



Native Women's Association of Canada

Press Release – For Immediate Release

Pickton Appeal Disappointing for Grieving Families

Ottawa, ON (November 27, 2009) – The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) is dismayed that the Supreme Court of Canada has agreed to broaden the scope of Robert Pickton's appeal on six counts of second-degree murder. Effectively, the decision gives Pickton more grounds to argue that his convictions should be overturned. His trial concluded in 2007 and was one of the most high profile, longest, and expensive in Canadian history. Many of Pickton's victims were Aboriginal or of Aboriginal descent.

"Robert Pickton was sentenced to life in prison for stealing the lives of six women. Each of these women was a mother, sister, auntie, or friend to someone," stated NWAC President Jeannette Corbiere Lavell. "We recognize that the ongoing appeals make it extremely difficult for the families to continue forward in their healing journeys."

NWAC released a report earlier this year, *Voices of Our Sisters In Spirit: A Report to Families and Communities, 2nd Edition*, documenting 520 Aboriginal women and girls either having gone missing or have been murdered, the majority in the last thirty years. 43 per cent of the murder cases remain unsolved. NWAC's research indicates that at least one third of the women missing from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside are Aboriginal or of Aboriginal descent.

In addition to being convicted of six counts of second-degree murder, Pickton was charged on another 20 counts of first-degree murder. The Crown does not plan to proceed with the additional charges if the first six convictions are upheld. NWAC regards this decision as utter disrespect for the families that have lost loved ones. "Our women deserve dignity and support. If a new trial is needed, it should be for the 20 other victims whose families continue looking for answers," concluded President Corbiere Lavell. NWAC wishes to offer its condolences and ongoing support for the families of the missing and murdered women.

NWAC's Sisters In Spirit initiative is a research, education and policy initiative designed to address the disturbing numbers of missing and murdered Aboriginal women in Canada. Through the work of the initiative, NWAC works to honour the women and girls who have been lost to violence and remember those who are missing.

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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