



News Release

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First Nations Women Leaders Demand Elimination of Violence Against Women

Domestic and police-inflicted violence must be stopped.

(xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.) - First Nations women leaders in BC call for an end to violence against women and increased police accountability as the world prepares to mark the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence.

Advocates, survivors, family members and loved ones have been raising awareness about the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people for decades. This advocacy led to the National Inquiry into MMIWG2S+ final report [Reclaiming Power and Place](#) and the Calls for Justice. These Calls for Justice are required to uphold the fundamental human rights of Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people across these lands. A number of the Calls address the need for a transformed relationship between the colonial legal and policing institutions and Indigenous peoples.

First Nations communities and women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people from the frontline to leadership are best-placed to identify priorities and lead implementation when it comes to addressing community safety priorities and ending gender-based violence.

Louisa Housty-Jones, BC Assembly of First Nations Women's Representative, stated "As First Nations, it's time to stand up our community safety priorities, our legal systems, and ways of governance, and establish the relations and agreements with the other levels of government that are necessary to ensure that we are taking the required action to prevent and respond to gender-based violence. It's up to the provincial and federal governments to fulfill their obligations and commitments to support the work of First Nations. Everyone should be able to expect equitable service and support from the police. Today, this is not the case for Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people."

"Historically, police were instrumental in the enforcement of colonial policies that dispossessed Indigenous women of their lands, communities, cultures, and children and enacted violence," stated Lorelei Williams, Founder of Butterflies in Spirit and family

member. “Today, police continue to operate with impunity when it comes to their treatment of Indigenous women and their families. The long history of racism continues to manifest as victim-blaming, stereotyping, negligence and a lack of will by authorities to believe Indigenous women or take swift action to prevent violence against them or to investigate it when it occurs. This has been documented repeatedly with little effect. First Nations continue to face challenges in addressing community safety priorities, and often face disregard for their laws and values from local police detachments.”

“Indigenous women and girls in communities across the province are teetering precariously between the realities of heightened domestic and random acts of violence and unsafe police authorities – leaving them little recourse in the face of danger,” stated Melissa Moses, UBCIC Women’s Representative. “Police forces have demonstrated time and time again gross negligence, mismanagement, and disrespect towards families in cases of Missing and Murdered Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit+ (MMIWG2S+) people through systemic violence, misogyny and racism that has bred deep mistrust and fear, which justice authorities must immediately account for and meaningfully remedy. We desperately need support for families of MMIWG2S+, strong Indigenous and civilian led police oversight mechanisms, and culturally informed ongoing training– the lives of Indigenous women and girls utterly depend on it”.

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