



Native Women's
Association of Canada

L'Association des
femmes autochtones
du Canada

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THE NATIVE WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF CANADA MARKS THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE REPORT OF THE NATIONAL INQUIRY INTO MISSING INDIGENOUS WOMEN, GIRLS, AND GENDER DIVERSE PEOPLE

INDIGENOUS WOMEN MOVE AHEAD IN THE ABSENCE OF A FEDERAL PLAN OF ACTION

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR NEWS CONFERENCE OF JUNE 3, 2020

On June 3, 2020 the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) marks the first anniversary of the release of the report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

- Here is a link to that report: <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/>
- NWAC has done extensive work to address the Calls for Justice and that list of actions is available here: <https://www.nwac.ca/resource/nwac-track-record-on-mmiwg-in-2019-2020/>
- NWAC has conducted a survey showing that nearly one in five Indigenous women reports being a victim of violence during the COVID-19 pandemic and similar numbers fear for their safety. That **survey** is available here: <https://www.nwac.ca/resource/the-impacts-of-covid-19-on-indigenous-women-and-gender-diverse-people-in-canada/>
- NWAC has presented the federal government with a list of **proposed measures** that could be the founding basis for a National Action Plan. That document is available here: <https://www.nwac.ca/resource/proposed-participation-by-nwac-in-a-federal-action-plan-to-address-the-findings-of-the-inquiry-into-missing-and-murdered-indigenous-women-and-girls/>
- NWAC has prepared a discussion paper to demonstrate Canada's international legal obligations to ensure effective **reparations** for the human rights violations of Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people. That discussion paper is available here: <https://www.nwac.ca/resource/reparations-remembrance-in-canada-for-indigenous-women-girls-gender-diverse-persons/>

SOME HISTORY

The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) has worked for more than four decades to document the systemic violence impacting Indigenous women, girls, their families, and communities.

From 2005 to 2010, NWAC's Sisters in Spirit (SIS) Initiative confirmed 582 cases of missing and/or murdered Indigenous women and girls over a span of twenty years and worked to raise awareness of this human-rights issue.

Throughout our work, NWAC believed the violence against Indigenous women to be much more pervasive than publicly available data would indicate. This suspicion was confirmed in

2014, when the RCMP released a report revealing 1,181 cases of missing and/or murdered Indigenous women and girls between 1980 and 2012.

NWAC lobbied persistently for a national inquiry into the violence and, when the Liberal government came to power in 2015, an inquiry was called to address the “systemic causes” of the problem. It was headed by Chief Commissioner Marion Buller, a Cree who was the first Indigenous woman to be appointed as a provincial court judge in British Columbia. She was joined by commissioners Michèle Audette, Brian Eyolfson, and Qajaq Robinson. The Inquiry cost an estimated \$92 million, heard from more than 1,400 witnesses, and took 33 months to complete.

As a non-partisan third party observer, NWAC released report cards evaluating the Inquiry’s progress and activities. NWAC also participated in the Inquiry’s National Indigenous Organization (NIO) Advisory Council.

The 1,200-page final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls was released in June 3, 2019.

It found that the violence constituted a genocide that is being perpetrated against Indigenous women, girls and gender diverse people. It highlighted the discrimination that is deeply rooted in policies, practices and laws, denying Indigenous women their basic human rights. And it made 231 Calls For Justice aimed at allowing Indigenous women to reclaim their power and place within Canada, and restoring their rights to culture, health, security and justice.

In response to the Inquiry’s report, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said the government would develop a National Action Plan to address the violence against Indigenous women, girls, two-spirit and LGBTQ people. Mr. Trudeau said: “The work of the commissioners, the stories they have collected, and the calls for justice they have put forward, will not be placed on a shelf to collect dust.”

Although there was no timeline initially provided for the creation of the National Action Plan, Carolyn Bennett, the Minister of Crown Indigenous Relations, told a meeting of First Nations leaders in December: “We believe we’ve got to have something in the window by June.”

