

COMING SOON

Let the People Speak: Oppression in a Time of Reconciliation

By Sheilla Jones
Foreword by Sheila North



Since Indigenous Affairs (IA) became a stand-alone Canadian government department in 1966, it has mushroomed into a federal department unlike any other. IA has jurisdictional reach over 90 percent of Canada's land mass, authorities that reach into every single federal government department and agency, with an annual budget (including its 33 federal co-delivery partners) of some \$20 billion annually. Indigenous Affairs Plus (IA+) is effectively a "super-province." Yet not a single person overseeing this new super- power within Confederation has been elected by Indigenous people to represent their interests. Not only do ordinary Indigenous people have no voice in federal policy decisions that can affect nearly every aspect of their lives, they have no power to hold IA+ accountable to them. Ordinary Indigenous people are among the most politically voiceless and powerless people in Canada. In *Let the People Speak: Oppression in a time of reconciliation*, award-winning Canadian journalist Sheilla Jones poses a crucial question: are the well-documented social inequities in Indigenous communities—high levels of poverty, suicide, incarceration, children in care, family violence—the symptoms of this institutionalized powerlessness? The solution to powerlessness is empowerment, and the means for that empowerment already exists—treaty annuities linked to the increasing value of ceded lands and paid directly to every First Nations Treaty man, woman and child. Modernizing annuities was validated by Parliament in 1879 and affirmed by the Supreme Court of Canada in 1895. It is a telling measure of the powerlessness of ordinary First Nations people that annuities have remained unchanged for 150 years. Only when ordinary Indigenous people are empowered to speak for themselves can all Canadians—Indigenous and non- Indigenous—begin a meaningful conversation about reconciliation.

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