

**REPORT**

# INDIGENOUS JUSTICE SYSTEM: A KNOWLEDGE SHARING SYMPOSIUM

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**2<sup>ND</sup> EDITION**  
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# Introduction

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This report provides an overview of the research and preparation conducted for the second symposium on the Indigenous Justice System, held in Calgary from November 4-6, 2024, on the Tsuut'ina Nation land. The symposium served as a significant platform for addressing issues related to self-governance, particularly in the context of Indigenous individuals navigating the Canadian legal system, the Gladue Courts and the Indigenous courts.

The symposium also addressed Bill C-92, exploring how Indigenous communities in Canada are actively working to develop their own legislation concerning family and child protection. Discussions centered on the ways in which these communities are asserting their jurisdiction and authority over child welfare matters, aiming to create systems that are culturally relevant and responsive to the needs of Indigenous families. This exploration highlighted the importance of self-determination in shaping policies that prioritize the well-being of Indigenous children and families, while respecting their unique cultural practices and values.

In addition to exploring these critical topics, the symposium also incorporated an international and comparative perspective, with the participation of distinguished speakers from the Ecuador and New Zealand judiciary and legal sector. Their contributions provided valuable insights into how Indigenous justice systems are approached and implemented in different global contexts, enriching the discussions and offering a broader understanding of the intersection between Indigenous law and national legal frameworks. This comparative aspect added significant depth to the conversations, allowing for a more holistic view of Indigenous justice practices and self-governance models worldwide.

First, the report summarizes the key takeaways and findings of the research. Next, it provides an overview of the Symposium's activities. Finally, it presents the recommendations made by the Symposium participants.

## Regarding Self-Government

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Indigenous communities may use to exercise self-governance over their own communities that are available in Canada to those available in the United States, Australia and New Zealand. This is an area that has drawn the attention of much scholarly work. As such, our findings do not reveal anything new. They do however provide a comparative analysis of the self-governing tools based on the existing literature, which demonstrates that in Canada, Australia and New-Zealand, Indigenous people and communities have less ability and scope to directly exert decision-making power over their own communities than Indigenous Nations in the United States.

# Section 1

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## I. KEY FINDINGS

### Self-Governance

Across Canada, Australia, New-Zealand and the United-States are legislative and constitutional schemes put in place on behalf of colonial powers that may allow, yet also limit, Indigenous self-governance; these schemes and the power that they recognize, or delegate is exercised in different ways depending on the scheme itself. Despite the differences, it is useful to compare Australia, New Zealand, and the United States with Canada as all four “countries (1) have minority Aboriginal populations... (3) have “common law” legal systems originally imported via British colonization... and, finally, (5) the legal and constitutional status of their Aboriginal people varies between the three countries.”<sup>1</sup> Further, Indigenous populations are disproportionately overrepresented in the Canadian legal system, and this is no different in Australia, New Zealand, or the United States. Indeed, Indigenous people in these countries struggle with bureaucratic, political, and legal barriers to self-governance, sovereignty, and self-determination in a variety of realms.

Across the four countries Indigenous legal systems interact with the state along two models: the Delegation Model, and the Recognition Model.<sup>2</sup> While no state employs one model fully, some states employ one more than the other. Indeed, there may even be instances where there is no water-tight differentiation between the two. In short, the delegation model refers to a system where Indigenous law-making is facilitated through delegated administrative powers from the judiciary to Indigenous groups. The Recognition Model refers to a system where the Canadian legal system recognizes that Indigenous law is an independent entity with political legitimacy, akin to foreign laws. The delegation model “relies on the well-known concept of delegation of administrative powers to explain Indigenous law-making.” as “a form of legal pluralism within the state.”<sup>3</sup> Where delegation “requires Indigenous law to fit within the pyramid of norms culminating in the Constitution,” the recognition model allows “Indigenous law...[to] rest upon its own political legitimacy, independent of the Constitution of the state or the legal order it creates,” putting it “in a position similar to that of foreign laws.”<sup>4</sup>

Delegation is the primary model in Canada, which the *Indian Act* exemplifies,<sup>5</sup> whereas recognition of Indigenous law “independent of the Constitution of the state or the legal order it creates” has been undertaken by the U.S., “based on Indigenous peoples’ ‘residual sovereignty.’”<sup>6</sup> This approach taken by the U.S. is an example of the recognition model. While self-governance has not been recognized to the level of the *Indian Reorganization Act* in the U.S, the recent passing of *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families*<sup>7</sup> recognizes the inherent right of self-government under s. 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*, which includes jurisdiction over child and family services.

