



Native Women's Association of Canada

Press Release – For Immediate Release

Poverty Is Hurting Aboriginal Families

Ottawa, ON (November 25, 2009) – Yesterday marked the twentieth anniversary of Parliament unanimously passing a resolution to end child poverty in Canada by the year 2000. Once again a renewed call is being voiced to eliminate poverty. While the child poverty rate of Aboriginal children has gone down since 1995, Aboriginal Peoples are at a higher risk of poverty; in fact more than one in three Aboriginal children live in low-income families. The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) strongly feels that the elimination of poverty in Canada must be made a national priority.

“Children are our future. The living conditions of many Aboriginal families are alarming. Concrete commitments are required to ensure that Aboriginal families and children do not live in poverty and that they have access to decent and safe housing, running water, food and other basic necessities that most Canadians take for granted,” stated NWAC President Jeannette Corbiere Lavell.

To commemorate the 20th anniversary of Parliament's resolution to end child poverty in Canada, Campaign 2000 released its annual report card on child and family poverty in Canada. Today in 2009 an Aboriginal child is 12.3 times more likely to be in foster care than a non-Aboriginal child. While comprising only 3.8 per cent of the Canadian population, poverty has resulted in Aboriginal children accounting for a staggering 30 per cent of children in foster care. The situation is so grave that the number of Aboriginal children in the child welfare system today is three times the number enrolled in residential schools at the height of their operation.

“The reality is that too many children are taken away from their families due to circumstances related to poverty. They are removed from their homes because of inadequate housing conditions and insufficient employment opportunities for their parents,” commented President Corbiere Lavell. “While the statistics paint a grim picture, we recognize that the reality is in fact much worse. Indicators do not capture the most marginalized cases, such as Aboriginal women fleeing violence often do not have their cases recorded when living in shelters.”

President Corbiere Lavell added, “Aboriginal Peoples represent the fastest growing population group in the country and have a young population. Investments made to eliminate the poverty experienced by Aboriginal families will go a long way to ensure our children reach their full potential.”

“While many Aboriginal Peoples experience poverty on a daily basis, there are concrete measures that can be taken to end child poverty and improve the overall quality of life for Aboriginal families. We must see political will to act on these findings; by creating strategies to prevent families from falling into poverty and help those experiencing it improve the conditions they face. Such measures will result in a more prosperous and hopeful future for all,” concluded President Corbiere Lavell.

The Native Women's Association of Canada is founded on the collective goal to enhance, promote, and foster the social, economic, cultural and political well-being of Aboriginal women within the Aboriginal community and Canadian society. In 2009, as we celebrate our 35th year of service, we are proud to continue to speak as a voice for Aboriginal women.

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