The government has since decided not to release a National Action Plan in June, and has given no timeline for its creation, citing the COVID-19 pandemic as the reason for inaction.

NWAC and the Indigenous women of Canada cannot wait for the government to move forward. Their lives, and the lives of their daughters, mothers, sisters and aunts are at risk. NWAC has already taken significant measures to address the violence, is pushing ahead with others. It is urging the federal government to join us in this urgent task.

NWAC is pleading with the federal government not to abandon the Indigenous women of Canada.

NWAC REPORT CARD ON THE GOVERNMENT FOLLOW-UP TO THE FINAL REPORT OF THE NATIONAL INQUIRY INTO MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS.

NWAC conducted report cards to grade the performance of the National Inquiry as it was doing its work. The report card being released today follows on those assessments with an evaluation of the federal government's efforts subsequent to the release of the Inquiry report. Rather than individually grade work done on the Inquiry's 231 Calls For Justice, many of which are not aimed at the federal government, NWAC looked at the four broad "pathways of oppression" - **culture, health, security, and the right to justice** - that the Inquiry commissioners identified as having been used to maintain the violence against Indigenous women and girls. In all four areas, NWAC found the government had done so little over the past year that the progress was **impossible to score and, therefore, received a failing grade.**

ON CULTURE:

- The Inquiry report says Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse persons have the inherent right to their own culture and identity. They also have the right to foster culture and identity within their families and communities through the full implementation of economic, social, and political rights, which can help, protect these practices and this knowledge.
- NWAC says no discernible improvements have been documented in this regard since the publication of the National Inquiry final report.

ON HEALTH:

- The Inquiry report says Indigenous women and girls have the inherent right to their own health and well-being. They also have the right to use their expertise to contribute to the health and well-being of their families and communities.
- NWAC says, in the absence of any National Action Plan, it is not in a position to comment on how, or even if, the Canadian government intends to respond to the numerous Calls for Justice relating to the right to health.

ON SECURITY:

- The Inquiry report says Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse persons have the inherent right to security in their own lives as well as the right to directly participate in maintaining that security for themselves and others, within their own understandings and within the full spectrum of economic, social, and political rights that can contribute to increasing security.
- NWAC says, in the absence of any National Action Plan, it is not in a position to comment on how, or even if, the Canadian government intends to respond to the numerous Calls for Justice relating to the right to security.



ON THE RIGHT TO JUSTICE:

- The Inquiry report says there are significant moments of disconnection between Indigenous peoples and the Canadian justice system and the gap between the delivery of justice in practice and theory. It also reaffirms, not only that Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse persons have the inherent right to live free from violence or injustice, but if this right is not ensured in practice, they have the right to have this violence stopped and condemned.
- NWAC says it has no evidence to indicate that the above reality has fundamentally changed since the publication of the National Inquiry final report ... More worrying still, on-going primary research conducted by NWAC indicates that violence in the home is increasing during the current health emergency. In short, the right of Indigenous women to have acts of violence against them stopped is not being ensured in practice.

THE EIGHT MEASURES PROPOSED BY NWAC FOR INCLUSION IN A NATIONAL ACTION PLAN TO ADDRESS THE 2321 CALLS FOR JUSTICE OF THE INQUIRY INTO MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS

Faced with little consultation from the federal government on the formulation of a National Action Plan to address the Inquiry's Calls For Justice in the Inquiry, and with the June 3 anniversary of the release of the Inquiry report fast approaching, NWAC compiled a list of measures that could form the basis of the action-plan's first version. It submitted that list of those measures to the government in May. They are as follows:

- **NATIONAL ACTION PLAN:** NWAC asked that the **National Action Plan be released** on the June 3rd anniversary date as promised. **(Calls for Justice 1) . This was not fulfilled.**
- **NATIONAL TASK FORCE:** NWAC asks the government to immediately establish a **national task force**, comprised of an independent, highly qualified, and specialized team of investigators, to review and, if required, to reinvestigate each case of all unresolved files of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people from across Canada. **(Call for Justice 9.9)**
- **NATIONAL DATABASE:** Efforts are currently underway by NWAC to quantify the number of Indigenous women who have been murdered or have gone missing since the release of the Inquiry report in June of last year. If that number is not quantifiable, NWAC staff plan to quantify the number of Indigenous women and girls who have been murdered or gone missing since the release of the RCMP report of 2014. A commitment is needed to **establish a national database. (Call for Justice 9.5)**

