ideologies against certain religions and races, with anti-Muslim and anti-Jewish sentiments being the most common, followed by hatred for immigrants, Indigenous people, women, LGBTQ communities and other minority groups."[31] One of the groups that was active at the January 6, 2021 attack on the Capitol building in Washington D.C. was a Canadian-founded group, the Proud Boys, which – after its involvement in that attack became clear – has just been designated a terrorist organization.

Hate groups such as the Proud Boys, often collectively referred to now as the "Alt Right", actively recruit new members to their cause. Those who have left the movement explain that a primary recruitment tactic in Canada is using people who look and seem respectable to be the "face" of recruitment or interacting with the public. These individuals then find people dealing who are struggling with insecurity, including in areas such as job loss or relationships. They identify the types of fears that person is experiencing and exploit those fears, blaming target minority groups such as those listed in the statistics above for the hardship, pain or anxiety someone who is economically or relationally vulnerable is experiencing and offering them a purported solution – to disempower or harm target groups in order to supposedly "regain" the power, wealth, security or sexual relationships they "should" have instead, "by natural right".[32]

Uncertain times and economic hardship increase the opportunities for these groups to recruit. As more people become insecure, their vulnerability to being radicalized based on their lack of security and the supposed security and power the group offers, is heightened. Narratives that equate "free speech" with hate speech or misinformation and "government control" with health measures taken, for example, during the pandemic, are often used to stoke fears. Many of the groups are recruiting heavily using narratives about lockdowns during the pandemic being aimed at "taking away our freedoms" or supporting conspiracy theories put forward by groups such as QAnon that work to undermine people's trust in any description of reality not espoused by the group.[33] In short, the groups function in ways similar to a cult. As many of these hate groups have white supremacy as a founding ideal, (as well, often, as misogyny) the means and goals they pursue are explicitly racist, have the aim of furthering white supremacy and harming anyone who the group either considers not white or (if white) not living according to the group's ideals.

These trends of increased hate crimes and a rise in white supremacism in Canada are troubling but the church is not powerless to address them and could be a voice and a model of how racism and xenophobia must be rejected in favour of inclusive and anti-racist communities. Indeed, as early as 1972, The Presbyterian Church in Canada stated, "Racism practiced by the white-skinned against their darker-skinned brothers is one of the world's basic problems and a blatant denial of the Christian faith." (A&P 1972, p. 269–70, 59) This statement was made in the context of Apartheid but the sentiment that racism is "a blatant denial of the Christian faith" remains. There is no place in Christian belief, practice or identity for white supremacism – or any kind of racism.

Racism disrupts the heart of society, cutting through community relationships and alienating neighbour from neighbour. More than that, it speaks the message that some people are worth less than others and so it matters less if bad things happen to them. The effects of such messages are chillingly apparent in the statistics cited in this report and in other reports such as the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls discussed

earlier. Addressing and ending racism and white supremacism – which is not only the product of hate groups but as a founding tenet of systemic racism and the Doctrine of Discovery is present throughout Canadian culture – is further complicated by the fact that many of the communities targeted can be hesitant to speak to police. This is due to a significant history of racism in police forces in Canada as well, which we speak about below. This history, which continues to manifest itself today, has taken the shape of racial profiling,[34] overrepresentation of minorities being arrested and harsher sentencing for minorities,[35] and even police brutality and statistically increased likelihood of lethal force being used by police against minorities. A look at the numbers is telling: "Indigenous people make up only 4.8% of the population yet represented 15% of total fatalities [of civilians shot by police]. Members of the Black community, which makes up only 3.4% of Canada's population, represented 9% of the fatalities. Both racial groups are disproportionately affected by police violence relative to other ethnicities."[36]

