

**Indigenous people say racial profiling most often felt in stores: Human Rights Commission report**

**Indigenous people report racial profiling happens most in retail, police and health care settings**

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Racial profiling can contribute to mental health issues for some Indigenous people, says Sylvia Maracle, the executive director of the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres. (Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres)

The constant and unwarranted scrutiny of store clerks, police and public servants leaves many racialized and Indigenous people in Ontario feeling mistrustful and unsafe, according to a new report from the Ontario Human Rights Commission.

The report, released on Wednesday, and titled **Under Suspicion**, includes social science research and survey results from more than 1,600 individuals and organizations about their experiences of racial profiling.

It concludes that "racial profiling is a daily reality that damages communities and undermines trust in public institutions."

Racial profiling also has an impact on the well-being of Indigenous people, according to Sylvia Maracle, the executive director of the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres.

"You internalize [the suspicion]," she said in an interview with CBC News. "You begin to think that you deserve it. You begin to think you are less-than."

### **'People are afraid to go places'**

"It can cause mental health issues," Maracle said. "It can cause physical issues to the point where some people are afraid to go to some places in their community."

Indigenous people who took part in the survey said they most often experienced racial profiling at private businesses and retail settings.

Maracle said Indigenous people reported that some restaurants in northern Ontario require them to prove they have money to pay before ordering food.

Indigenous youth are also frequently and unnecessarily targets of mall security, she said.

Police, health care and education settings were next, respectively, among the settings Indigenous respondents said they experienced racial profiling.

There is a direct connection between the profiling of Indigenous people by police and the overrepresentation of Indigenous people in jail, Maracle said.

"If you don't have police contact, then you don't go to court and if you don't go to court, you don't go to corrections," she said.



Renu Mandhane, chief commissioner of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, says the quality of health care for Indigenous people is diminished by racial stereotypes and profiling in hospitals. (CBC News)

A collision of racial profiling in health care and child welfare accounts for an experience that the Ontario Human Rights Commission heard about several times, according to Chief Commissioner Renu Mandhane.

"When young Indigenous women give birth in a hospital, if they aren't married, if they seem young, child welfare will be called to apprehend the baby at birth," Mandhane said.

"When Indigenous people come in with myriad complex health issues, it's almost assumed that those relate to an addiction," she said. "Certainly for First Nations people, we heard that the quality of care they receive is lower as a result of racial stereotyping and racial profiling."

The Ontario Human Rights Commission will work directly with First Nations, Metis and Inuit communities to develop tools for addressing their experiences of racial discrimination, Mandhane said.

## **Indigenous, black experiences similar**

Like Indigenous people, survey respondents who are black also identified retail and private business settings as the number one place they experience racial profiling, followed by police.

Survey respondents who identified as Muslim, Arab, West Asian or South Asian reported experiencing racial profiling most commonly in transportation and employment settings.

A commitment from Ontario's anti-racism directorate to collect race-based data in relation to policing, child welfare, education and corrections is a step towards finding solutions, Mandhane said.

The Ontario Human Rights Commission is now developing policy guidance for policing and law enforcement, child welfare, court and corrections and other sectors to understand how racial profiling can be prevented and addressed.