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<sup>1</sup> Jeffries & Stenning, *supra* note X at 448.

<sup>2</sup> Sébastien Grammond, “Recognizing Indigenous Law: A Conceptual Framework” (2022) 100:1 Can Bar Rev 1 at 9.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid* at 10.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid* at 14.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid* at 10.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid* at 15.

<sup>7</sup> SC 2019, c 24 [FIMCYF Act].

In terms of moving forward with Indigenous sovereignty, self-determination, and self-governance, academics often compare Australia and New Zealand to Canada as a sort of measuring stick.<sup>8</sup> Themes seem to arise in the existing body of literature in regards to solutions that suggest systemic changes through legislative, policy, or political reform that may result in more self-determination on the part of Indigenous peoples; however, the arguments are not all united.

Specifically, Canada has constitutional provisions that allow for a foothold in the recognition of rights, which is not the case in Australia:

Because Australia does not have a clause in its *Constitution* guaranteeing 'Aboriginal rights' as does Canada in s. 35(1) of its *Constitution Act, 1982*, a common law right of Indigenous self-government in Australia would seem to require a new explanation of the assertion of British sovereignty... it is 'sovereignty' (the British assertion of, and Indigenous claims to), rather than 'self-government' that I see as the central issue for judicial scrutiny in Australia.<sup>9</sup>

Overall, "Australian governments have refused to engage in any treaty negotiations with Indigenous people, whereas Canadian governments have engaged in negotiations with First Nations which are treaties only by name."<sup>10</sup>

While Canada, Australia, and New Zealand all appear to be slowly moving towards greater recognition of Indigenous rights, New Zealand's relationship with its Indigenous peoples falls between Australia and Canada, as they are not formally recognized in the New Zealand Constitution, only treaty agreements. As a result, "governments have the authority to limit or even extinguish [I]ndigenous rights at their pleasure, limited only by their own...legislative instruments,"<sup>11</sup> and this lack of constitutional protection results in ultimate state power.

Overall, though Indigenous people in Australia do not benefit from constitutional footholds for self-governance recognition by the state, there are various other legislative options for exercising power over their own people and affairs. New Zealand Indigenous people also do not benefit from constitutional protection, but benefit instead from a main treaty, efforts in restorative justice processes, and other legislative provisions regarding land rights to exercise self-governance.

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<sup>8</sup> Davis & Langton, *supra* note X at 473.

<sup>9</sup> Linda Popic, "Sovereignty in Law: The Justiciability of Indigenous Sovereignty in Australia, the United States and Canada" (2005) 4 *Indigenous LJ* 117 at 122.

<sup>10</sup> Pratt, *supra* note X at 58.

<sup>11</sup> Michael Murphy, "Prisons of Culture: Judicial Constructions of Indigenous Rights in Australia, Canada, and New Zealand" (2008) 87:2 *Can B Rev* 357 at 378.

## II. PRACTICAL APPROACH FOR THE SYMPOSIUM

### Regarding Self-Government

Based on our research, we developed a program with the following considerations in mind:

1. Panels ought to focus on practical approaches to using tools to exercise self-governance. This ought to be paired with sessions dedicated to fostering a community's ability to rebuild and explore its own legal system. A community would therefore want to use the tools at its disposal while seeking greater ability to exert jurisdiction based on its own tradition. This of course varies from community to community.
2. Considering this, it would be useful to have panels that focus on specific self-governing tools, such as legislating under the *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and family*, and for the planning committee to identify which tools it would want to focus on.
3. Further, some panels should focus on economic development of Indigenous communities in Canada. Notably, in-depth discussions of treaties, land claims, and Impact Benefit Agreements as vehicles for not only exercising sovereignty but increasing the economic conditions of Indigenous people in Canada. Therefore, turning to other jurisdictions would be helpful in discussing strategies they have used to develop economically, despite different legal regimes governing Indigenous communities between the four countries.

## Section II

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### I. **INDIGENOUS JUSTICE SYSTEM SYMPOSIUM: ADDRESSING KEY OBJECTIVES**

The symposium on the Indigenous Justice System focused on five principal objectives: fostering meaningful dialogue, addressing critical issues such as childcare protection, advancing self-governance, aligning the legal system, and integrating Indigenous legal systems. Below is a detailed exploration of how each objective was addressed and discussed during the event:

#### **1) Foster Dialogue: Building Mutual Understanding and Collaboration**

##### **Objective:**

Facilitate meaningful conversations between the Canadian legal community and Indigenous communities to build mutual understanding and collaboration.