Racism is deadly and this is one of the reasons Christians must speak out against it. In the words of professor and lawyer Pam Palmater from "Guns and White Supremacists Don't Mix," in *Macleans*: "Racism is lethal for Indigenous peoples and easy access to guns by those who hold racist views increase the risk. To treat gun control as sex-neutral or race-neutral further perpetuates the risk to women and Indigenous peoples. Canada should be engaging with First Nations and Indigenous women's groups to address the threat of gun violence by both white nationalist hate groups and individuals with extreme right-wing, racist views." As we can see in incidents such as the 2017 shootings at the Islamic Cultural Centre of Quebec, the 2018 shootings at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh and the 2015 Charleston Church shooting of Black parishioners, racism is deadly for other groups too.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada continues to work to find ways to eliminate racism and xenophobia in its policies and practices, including ways to build and maintain an ethos where racism is pre-empted by fulsome and faithful love. As we continue to work toward achieving these goals, as some of the recommendations in the section of our report on the Doctrine of Discovery note, we need to continue to examine and update our policies and practices, to ensure they foster the kind of community in which racism and xenophobia can't flourish.

Justice Ministries is involved in a time of listening, research and learning and will bring recommendations to the General Assembly next year on how the church can be faithful to its call as disciples of Christ and engage in ministry that is anti-racist.

> **Recommendation LMA-018**(adopted, p. 38)
> That congregations and presbyteries be encouraged to study racism and xenophobia in Canada, especially ways the church can contribute to ending racism and xenophobia in Canada and in the church.

Justice Ministries can be contacted for an up-to-date list of resources and webinars that can be used for this purpose. The Canadian Council of Churches provides an extensive list of resources on anti-Black racism specifically, at interculturalleadership.ca/wp-content/uploads/Resources-Anti-Black-Racism-Canada.pdf.

> **Recommendation LMA-019** (adopted, p. 38)
> That congregations be encouraged to study government resources such as "Taking Action to End Online Hate" or church resources such as "Racism and Hate in Canada" and discuss the problem of online radicalization for hate groups, especially the rising number of white supremacist or neo-Nazi groups and how to stop it.

"Racism and Hate in Canada" can be downloaded on the Social Action Hub at presbyterian.ca/ justice/social-action/anti-racism. "Taking Action to End Online Hate" is the June 2019 report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights available at ourcommons.ca/Content/ Committee/421/JUST/Reports/RP10581008/ justrp29/ justrp29-e.pdf.

**Violent encounters between Police and Black and Indigenous People**

Much of the systemic racism that exists in all Canadian institutions, including the church, has roots in colonialism, which advanced the notion of White European cultural supremacy. Systemic racism affects how our institutions (including the church) operate. Consider the following quote: "Racism also operates through the policies, procedures and practices of the institutions in our society. Racism is built into the policies, procedures and everyday practices of the health care system, the education system, the job market, the housing market, the media and the criminal 'justice' system to name a few. That means that it operates both systematically and without the need for individual racist acts. People can simply be following the rules and produce outcomes that benefit white people and harm People of Color because the rules are set up to reproduce racism."[37] Resistance to labels like "systemic racism" and to scrutiny is both a symptom and a survival tactic of systemic racism. Despite policy and operational modernization throughout many institutions in Canada, systemic racism remains.

This is true of our policing systems as well and the relationship between police and racialized and Indigenous people has also remained fraught. This tension has become more visible as Canadian demographics have changed in the second half of the 20th century and into the 21st century.[38] These changes occurred in a landscape of both private and public structures and institutions that are slower to turn away from entrenched colonial attitudes and structures. Policing institutions do not escape this influence: policing structures in pre-confederation Canada were drawn from earlier European models which imbodied these attitudes. Police are at the frontline of enforcing Canadian laws and there is a double degree of tension in this placement when policing institutions (their policies and practices) reflect a colonial structure, as well as the laws that they are mandated by the state to enforce.

Violent encounters between Black and Indigenous people and police services in 2020 and previously both here and in the United States have recently sparked a fury of public commentaries regarding policing. As Ingrid Waldron puts it in "The wounds that do not heal: Black expendability and the traumatizing after-effects of anti-Black police violence", in *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion*: "Calls to reform, defund and abolish the police were battle cries that had been heard over the last few years but that reached a fever pitch in 2020." The protests and violence of 2020 brought the extreme mistrust and sometimes violent interactions between policing services and Black and Indigenous people to the forefront of societal attention through the deaths of people like George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Chantel Moore and Regis Korchinski-Paquet. These tensions and the deaths that have resulted from them are manifestations of the systemic racism that permeates our society.

