



**Native Women's
Association of Canada**

**L'Association des
femmes autochtones
du Canada**

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November 13, 2020

The Honourable David Lametti P.C., Q.C., M.P.
Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada
284 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON
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Dear Minister Lametti,

I am shocked to learn that a secret FPT meeting was held this week to discuss the implementation of UNDRIP, and that NWAC was not invited to participate. However, upon reflection, I should not be surprised at NWAC's exclusion from such discussions. All too often, your government has left NWAC out of processes that impact Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQI people – to the extent that the decision to hold these meetings without us has become the norm, rather than the exception.

Failing to invite NWAC to this event is just another example of a broken promise to NWAC and the Indigenous women it serves and supports. There is a long history of broken promises to Indigenous women in this country and it appears there is no change in sight.

On February 1st, 2019 the Government of Canada signed an Accord with the Native Women's Association of Canada. In that Accord, Canada promised to include NWAC in engagement processes that impact Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQI people. The signing of the Accord gave us hope that the relationship between NWAC and the government would be one of transparency and honesty. It gave us hope that the government would recognize the importance of consulting and engaging with us on issues affecting Indigenous women, girls and gender diverse people in Canada.

Based on the secrecy around the recent FPT meeting, I can only conclude that those hopes were misplaced and that, rather than building a relationship on trust and honesty, the government would prefer to operate in a climate of secrets and lies.

Ironically, Article 22 of UNDRIP requires the government to pay particular attention to the special needs of Indigenous women, Elders, youth, children and persons with disabilities. By ignoring our voice at FPT meetings, you are breaching the government's commitment to comply with the provisions of UNDRIP and its implementation.



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I would further state that the government is also ignoring the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls that said: “the exclusion of Indigenous women, girls, 2SLGBTQQIA people, Elders, and children from the exercise of Indigenous self-determination must end.”

If the government cannot understand the basic precepts of the National Inquiry's 231 Calls for Justice, how will it ever successfully implement them, or the UNDRIP?

By its actions this week, your government is ignoring the imperative, spelled out in the UNDRIP and the National Inquiry report, to examine this issue from a gender-based perspective. The NIOs invited to the recent FPT meeting are organizations dominated and led by men. Colonization changed the structure of Indigenous culture from a matriarchy to a patriarchy. The National Inquiry into MMIWG requires the government to take a decolonizing approach if the Calls for Justice are to be successfully implemented. Inviting only male-dominated NIOs to FPTs perpetuates colonization and disrespects and marginalizes Indigenous women even further.

At this point, the road to reconciliation for Indigenous women in this country is not paved with hope, trust, or honesty. Instead, it would appear it is reaching a dead end and there is no way forward unless the government is prepared to renew its relationship with us. This means hearing our voices, allowing us to participate in meaningful discussions, and recognizing the importance of Indigenous women in Indigenous culture.

I am therefore requesting, Minister, to meet with you on an urgent basis to discuss our concerns and to ask you to work with us to establish a future for reconciliation and to provide hope for Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people in Canada.

Regards,

Lorraine Whitman
President, Native Women's Association of Canada

cc: Mr. Luis Almagro, Secretary General of the Organization of American States