##### **Discussion:**

The symposium created a space where representatives from both the Canadian legal community and Indigenous communities could engage in open, honest discussions. These dialogues were crucial in breaking down historical barriers, addressing misunderstandings, and building trust. The work is in front of us. Panel discussions, workshops, and networking sessions allowed participants to share their unique perspectives, challenges, and solutions. Key discussions included how communities could work together to develop collaborative approaches to justice that respect Indigenous values, laws, and traditions.

##### **Outcome:**

The engagement of both legal professionals and Indigenous leaders facilitated the establishment of potential partnerships, contributing to a stronger foundation for future collaboration in the justice sector.

#### **2) Address Childcare Protection: Enhancing Measures that Respect Indigenous Laws and Practices**

##### **Objective:**

Explore and develop strategies to enhance childcare protection measures that respect and integrate Indigenous laws, cultural values, and practices.

##### **Discussion:**

A significant focus of the symposium through workshops lead by the Wahkohtowin Law and Governance Lodge was on improving childcare protection systems for Indigenous children and families. Discussions centered around Bill C-92 and the ongoing efforts of Indigenous communities to develop their own family and childcare protection laws. Participants discussed how these new Indigenous-led systems could be designed

to prioritize cultural sensitivity, family autonomy, and the well-being of children, integrating traditional Indigenous practices into modern child welfare frameworks.

**Outcome:**

The symposium helped shared and identified strategies for enhancing childcare protection that would ensure cultural relevance and effectiveness in safeguarding the rights and well-being of Indigenous children. These strategies emphasized community-based approaches and self-determination in decision-making regarding child welfare.

### **3) Advance Self-Governance: Supporting Community Autonomy and Decision-Making**

**Objective:**

Identify and promote pathways for strengthening Indigenous self-governance within the legal framework to support community autonomy and decision-making.

**Discussion:**

A core theme of the symposium was the promotion of Indigenous self-governance. This included discussions about the importance of empowering Indigenous communities to make decisions for themselves, particularly in relation to justice and social systems. Speakers and participants explored how Indigenous communities could strengthen their autonomy through the development of their own legal systems and governance structures. The symposium also examined how these systems could work alongside or within the broader Canadian legal framework, ensuring both self-determination and cooperation with national policies.

**Outcome:**

Key takeaways included the identification of a few pathways to further empower Indigenous communities through self-governance, but essentially, the acknowledgment that real autonomy can only be achieved when Indigenous peoples are able to create laws and structures that align with their cultural practices and community needs.

### **4) Align the Legal System: Proposing Reforms to Meet the Needs of Indigenous Peoples**

**Objective:**

Examine and propose reforms to the Canadian legal system to better address and meet the needs of Indigenous peoples, ensuring equitable treatment and justice.

**Discussion:**

The symposium also addressed necessary reforms to the Canadian legal system, focusing on making it more equitable and responsive to the needs of Indigenous peoples. This involved discussions around the implementation of Gladue reports, the role of Gladue Courts, and how restorative justice practices can be incorporated into the mainstream legal system. Additionally, the importance of cultural sensitivity training for legal professionals, such as judges, lawyers, and law enforcement, was emphasized as a key strategy to address the systemic challenges Indigenous people face in accessing justice.



**Outcome:**

Proposals were made to ensure that the Canadian legal system better aligns with the principles of equity and justice for Indigenous peoples, advocating for systemic changes that include the integration of cultural practices, restorative justice, and more inclusive legal practices.

**5) Integrate Indigenous Legal Systems: Adapting Traditional Laws for Effective Outcomes****Objective:**

Assess how traditional legal systems can be integrated and adapted to provide more effective and respectful outcomes for Indigenous communities.

**Discussion:**

The symposium explored the cohabitation of traditional Indigenous legal systems with the broader Canadian justice system. Discussions highlighted the strengths of Indigenous laws—such as restorative justice, the existence of a non-adversarial system, community accountability, and collective decision-making—and how these can be incorporated into contemporary legal practices. This included dialogue on adapting Indigenous legal practices to modern legal contexts, ensuring that they remain effective in addressing contemporary issues while still respecting traditional practices.

**Outcome:**

The symposium facilitated important conversations on how Indigenous practices could be incorporated into existing frameworks to create more effective, culturally appropriate, and respectful justice outcomes. The integration of traditional legal practices was seen as a key strategy for providing holistic justice that reflects the values and needs of Indigenous communities. The symposium also incorporated several Indigenous practices throughout the days.

