

# **Confronting Medical Colonialism Against Indigenous Children In Canada: A Comprehensive Guide**

Medical colonialism is a systematic and pervasive form of oppression that has had a profound impact on Indigenous communities worldwide. In Canada, this history dates back to the colonial era, when European settlers established policies and practices that aimed to control and assimilate Indigenous peoples. Healthcare systems played a central role in this process, perpetuating racist ideologies and discriminatory practices that have had devastating consequences for Indigenous children.

One of the most egregious examples of medical colonialism in Canada is the residential school system. From the 1870s to the 1990s, over 150,000 Indigenous children were forcibly removed from their families and communities and placed in residential schools. These institutions were designed to assimilate Indigenous children into Euro-Canadian society, and they used a variety of tactics to break down their cultural identities, including denying them their language, culture, and spirituality.

In addition to the residential school system, Indigenous children have also been subjected to a number of other forms of medical colonialism, including:

**Fighting for a Hand to Hold: Confronting Medical Colonialism against Indigenous Children in Canada (McGill-Queen's Indigenous and Northern Studies Book 97)**



★★★★☆ 4.6 out of 5

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- **Forced sterilization:** In the mid-20th century, the Canadian government forcibly sterilized thousands of Indigenous women without their consent. This practice was used as a means of controlling Indigenous population growth and preventing the transmission of "undesirable" genes.
- **Medical experimentation:** Indigenous children have often been used as subjects in medical experiments without their consent. In the 1940s, for example, Indigenous children in northern Manitoba were deliberately infected with tuberculosis as part of a government-funded experiment.
- **Discrimination in healthcare:** Indigenous children continue to experience discrimination in healthcare settings today. They are more likely to be denied access to basic medical care, and they often receive lower quality care than non-Indigenous children.

The impacts of medical colonialism on Indigenous children have been devastating. These children have suffered from higher rates of infant

mortality, malnutrition, and infectious diseases. They are also more likely to develop chronic health conditions, such as diabetes and heart disease.

In addition to the physical health impacts, medical colonialism has also had a profound impact on the mental health of Indigenous children. These children have experienced high rates of trauma, depression, and anxiety. They are also more likely to engage in self-harm and substance abuse.

The legacy of medical colonialism continues to impact Indigenous children in Canada today. Despite the progress that has been made in recent years, there is still much work to be done to address the systemic racism and discrimination that Indigenous children face in healthcare settings.

One of the most important ways to address this issue is to raise awareness about the history and impacts of medical colonialism. By educating ourselves and others about this issue, we can help to create a more just and equitable society for all Indigenous children.

In addition to raising awareness, there are a number of other concrete steps that can be taken to address medical colonialism in Canada. These include:

- **Investing in culturally competent healthcare:** Healthcare services for Indigenous children should be culturally competent and responsive to the unique needs of these children. This means hiring Indigenous staff, providing services in Indigenous languages, and incorporating Indigenous knowledge and practices into healthcare delivery.
- **Addressing the social determinants of health:** The social determinants of health, such as poverty, housing, and education, play

a major role in the health of Indigenous children. By addressing these determinants, we can help to improve the overall health of Indigenous communities.

- **Supporting Indigenous self-governance:** Indigenous communities should have the right to self-govern their own healthcare systems. This is essential for ensuring that healthcare services are responsive to the unique needs of Indigenous children.

Medical colonialism is a serious issue that has had a profound impact on Indigenous children in Canada. By understanding the history and impacts of this issue, we can take action to create a more just and equitable society for all Indigenous children.



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