- **OVERSIGHT/MMIWG UNIT:** NWAC asks the federal government to create an **independent mechanism to report annually to Parliament on the implementation of the National Inquiry's Calls for Justice**. NWAC is requesting financial resources to establish its own internal dedicated MMIWG unit within its national office to work on Calls for Justice relating to policy, legislation, research and public education, and external liaison work with communities, police, government, business, and lawmakers. This unit will also provide oversight of the implementation of the MMIWG Calls for Justice. Permanent NWAC staff should also be part of the development and creation of the independent mechanism. **(Call for Justice 1.10)**
- **PUBLIC EDUCATION:** NWAC will be launching a plain language version of the Genocide report, translated into English, French and Spanish. NWAC has entered into a partnership with the author of the report, a University and with private donors to complete this initiative. We anticipate the publishing of this report at the end of June 2020. NWAC is requesting assistance from the government to help **develop a national awareness campaign** that aims to educate Canada's citizens about, and to confront and eliminate, racism, sexism, homophobia, and transphobia and to work with NWAC to develop and implement an Anti-Racism and Anti-Sexism National Action Plan to end racism and sexualized stereotypes of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people. **(Calls for Justice 1.9, 2.6)**
- **POLITICAL RIGHTS AND END MARGINALIZATION:** NWAC has an Accord with the Crown. We ask that the government immediately **bring NWAC to all decision-making tables** that impact Indigenous women's, girls and gender diverse issues and rights including when developing budgets and determining government activities and priorities. **(Calls for Justice 1.3)**
- **BEST PRACTICES SUMMIT:** NWAC is keenly interested in addressing the issues that led to missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and wants to organize and lead a **virtual international "Best Practices Summit"** that would include NWAC, a number of federal ministers, UN Women representative, an OAS representative, a representative of the CAMIs from Mexico and Indigenous leaders and matriarchs from the World Indigenous Women's Business Network to discuss the impact of COVID in their countries and propose practical solutions. The goal of the Summit is to discuss existing solutions in other countries to help implement specific Calls for Justice **(To assist in implementing all the Calls for Justice)**
- **AN EIGHTH MEASURE TO BE ANNOUNCED PUBLICLY BY NWAC IN COMING WEEKS**

SURVEY FINDS NEARLY ONE IN FIVE INDIGENOUS WOMEN HAVE BEEN VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE SINCE PANDEMIC HIT OUR SHORES

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF CANADA

Summary of the findings of an online survey conducted for the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) between May 1, 2020 and May 29, 2020 and verified by Nanos Research. In total, 1,087 people of First Nations, Metis or Inuit Background participated.

1. **Two Spirits experience and fear most violence:** 18% of Indigenous women and 25% of Two Spirits have experienced violence in the past 3 months. Two Spirits are most worried about the impact of COVID on violence in the home. Men are half as likely to worry about violence against women than women and Two Spirits (31% vs 65%).
2. **Inuit experience and fear most violence:** Inuit women and gender diverse people are the demographic most worried about COVID impacting violence in the home in the whole sample: almost 4 times as likely (30% vs 8%). They are also almost twice as likely to have been a victim of violence in the past 3 months (35% vs 18%).
3. **Youth are especially unsafe at home:** Women and gender diverse people under 25 are most concerned of any demographic about violence from family members (23%), and the most likely demographic in the whole sample to have experienced violence in the past 3 months (38%). It is not wonder that they are the age group most worried about COVID's impact on violence in the home.
4. **North experiences and fears the most violence:** Women and gender diverse people in the North are more worried about domestic violence during COVID than other regions, and more likely to have experienced violence in the past 3 months than other regions (28%). They are also more worried about violence from family members than other regions.
5. **Victims of violence most financially impacted:** Over half (54%) of the women and gender diverse people who have experienced violence in the past 3 months are moderately or majorly impacted financially by COVID. They are also more likely to be worried about violence from family members and COVID impacting violence in the home. Another 23% don't know what the financial impact will be yet.

