



**Native Women's
Association of Canada**

Joint Statement



*To be read nationwide on October 4th 2009
as part of the movement of
Sisters In Spirit vigils.*

The violence experienced by Aboriginal women and girls in Canada is a national tragedy. The disappearance and murder of our Aboriginal sisters is felt nationwide, with countless First Nations, Inuit and Métis families and communities grappling with the loss of a loved one and struggling to find answers. We are speaking out, as individuals and organizations, because we believe this violence should be of urgent concern to everyone in Canada. More than that, this concern must lead to action—action to ensure that the rights and safety of Aboriginal sisters, daughters, mothers and grandmothers are respected and protected.

October 4th is a day where we honour the lives of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls. The Sisters In Spirit movement began with the courage, strength and love of families. We must take the time to give thanks to these families who are our inspiration and the reason we all continue to demand action. Many of them are here with us today and we thank them for sharing their stories. There are more than 520 missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in this country. Each one of these women is loved and missed terribly by their family, friends and community. Their loss is our loss. Their grief is our grief. Together we demand action.

Across Canada, there are countless individuals who dedicate their professional and personal lives to the betterment of Aboriginal women and girls. Some of us are community workers, service providers or teachers. Others are policymakers, leaders and funders. Each of us plays a role in ensuring that Aboriginal women and girls receive the support and protection they need to live in safety. The positive initiatives that have been

Head Office, Six Nations of the Grand River, P.O. Box 331, 1721 Chiefswood Road, 1st Floor, Ohsweken, ON N0A 1M0
Telephone 519-445-0990, Facsimile 519-445-0924

Satellite Office, 1292 Wellington Street West, Ottawa, Ontario, K1Y 3A9,
Telephone 613.722.3033, Facsimile 613.722.7687 Toll Free 1.800.461.4043

taken at the community and local level tell us that the public has the will to stop this violence and that solutions can be found.

However, much more needs to be done. Aboriginal women face disproportionate levels and severe forms of violence no matter where they live in Canada. There can be no piecemeal solution to a problem of this scale. Therefore, we are calling on all levels of government to work with Aboriginal women, including the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) and other key stakeholders, collaboratively on issues of justice, safety, economic security and the well-being of Aboriginal women and girls. We call for a national plan of action that:

- Recognizes the violence faced by Aboriginal women because they are Aboriginal and because they are women,
- Ensures effective and unbiased police response through appropriate training, resources and coordination,
- Improves public awareness and accountability through the consistent collection and publication of comprehensive national statistics on rates of violent crime against Aboriginal women,.
- Reduces the risk to Aboriginal women by closing the economic and social gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada; and,
- Improves the child welfare system.

We are ready to start this very important work.

This Joint Statement is supported by:

Amnesty International Canada
Assembly of First Nations
Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies
Canadian Federation of Students
The Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action (FAFIA)
KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives
Métis National Council
National Association of Friendship Centres
New Democratic Party of Canada Federal Caucus