



BC ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

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BCAFN 20th ANNUAL SPECIAL CHIEFS MEETING
March 7 & 8, 2024
Online via Zoom

Resolution 16/2024

SUBJECT: SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES AND SURVIVORS OF MMIWG2S+

Moved BY: CHIEF ARNOLD LAMPREAU, SHACKAN INDIAN BAND

SECONDED BY: CHIEF LEE SPAHAN, COLDWATER INDIAN BAND

DECISION: CARRIED

WHEREAS:

- A. First Nations communities in British Columbia are disproportionately affected by violence, domestic violence and gender-based violence (GBV), the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girl, and Two-Spirit+ crisis (MMIWG2S+), and ongoing genocide rooted in colonialism. The issue is so pervasive that it is not uncommon for Indigenous people in all walks of life to have experienced the loss of a relative to violence;
- B. The Province of British Columbia has the unfortunate claim to being the home of the Highway of Tears, Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, and the Robert Pickton case, all of which are notorious sites of brutal systemic GBV against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA+1 peoples. The families and survivors of these and other sites of violence represent a diverse group who are bound together by tragedy and missteps of justice who are too often excluded from decision-making spaces. They are owed every effort and ultimate respect;

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- C. *The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which the government of Canada has adopted without qualification, and has, alongside the government of B.C., passed legislation committing to implement, affirms:*
- a. Article 7(1): Indigenous individuals have the rights to life, physical and mental integrity, liberty and security of person.
 - b. (2): Indigenous peoples have the collective right to live in freedom, peace and security as distinct peoples and shall not be subjected to any act of genocide or any other act of violence, including forcibly removing children of the group to another group.
 - c. Article 22(1): Particular attention shall be paid to the rights and special needs of indigenous elders, women, youth, children and persons with disabilities in the implementation of this Declaration.
 - d. (2): States shall take measures, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, to ensure that indigenous women and children enjoy the full protection and guarantees against all forms of violence and discrimination;
- D. Five years after the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (the National Inquiry) published the Calls for Justice on June 3, 2019, the MMIWG2S+ crisis continues to cause immense and immeasurable harm to families, friends, and entire communities whose loved ones are taken by perpetrators of GBV;
- E. The Final Report of the National Inquiry reveals the persistent and deliberate human and Indigenous rights violations and abuses as a root cause behind Canada's staggering rates of violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people;
- F. The National Inquiry's Calls for Justice, "Red Woman Rising: Indigenous Women Survivors in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside", and Highway of Tears Symposium Recommendations Report clearly outline discrimination against families of MMIWG2S+ and provide concrete actionable recommendations and a clear path to creating systemic change and ending violence by calling on government in the areas of culture, human security, health, and justice; on industries, institutions, service providers and partners, including the media, health providers, transportation and hospitality providers, educators, social workers, extractive industries, police services, and justice actors; and the Canadian public;
- G. Mandated by the BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly to continue this work via Resolutions 10h/2017, 01/2018, 03d/2018, 16/2018, 07g/2019, 21a/2019, 11/2020 (SCA), and 06/2020; has worked to address issues of missing Indigenous people and GBV and to advocate for the implementation of the Calls for Justice;
- H. The justice system and police are failing to protect Indigenous people and prevent violence. In cases of missing Indigenous people or violence towards Indigenous people, police

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regularly discriminate and demonstrate apathy, jurisdictional disorganization, mismanagement and miscommunication, and perpetuate centuries of mistrust between Indigenous people and the police. These gaps in the justice system are regularly filled by families, advocates and First Nations without institutional support;

- I. When a loved one goes missing and justice authorities are resistant to acting swiftly, family members and First Nations respond to organize and carry out complex missing person searches without resources, access to investigative technologies, financial assistance or organizational capacity during a period of profound distress and trauma;
- J. This family and community-led advocacy is typically undervalued, unpaid, under-resourced, is deeply (re)traumatizing, and can have a profound impact on the mental, emotional, physical and spiritual well-being for individuals and entire communities alike;
- K. Long after the initial murder or disappearance of a loved one, families often assume a lifetime of advocacy for GBV prevention, justice reform, government accountability and commit themselves to filling the deep systemic gaps which perpetuate the MMIWG2S+ crisis. The unrelenting dedication of families and survivors ensures that lost relatives are not forgotten, that justice is sought, and that the issue remains front of mind for decision-makers and authorities;
- L. The provincial and federal policy and legislative work on GBV prevention is taking place within various provincial and federal Ministries; however, a lack of coordination between Ministries and across levels of government is creating silos and is weakening the response to the MMIWG2S+ crisis; and
- M. The will of families and survivors must guide how government and justice authorities address GBV prevention work across sectors. Failure to center families and survivors and to acknowledge their lived experience will further harm those who have already suffered so much.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

1. The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly fully supports families and survivors of gender-based violence and those who have lost loved ones to the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit+ people;
2. The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly calls on grassroots, frontline, Indigenous, and advocacy organizations doing good work to address gender-based violence:
 - to take a rights-based, gender-based analysis plus, trauma-informed and culturally safe approach when working with families and survivors;

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- to ensure that families and survivors are engaged on key Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit+ initiatives;
 - and for the expansion of programming to provide psychosocial and cultural healing support services as well as search supports for families responding to the disappearance of a loved one;
3. The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly calls on the Governments of British Columbia and Canada, and the police and RCMP:
- to take a rights-based, gender-based analysis plus, trauma-informed and culturally safe approach when working with families and survivors;
 - to ensure families and survivors are consulted and fully involved at decision-making tables pertaining to gender-based violence prevention and the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirit+ crisis;
 - to work across Ministries and between governments to advance Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirit+ advocacy;
 - to increase resourcing for psychosocial and cultural healing support services and capacity supports to families for missing person searches; and
 - to fund First Nations women's organizations that uphold First Nations, family and survivor rights; and
4. Finally, the BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly directs the BCAFN Regional Chief, BCAFN Women's Representative and BCAFN Staff to work with like-minded organizations to advance and uphold the dignity and rights of family members and survivors of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirit+ crisis.

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