NWAC TRACK RECORD ON THE MMIWG IN 2019-20

Indigenous women have been working to meet the Calls For Justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, even as the federal government fails to produce a promised National Act Plan a year after the Inquiry's Final Report was delivered. **A MAJOR PROJECT WILL BE ANNOUNCED IN COMING WEEKS THAT WILL FOCUS ON HEALING.** Here are some of the other things that NWAC, alone, has accomplished over the past year, along with the corresponding Call(s) For Justice that the measures address.

DIRECT RESPONSE TO THE INQUIRY REPORT:

- Created a 10-point action plan in response to the Inquiry Report. The overarching objective is to keep a spotlight on the issue of the missing and murdered Indigenous women and to advance the dialogue nationally and internationally. **(1.1; 1.3; 1.4)**

- Held a roundtable with Indigenous communities in January 2020 to identify key priorities in response to the Inquiry's 231 Calls For Justice. **(1.1; 1.3; 1.4)**
- Distributed, via social media, important information to Indigenous women about the COVID-19 virus, skills training, government actions, and other issues. **(2.6; 2.7; 3.5; 11.1)**
- Created a report card to monitor government progress on the 231 Calls For Justice to be released on the first anniversary of the presentation of the Final Report. Will follow with regular report cards throughout the coming years. **(1.10)**
- Collaborating with the Centre for Indigenous Health to deliver two webinars on racism, sexism and violence against Indigenous women. **(6.1; 11.1)**
- Preparing to open a Social and Cultural Innovation Centre in Gatineau where Indigenous women can find the tools they need to achieve economic stability, security and independence. **(4.1, 4.2)**

COMMEMORATION:

- Conducted the Faceless Doll Campaign sending kits for creating the dolls, which commemorate the missing and forgotten Indigenous women, to all MPs. **(2.6; 11.1)**
- Called for Indigenous women to submit designs for red skirts to commemorate the missing and murdered women as part of its Ribbon Skirts Project. Received more than 150 designs. The winner will be announced shortly. **(7.1)**
- Preparing to commission art installation at NWAC's Social and Cultural Innovation Centre in Gatineau commemorating the missing and murdered women and girls. **(2.6; 11.1)**

HEALTH

- Developed a series of three webinars for health service providers on delivering culturally-safe and trauma-informed care to Indigenous women. **(6.1; 11.1)**
- Partnered with the Northern Ontario School of Medicine at Lakehead University to develop *Hearing Our Voice: An Indigenous Women's Reproductive Health Curriculum*.
- Designed and implemented the Red Path Project, a five-year effort with the Public Health Agency of Canada to prevent sexually transmitted and blood-borne infection of Indigenous women in a culturally safe manner. Conducted workshops on this issue at federal correctional institutions. **(7.2; 7.6)**
- Created a community-informed public-awareness and education project aimed at identifying the cannabis needs of Indigenous women. **(7.1)**
- Created a four-year project, funded by Public Health Agency of Canada, to optimise the well-being of Indigenous people living with dementia. **(7.4)**
- Participated in the Human Trafficking Health Care Alliance to advocate for awareness of human trafficking and its impacts on health. **(7.3; 8.1)**

PANDEMIC RESPONSE:

- Because the pandemic fosters conditions that promote violence against Indigenous women, NWAC created a COVID-19 action plan for Indigenous communities including a

targeted communications strategy, elder support services, and participation in the COVID-19 Immunity Task Force's Indigenous Advisory Circle. **(6.1; 3.5; 7.1; 7.2)**

- Conducted an online survey to determine the effects of COVID-19 in Indigenous communities. **(2.6)**

