



Canadian Labour Congress
Congrès du travail du Canada



Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies™



national
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Project of Heart



Public Service Alliance of Canada
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Joint Statement

To be read nationwide on October 4th 2011 as part of
Sisters In Spirit Vigils—A Movement for Social Change

Each year on October 4th communities across Canada come together to honour the lives of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls. As we do so, we remember the lives of sisters, daughters, mothers and grandmothers tragically taken from us.

Today, we offer our support and sympathy to their families and we join with them in demanding justice.

Statistics consistently show that Aboriginal women face much higher levels of violence than all other women in Canada. The Native Women's Association of Canada has documented more than 600 cases of Aboriginal women and girls who have been murdered or who remain missing.

This violence has touched the lives of almost every First Nations, Inuit and Métis family and community. And it has moved Canadians from all walks of life to demand action. Violence against Aboriginal women is a national issue, one that must concern us all.

There can be no piecemeal solution to a tragedy of this scale. We are calling for all levels of government to work with Aboriginal women and representative organizations to establish a comprehensive, national plan of action to stop violence against women. Such a plan of action must:

- Ensure Indigenous women's access to justice, including effective and unbiased police response to all cases of missing and murdered women and new investigations of cases where police misconduct has occurred;
- Improve public awareness and accountability through the consistent collection and publication of comprehensive national statistics on rates of violent crime against Indigenous women;

- Provide adequate, stable funding to the frontline organizations that provide culturally-appropriate services such as shelter, support and counseling for Indigenous women and girls and their communities;
- Address the root causes of violence against Indigenous women, including by closing the economic gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people;
- Eliminate inequalities in the services available to Aboriginal children, in particular, through the child welfare system.

Along with this call for action, we express our sincere thanks and gratitude to the families. Many are here today and we thank them for sharing their stories. You are the reason we continue to demand action. We are honoured to walk beside you on this journey!

Moreover, we acknowledge that families must take the lead in this movement. Their stories need to be heard, and their initiatives supported. Relationships must be nurtured and further strengthened with other families, as well as with grassroots women and men, organizations, and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities across Turtle Island.

This Joint Statement is supported by:

Amnesty International Canada
 Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies (CAEFS)
 Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action (FAFIA)
 Canadian Labour Congress (CLC)
 Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE)
 Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW)
 Families of Sisters In Spirit (FSIS)
 KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives
 Minwaashin Lodge
 Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC)
 National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE)
 Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC)
 Prostitutes of Ottawa/Gatineau Area: Work, Educate and Resists (POWER)
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