

Canada's treatment of Indigenous women not a 'genocide,' says Scheer

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By The Canadian Press

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OTTAWA—"Genocide" isn't the right word to describe what's been done to generations of Indigenous women and girls in Canada, Conservative Leader [Andrew Scheer](#) said Monday.

Last week, the federal inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls released its final report. The report included a lengthy argument for why Canada's "series of actions and omissions" allowed Indigenous women to be targeted in ways that add up to an ongoing genocide.

The inquiry noted that under international law, a genocide doesn't need a single directing mind, or to be an organized campaign of violence.

Scheer called every death “a tragedy” that has a “huge impact on families and loved ones.” Speaking on Parliament Hill, Scheer said there are concrete actions governments can take to protect vulnerable populations, specifically Indigenous women and girls.

“That being said,” he added, “the ramifications of the term ‘genocide’ are very profound. That word and term carries a lot of meaning. I think the tragedy involved with missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls is its own thing, it is its own tragedy, and does not fall into that category of genocide.”

The use of the term “genocide” in the report instantly sparked arguments over whether the inquiry commissioners’ label is accurate, and whether those arguments risk obscuring the findings and the 231 recommendations the inquiry made.

Citing residential schools, poor health care, unsafe transportation, and indifferent or even hostile policing, the inquiry’s four commissioners argued the policies aimed to “destroy Indigenous Peoples physically, biologically, and as social units” through oppressive colonial actions that have persisted since Europeans began settling in North America.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has not directly answered questions about whether he agrees with that, though he has said he accepts the findings of the report.

After a speech on Monday in Vancouver, the inquiry’s chief commissioner Marion Buller said it’s unfortunate when a political leader rejects a finding of a 30-month national inquiry.

“The danger is, of course, he’s saying, ‘I don’t believe the truths that the families told.’ I think it’s a real affront to the families and survivors who did come forward,” she said.

Canada signed on to the United Nations’ 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, which included commitments to avert and stop genocidal acts and punish perpetrators. After the inquiry report was released, the secretary general of the Organization of American States said he wanted to form an international panel to investigate the claim and achieve justice.

“The idea that Canada would now be subject to the types of international actions that follow findings of genocide — I think we have to be very careful with the use of that terminology and I don’t want to get distracted from the good work that the report has done,” Scheer said.

“But that being said, I think that the tragedy is its own thing, it is its own heartbreaking situation for every single family that was affected by it, and it does not fall into the category of genocide.”

On Sunday, Crown-Indigenous Relations Minister Carolyn Bennett told Global TV's *The West Block* that the Liberal government would support such a call because it believes in the "rules-based international system."