How Can Decolonizing Children's Rights Influence National and International Health and Social Policies?

ICCRP
International and Canadian Child Rights Partnership

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Introduction

Across various global contexts, health and social policies for children are developed and operate within institutions and frameworks deeply imbued with colonial legacies.

Colonialism has ascribed and continues to inform dominant practices and rhetoric surrounding children, childhood, and children's rights that has led to discriminatory policies, institutions, and an unequal realization of children's rights.

By embracing Indigenous and decolonial values and perspectives in policy formation, professional practices, and research, we can move closer to a decolonial future where all children access meaningful, inclusive, and culturally relevant health and social policies.

Objective

Discern what has and *has not* been addressed on the nexus of decolonization and children's rights.

Provide policy recommendations, inform professional practices, and create a decolonial world for all children.

Methodology

Findings are based on a comprehensive literature review of peer-reviewed, scholarly articles written from the past ten years, extracted from eight multidisciplinary databases.

Results

The research reveals that forcing universalised, Western-centric ideals and rights frameworks upon heterogeneous contexts and diverse communities has disenfranchised subaltern and marginalized children.

The current children's rights apparatus acts as a new form of imperialism to spread Western ideals and subjugate those historically marginalized by colonial violence.[1]

Current health and social systems have been, and continue to be, implicated in the material and symbolic violence of colonialism.[2]

Policy Brief

Brief for municipal, provincial, and federal policymakers in Canada to decolonize policies for children.

Reveals the policy inertia within Canada's legislative attempts to redress children's rights and wellbeing, Indigenous rights, and all forms of discrimination.

Invites Canadian policymakers to question why Canada continues to reproduce colonial legacies through exclusive policies that render certain children disenfranchised and invisible.

Recommendations provide ways to decolonize policies built upon the four guiding principle of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Podcast

The Scoop on Children's Rights and Decolonization: A Podcast Series of the ICCRP is an educational series for global child professionals on recommendations for decolonial practices.

Episode 1 explores the impact of colonialism on children and children's rights.

Provides examples of colonial violence across various global regions and gives discipline-specific recommendations.

Future episodes feature interviews with expert academics, activists, and practitioners from various continents for diverse insights on decolonizing professional practices.

Literature Review

Paper underway to analyze existing academic literature on decolonization of children's right and impacts on children's health and social wellbeing for the audience of academics, students, and professionals.

Literature spans across the globe to investigate the impact of colonialism on children, childhood and children's rights.

Specific attention on how health and social systems are implicated in colonial violence and produce low rates of health and social wellbeing among Indigenous and marginalized children.

General Recommendations

- Center Indigenous and marginalized perspectives and values in political and social forums. Foster collaboration between various racial, cultural, and social groups.
- Ensure self-determination for marginalized groups in family and child services.[3, 4]
- Center the views of the child and respect children as developed social agents. [5]
- Challenge colonial legacies in international organizations and rights frameworks, like the UNCRC, by creating critically informed and rights-based policies [1]
- Mandate professional education on local cultures, traditions, and communities and critical and declonial theories. [6]
- Reform institutions implicated in the violence of colonialism, including education, health, justice, immigration, and social work systems.[2]

Works Cited

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