**II. CONCLUSION**

Through the discussions on these key objectives, the symposium made substantial progress in fostering a deeper understanding of how Indigenous and Canadian legal systems could collaborate, reform, and integrate. By focusing on mutual respect, self-governance, child protection, legal alignment, and the integration of Indigenous legal traditions, the symposium provided valuable insights and laid the groundwork for future initiatives aimed at improving justice outcomes for Indigenous peoples in Canada.

### III. THE INDIGENOUS JUSTICE SYSTEM: A SHARING KNOWLEDGE SYMPOSIUM | KEY POINTS DISCUSSED DURING THE 3-DAY SYMPOSIUM

#### Day 1: Foundational Discussions and Keynote Insights

##### Opening Addresses

The symposium began with a land acknowledgment, ceremonial reflections, and remarks from community leaders. Key themes included balancing traditional and corporate pathways, fostering dialogue, and advancing Indigenous legal traditions.

Elders Louie and Laura Heavenfire led a pipe ceremony, emphasizing the spiritual foundation of Indigenous legal traditions. Tyson Heavenfire, a Tsuut'ina Council member, highlighted the dual paths of traditional and corporate frameworks, advocating for their integration to foster positive change.

CIAJ President of the Board, Justice Julie Dutil reflected on last year's discussions about recovering Indigenous legal traditions and reforming Canadian legal systems, setting the stage for continued progress.

The Honourable Marion Buller delivered opening remarks, stressing that while creating change is difficult, fear should not hinder progress. She cautioned against complacency and urged participants to take the energy from the symposium into their daily lives to drive meaningful change.

##### Keynote: Engaging with Indigenous Law

Koren Lightning, legal affairs Director from the Wahkohtowin Law and Governance Lodge at the University of Alberta shared her experiences as an Indigenous lawyer navigating both Indigenous and Canadian legal traditions. She recounted her bar call ceremony, which took place in her home community instead of a courthouse, symbolizing a shift towards recognizing Indigenous legal processes.

Her address presented Indigenous law as a living system, evolving through different eras:

- Roots (1000+ years ago): Established legal systems grounded in oral traditions and community governance.
- Repression and Resilience (100-400 years ago): Colonization led to suppression, yet Indigenous legal traditions persisted through cultural resilience.
- Recovery and Revitalization (10-40 years ago): Renewed efforts to document, revitalize, and apply Indigenous legal traditions in contemporary settings.
- Resurgence and Renaissance (1-10 years ago): Significant legal developments, including Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) initiatives and Indigenous law school courses.

##### Workshop: Drawing Out Law - Narrative Analysis

Lead by the Wahkohtowin Law and Governance Lodge Team

Facilitators introduced methodologies for articulating Indigenous law through storytelling. Participants explored narrative analysis techniques, treating traditional stories as legal texts to extract guiding principles.

Key insights included:

- Sources of Indigenous law: Sacred, natural, positive, customary, and deliberative laws.
- Challenges: Prolonged state repression, lack of education, funding constraints, and pressures to conform to external legal standards.

- Story-based methods: Using community narratives to develop legal frameworks that reflect Indigenous worldviews.

A case study analyzed how Indigenous legal traditions address child welfare. Discussions focused on how communities identify danger, respond to crises, and prioritize protection while centering love and communal responsibility over punitive measures.

## **Day 2: Bridging Systems and International Perspectives**

### **Reflections and Key Themes**

Participants reflected on Day 1, sharing insights on collaboration, systemic biases, and pathways for integrating Indigenous legal principles into mainstream frameworks.

Guests from New Zealand emphasized that meaningful change requires courage, particularly in overcoming the fear of success—what happens if Indigenous legal systems thrive, and how do we ensure continued progress?

A key discussion point was the intersection of Indigenous natural law with Canadian legal frameworks, with some questioning whether the two can coexist or if fundamental contradictions persist.

### **Tully Wheel Workshop: Mapping Strategies for Change**

Lead by the Wahkohtowin Law and Governance Lodge Team

Participants engaged in an exercise mapping out strategies for justice reform:

- Staying within the rules: Working within existing legal structures to secure funding and support while acknowledging potential limitations.
- Confrontation: Non-violent protests and blockades, which can create visibility but may lead to backlash.
- Acting otherwise: Leveraging legal scholarship and court cases to influence systemic change.
- Negotiation: Co-developing legal frameworks through modern treaties and agreements.
- Turning away: Resurgence of Indigenous governance independent of state institutions.

