



Native Women's Association of Canada

Press Release – For Immediate Release

New Report finds Experiences of Aboriginal Peoples in Federal Prisons Unacceptable

Ottawa, ON (November 13, 2009) – The Office of the Correctional Investigator (OCI) today released an independent report once again calling for a Deputy Commissioner for Aboriginal Corrections to the Executive Committee of the Correctional Service of Canada. The Report, *Good Intentions, Disappointing Results: A Progress Report on Federal Aboriginal Corrections*, confirms the unacceptable situation of Aboriginal offenders under federal sentence in Canada and details the significant gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders on nearly every indicator.

The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) is concerned with the persistent and unacceptable response of the state and justice system when it comes to Aboriginal peoples. "Overrepresentation of Aboriginal peoples in the criminal justice system is not new. However, we would hope that in 2009 there would be some progress to address the continued evidence of discrimination and factors of socioeconomic stress that lead to incarceration" says NWAC President Jeannette Corbiere Lavell.

Today's report identifies the lack of progress since 2006, when Corrections Canada reported the number of Aboriginal peoples in Canada's prisons was growing and that investment must be made to address poverty and improve educational outcomes. However, today's report identifies that while almost 200 action items were made in 2006 many of them have yet to be fully implemented or operationalized.

Of great concern is the growing incidence of Aboriginal women offenders – now one in three federally sentenced women is Aboriginal. "The alarm bell is ringing and we must take action. With a growing population of young people we need to be aware of the environment and risks Aboriginal youth face as they grow up, particularly young women," added Corbiere Lavell. "We, as a society, are responsible for the future of our children and we must give them opportunities to make good choices for positive life outcomes. This starts at the beginning of life, not through punishment in the justice system."

The Native Women's Association of Canada is anxious to see government's response and is hopeful this report will force change. With this said, tough questions need to be asked of all levels of government and ministries responsible for the healthy development of families and communities, not just those responsible for incarceration.

-30-

For more information contact:
Kate Rexe, Director of Sisters In Spirit
Native Women's Association of Canada
Tel: (613) 722-3033 ext. 252
Cell: (613) 797-3990
krex@nwac-hq.org