

A Focus on Indigenous Parliamentarians

Indigenous persons have served as representatives in Canada's federal and provincial parliaments for almost as long as the country has been in existence. However, the legacy of colonialism combined with franchise restrictions imposed on Status Indians (and women), has contributed to severely limiting the numbers of individuals who have served as parliamentarians.

Following the 2015 federal election, national news media lauded results which indicated that a record number of Indigenous candidates (54) resulted in a record 10 persons of Indigenous heritage becoming MPs. Yet, this still represented only three per cent of the House of Commons seats – a little more than half of their census representation. Moreover, there is no guarantee that these gains will be sustained from one parliament to the next. Representation in the Senate and amongst the provinces varies widely (see our Infographic on pages 32-33).

In this issue, we focus on Indigenous Parliamentarians and Indigenous representation within parliaments. Inside you'll find profiles of some Indigenous parliamentarians, including the McLeod brothers of the Northwest Territories (inside cover) and Yukon's Sam Johnston (page 64), articles by or roundtable discussions featuring Indigenous parliamentarians, a feature on efforts to expand Indigenous art within a Parliament, and an expansive review of how Indigenous political cultural traditions can coexist and inform the Westminster parliamentary system.

A single edition cannot hope to capture the diversity of Indigenous experiences or scratch but the surface of important topics or issues. Rather, we hope to use this theme issue as a springboard for additional coverage. Other articles and features which were planned for this issue, but unfortunately not ready in time for publication, will be part of this ongoing presence.

We encourage suggestions for future articles or submissions.

Will Stos, Editor