A case study on the Haida Nation's governance approach illustrated how communities have strategically combined these methods, leading to significant legal and political successes.

### **International Perspectives**

Representatives from the Māori justice system discussed their efforts in reclaiming self-governance. They emphasized that Māori law (Tikanga Māori) is foundational and should not be subordinate to state laws.

Key initiatives included:

- Community-led panels replacing state-controlled family courts, integrating legal and cultural expertise.
- Legal education programs for Māori families, helping them navigate Western court systems while upholding Indigenous values.
- Policy advocacy to challenge government actions that violate treaty obligations.

## Day 3: Best Practices and Future Directions

### Success Stories in Indigenous Legal Integration

Several communities shared successful initiatives demonstrating the effectiveness of Indigenous legal frameworks:

- Peguis First Nation's Coordination Agreement: Reduced child apprehensions through Customary Care Agreements, ensuring children remain with extended family.
- Louis Bull Tribe's Child Welfare Law: Developed in Cree syllabics and English, reflecting a community-led approach to child protection.
- Siksika Nation's Justice Department: Integrated elder mediation and youth engagement, fostering a holistic justice system.
- Gladue Court in Toronto: Structured as a healing-focused circle with Indigenous representation and traditional protocols.

### Challenges in Dialogue with Non-Indigenous Institutions

Discussions highlighted obstacles such as systemic racism, inadequate Indigenous legal education among Canadian legal professionals, and funding challenges. Notably, the absence of lawmakers and law enforcement representatives at the symposium was identified as a significant gap in efforts toward reconciliation.

### Future Directions

- Stronger ceremonial integration: Increased use of Indigenous spiritual practices in legal proceedings and symposium discussions.
- Greater involvement of lawmakers and justice system actors: Ensuring those responsible for policy and enforcement are engaged in discussions on Indigenous legal frameworks.
- Focus on enforcement and prosecution: Exploring how Indigenous laws can be formally recognized and applied within existing justice structures.
- Expanding Indigenous legal education: Training for Canadian judges, Crown counsel, and legal professionals on Indigenous legal traditions.
- Federal funding and industry accountability: Advocating for financial resources and corporate responsibility on Indigenous lands.

## Conclusion

The symposium reinforced the importance of continued dialogue, systemic change, and collaboration. Participants expressed a commitment to advancing Indigenous legal traditions through education, advocacy, and institutional engagement, ensuring these traditions remain integral to Canada's legal landscape.

#### **IV. KEY THEMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE 2ND INDIGENOUS JUSTICE SYSTEM: A SHARING KNOWLEDGE SYMPOSIUM**

##### **Education**

###### **Targeted Education for Key Justice Stakeholders:**

- Judges, Crown Counsel, and Law Enforcement:
  - Cultural Sensitivity Training: Ensuring justice professionals are aware of Indigenous histories, cultures, and legal traditions.
  - Mandatory Judicial Training: Training for judges to incorporate Indigenous knowledge, perspectives, and practices into decision-making.

###### **Community-Based Training and Capacity Building:**

- Knowledge-Sharing Between Communities: Indigenous communities should have regular opportunities to engage in dialogue, share best practices, and learn from one another.
- Strengthening Local Capacities: Investing in community-based training will ensure Indigenous leadership and knowledge flourish and are passed down effectively.

##### **CFSA (Child and Family Services Act) and Self-Governance**

###### **Building a Holistic Approach:**

- Regular Gatherings Among Indigenous Actors and Governments: Facilitating better communication and collaboration between Indigenous actors and governmental bodies is essential for advancing CFSA and self-governance.
- C-92 and Beyond: While C-92 serves as a helpful framework, it should not be treated as a perfect model. There needs to be space for innovation and adaptation to the specific needs of each First Nation.
- Expanding Infrastructure & Capacity Building: Developing homes for aging out youth, eliminating punitive programs, and prioritizing healing approaches to issues such as substance abuse and incarceration.

###### **Healing Communities Through CFSA Self-Governance:**

- Holistic Care and Community Well-being: The focus should be on long-term healing and reducing systemic issues like addiction and mass incarceration through culturally grounded CFSA self-governance.

##### **Language Revitalization**

###### **Commitment to Language Recovery:**

- Revitalization Efforts: Strengthening the commitment to revitalizing Indigenous languages by including them in education systems and public spaces.
- Engagement with Knowledge Keepers and Fluent Speakers: Collaborating with Elders, language keepers, and fluent speakers to facilitate public language education and language immersion programs.
- Translation of Agreements and Documents: Ensuring that legal agreements, laws, and other key documents are translated into Indigenous languages to make them accessible.