INTERNATIONAL WORK

- Repeatedly raised the issue of the National Inquiry and the Final report in international circles including the UN Commission on the Status of Women, the UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, at meetings with United Nations officials in New York, and at significant international human-rights events. **(1.2; 2.1)**
- Sponsored a visit to Canada in December by OAS Secretary General Luis Almagro. **(1.2; 2.1)**
- Researched and submitted a number of documents to UN entities including *Submission to the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous People: A Proposal To Revisit The Crime Of Genocide in International Law*, a list of issues for the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Reparations and Remembrance in Canada for Indigenous Women, Girls and Gender-Diverse People*, and *The Gender Perspective in Transitional Justice Processes* which was submitted to the UN Special Rapporteur on the Promotion of Truth, Justice, Reparations and Guarantees of Non-recurrence. **(1.2; 2.1; 5.6)**

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENTS

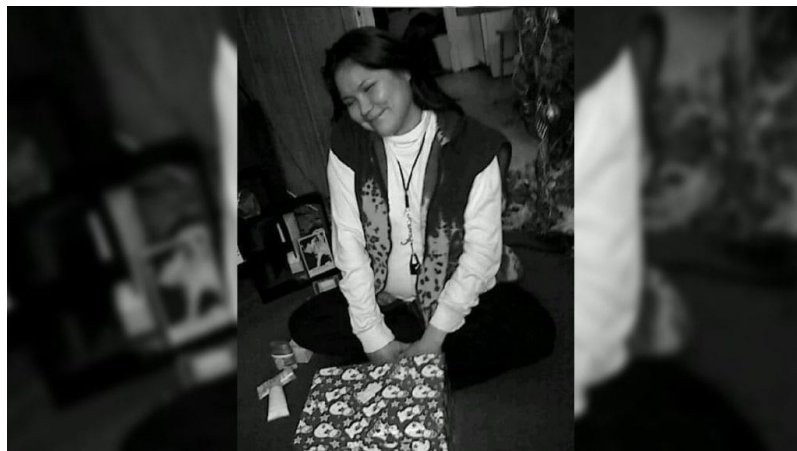
- Met and corresponded with ministers and officials from all levels of government, senators, MPs, private sector executives, and NGOs, both domestically and internationally on ways to reduce violence against Indigenous women and girls. **(1.3; 1.9)**
- Sat on the Advisory Committee on Indigenous Women's Health and Wellbeing of Indigenous Services Canada, **(3.1, 7.3, 7.4, 16.7, 17.21)**
- Took part in more than 40 policy projects with 15 federal departments. **(4.6, 14.7, 15.6, 16.19, 17.19)**
- Provided supports including tuition, living allowances, childcare, job starts and other resources, through an agreement with Employment and Social Development Canada, to help Indigenous women find good jobs and economic stability. **(4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 17.19)**

INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS CONTINUE TO LOSE THEIR LIVES TO VIOLENCE IN CANADA. HERE ARE THREE OF THE WOMEN WHO WERE ALIVE WHEN THE INQUIRY REPORT WAS RELEASED ON JUNE 3, 2019 BUT WHO HAVE SINCE BEEN KILLED.

MARIE MORIN

From Winnipeg, aged 46. Died May 15, 2020 after a violent attack by her boyfriend who had reportedly abused her on multiple occasions previously. Member of Manitoba's Granville Lake First Nation.

<https://www.aptnnews.ca/national-news/friend-of-marie-morin-says-she-was-calling-out-for-help-prior-to-murder/>



JENNIFER DONOVAN

From Peace River, Alberta, aged 37. Murdered October 8, 2019. Came from the Katlodeeche First Nation near Hay River, N.W.T.

<https://edmontonjournal.com/news/local-news/murder-charge-laid-in-peace-river-womans-death/>



BREANNA MENACHO

Age 22, from Yellowknife. Body was found May 6, 2020

<https://nnsi.com/yellowknifer/pair-charged-in-breanna-menachos-death-make-brief-court-appearances/>