It is important to understand that these deaths are not isolated incidents; as just one example, eight Indigenous people – Rodney Levi, Chantel Moore, Abraham Natanine, Regis Korchinski-Paquet, Stewart Kevin Andrews, Everett Patrick, Jason Collins and Eishia Hudson, all died during encounters with police services in Canada just between the months of April and June, 2020. Two of these deaths, Chantel Moore and Regis Korchinski-Paquet were in the context of wellness checks. During that same stretch of time, D'Andre Campbell, a Black man and Ejaz Ahmed Choudry, a Middle Eastern Muslim man, were also both shot and killed by police during separate wellness checks. We will discuss wellness checks below but in any case it is clear that

addressing systemic racism is a matter of life and death; looking at how systemic racism has affected policing and working to transform the institution of policing (among all the other institutions also shaped by systemic racism) is an important step in shaping a better and more healthy society for everyone.

**Police Services and Violence**

There are disproportionate levels of violence in encounters between police and Black and Indigenous people than between police and other segments of the population, particularly white people.[39] Some of the interactions between Indigenous peoples and police are outlined in the section of this report reviewing the final report on the National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls; this section of our report on policing should be read in tandem with that section. Other expressions of systemic racism include under policing and over policing, racial profiling and excessive use of force, including deadly force according to "Racialized Policing: Aboriginal People's Encounters with the Police" by Elizabeth Comack. This is not a complete or comprehensive list. Those seeking further detailed information should see the resource list at the end of this section.

A CBC report which reviewed deaths involving encounters with the police between 2000–2017 revealed a shocking overrepresentation of Black and Indigenous people. Though the numbers were disproportionately high across the nation, some areas were particularly egregious. For example, Black people in Toronto make up about 8.3% of the population but represented nearly 37% of victims killed in encounters with police. In Winnipeg, Indigenous people make up 10.6% of the population but account for nearly two thirds of victims, according to "Deadly Force" by CBC. An investigation by the Ontario Human Rights Commission into allegations of anti-Black racism in the Toronto Police Service resulted in staggering observations: Black people in Toronto are nearly 20 times more likely than White people to be fatally shot by police, four times more likely to be pepper sprayed, five times more likely to be tasered and six times more likely to be taken down by police dog, according to "A Disparate Impact: Second interim report on the inquiry into racial profiling and racial discrimination of Black persons by the Toronto Police Service". Until recently, racially disaggregated data was not available and the Commission did painstaking work to piece together and verify its research. One of the Commission's recommendations is to mandate this kind of data collection.

**Police Services and Wellness Checks**

One of the issues that has been raised in Canada specifically around policing is the issue of wellness checks. A wellness check is conducted, often at the request of friends or family, when someone is suspected of being in crisis and needing help – not because of any suspected crime. And yet the CBC report also revealed that more than 70% of those who died in encounters with the police suffered from mental health and substance use problems. Violent behaviour is no more common amongst those living with mental illness than it is in the general population, though prejudicial perceptions about mental health, mental illnesses and violence contribute significantly to stigma, discrimination and social exclusion. More can be read on this matter at ontario.cmha.ca/
documents/violence-and-mental-health-unpacking-a-complex-issue/.

There is a racialized aspect to mental health crisis interventions: Black people who suffer from mental health crises are statistically more likely to have police involvement in their pathway to care. Additionally, the Intergenerational trauma caused by actions to remove Indigenous identity is well documented and families in which multiple generations attended residential schools are at

greater risk of distress – experiencing crises and poor mental and physical health, including a greater likelihood of being victims of violence, which are likely to increase interactions with police. And when people who are already in crisis are confronted by an officer – possibly even a well-meaning officer – who is armed, in situations where there is already tension and mistrust between the police and community members, the potential for harm increases exponentially.