## **Role of the Courts**

### **Judicial Leadership:**

- Courts Leading the Way: Courts must take the lead in demonstrating commitment to Indigenous justice, by embracing new approaches and judicial reforms.
- New Gladue Approach: Expanding the Gladue approach to not only identify trauma but also incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing and being, fostering a more holistic understanding of an individual's background.
- Reforming Court Structures: Implementing structural reforms, such as circular tables to facilitate more inclusive and culturally respectful interactions.

## **Trust and Relations**

### **Building Trust with Indigenous Communities:**

- Asymmetry of Commitment: Trust between Indigenous and Canadian institutions is strained by the unequal commitment to upholding Indigenous laws and providing resources for self-governance.
- Enforcing Indigenous Laws: Canadian institutions must demonstrate a willingness to enforce Indigenous laws and respect Indigenous communities' self-governance.
- Role of Courts in Building Trust: Courts have a critical role in bridging the gap by acknowledging and incorporating Indigenous laws and governance models.

### **Indigenous Recruitment in Justice Roles:**

- Indigenous Representation: Encouraging Indigenous recruitment in all areas of justice, from law enforcement to the judiciary, will create more equitable and culturally appropriate legal practices.

### **Spirituality and Indigenous Protocols in Courts:**

- Incorporating Indigenous Spirituality: Including Indigenous spiritual practices in legal records and proceedings would acknowledge and respect Indigenous worldviews.
- Indigenous Protocols: Courts should incorporate traditional Indigenous protocols, enhancing the connection between the legal process and Indigenous cultural values.

## **Generational Relations**

### **Engaging Youth in Cultural Ways:**

- Youth Engagement: Expanding cultural programs for youth, ensuring they connect with their heritage and language, fostering a sense of responsibility and pride in their culture.
- Resolving Generational Conflict: Facilitating understanding and reconciliation between younger and older generations, ensuring mutual respect and shared knowledge transfer.

### **Elder Involvement:**

- Respecting Elders: Careful consideration should be given to the roles of Elders in community and cultural activities to avoid elder fatigue and tokenization.

- Respecting Elders' Wisdom: Ensuring Elders are kept informed of what is on the docket in community meetings, allowing them to contribute meaningfully without being overwhelmed.

## **Addressing Conflict Within Communities**

### **The Legacy of Colonialism:**

- Healing from Colonial Impact: The role of colonialism in creating division and conflict within communities must be acknowledged.
- Restoring Common Values and Principles: Communities must focus on restoring shared values and principles, including cultural and legal traditions, to heal and unite.

## **Are Indigenous and Canadian Laws Compatible?**

### **Contrasts Between Natural and Human Laws:**

- Navigating Conflicts: The question of compatibility between Indigenous natural laws and Canadian human laws needs ongoing discussion. While there may be contrasts and conflicts, efforts should focus on finding ways to reconcile and integrate these systems to benefit Indigenous communities and their justice systems.

## **One Size Doesn't Fit All**

### **Tailored Approaches for Each Community:**

- Grassroots Initiatives: Indigenous communities are diverse, so strategies and solutions should be community-driven and customized to meet the unique needs of each group.
- Recognizing Diverse Strengths: Individuals within communities and justice systems have different roles to play, which should be respected and leveraged for collective success.

# Conclusion

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The key themes discussed at the symposium provided a valuable roadmap for advancing Indigenous justice reforms, emphasizing the need for cultural respect, structural change, and the rebuilding of trust between Indigenous communities and Canadian institutions. As CIAJ looks to the future, our work will align with these essential areas, focusing on creating opportunities to build meaningful content and organize events that bring leaders together to make a tangible impact on the lives of Indigenous peoples.

One of the challenges ahead is to rebuild trust after generations of colonial policies and systemic injustice. This will not be a simple or quick process, but we are committed to deepening our understanding of the trauma Indigenous peoples have endured and how they are working to heal. We can support this healing journey by approaching it with respect for the pace and needs of each community.

The path to reconciliation and justice is long and complex. However, CIAJ are steadfast in its commitment to continue this journey, working alongside Indigenous peoples to create a legal system that is truly inclusive and just. The road ahead may be challenging, but through collaboration, understanding, and respect, we can make meaningful progress toward a more equitable future.