In "CAMH Statement on Police Interactions with People in Mental Health Crisis", the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health lays out the issue at its core as one of proper training and care: "Mental Health is Health. This means that people experiencing a mental health crisis need health care. Police should not be the first responders when people are in crisis in the community. Police are not trained in crisis care and should not be expected to lead this important work." Quoting criminologist Julias Haag, one CBC article by Sanifa Nasser in 2020 entitled "Family of Ejaz Choudry demands firing of officer who fatally shot him during mental health crisis", points out "[The police's] primary competency is not to work as counsellors or to work with people in distress"…[and] seeing armed police officers could in fact provoke a 'heightened response' with a person in crisis feeling more frightened than comforted."

Many police agencies do have some kind of mental health crisis intervention training available to their officers. However, the training is not having the effect of lessening police involved deaths during interactions with people who are experiencing mental health crises; while some positive outcomes are reported, studies to date fail to show a reduction in the risk of mortality or death during emergency police interactions, according to a 2019 article entitled "Effectiveness of Police Crisis Intervention Training Programs" by Michael S. Rogers, Dale E. McNeil and Renee L. Binder in *American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law*.

Whether violence involving police interactions with Black or Indigenous people happens in the context of wellness checks or other policing interventions, it is clear that there is a problem. Given the disproportionate numbers of incidents involving racialized communities such as Black and Indigenous communities it is also clear that the problem stems at least in part from racism. This racism is part and parcel of the way we are all raised, no matter our race; it is systemic and it shapes our institutions and practices. The church's policy, *Growing in Christ: Seeing the Image of God in our Neighbour, the Policy of the Presbyterian Church in Canada for Dealing with Racial Harassment* recognizes that racism exists at multiple levels, including at the level of institutions and systems. The policy states, "Institutional racism or systemic racism occurs where the established rules, policies and regulations or practices of an organization result in the unequal treatment of different groups either within that organization or in the larger society. A result of institutional racism is that the laws, values and practices of society, which may appear to be neutral, in fact tend to benefit one dominant group over others". Living Faith then calls us to action, reminding us that "God's justice is seen when we deal fairly with each other and strive to change customs and practices that oppress and enslave others. (8.4.2)

To address the problem, we need to own up to the roots that feed it and transform the mechanisms by which it works. As some steps the church could take to help with that transformation, we propose the following recommendations:

**Recommendation LMA-020** (adopted, p. 38)
That presbyteries, sessions and individuals be encouraged to study The Presbyterian Church in Canada's July 2020 "Statement Regarding Violence and Encounters Between Indigenous People and Policing Agencies".

**Recommendation LMA-021** (adopted, p. 38)

That the Moderator write a letter encouraging the Government of Canada to create a nationally run centralized data collection system that records and analyzes race-based data within policing, including on use of force.

**Recommendation LMA-022** (adopted, p. 38)
That the Moderator write to each province and territory requesting that the responsibility and funding for wellness checks is reallocated from police to community and healthcare-based crisis intervention workers, including pathways for people to access public health-lead interventions through 911 services that do not necessitate the involvement of police as first responders in mental health crises.

**Resource List**

Books:

- *Racialized Policing: Aboriginal People's Encounters with the Police* by Elizabeth Comack, Fernwood Publishing, 2012. This book gives a detailed account of the racialized nature of policing practice and policy in Canada, including an in-depth review of the shooting death of J.J. Harper and the so called "Starlight Tours".
- *Policing Black Lives: State violence in Canada from Slavery to the Present* by Robyn Maynard, Halifax and Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2017. This book examines the history of anti-Black racism in Canada, contemporary manifestations of systemic racism including social and economic marginalization, violence and encounters between Black people and the police and Black people and the Justice and Corrections system.
- *The Skin We're In* by Desmond Cole.

Online resources:

- "Deadly Force" is a CBC archive of deadly police encounters over 20 years. This archive investigates the numbers and some of the circumstance of deadly police encounters.
- "A Disparate Impact: second interim report on the inquiry into racial profiling and racial discrimination of Black persons by the Toronto Police Service." Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2020.
- "The Statement Regarding Violence and Encounters Between Indigenous People and Policing Agencies" can be found at presbyterian.ca/2020/07/03/Indigenous-people-and-policing.

*The full report is found in The Presbyterian Church in Canada's Acts and Proceedings 2021, pp.407-443.*