



# Native Women's Association of Canada

## Speaking Notes

### Voices of Our Sisters In Spirit: A Report to Families and Communities, 2nd Edition

Good day, traditional greetings.

I would like to acknowledge the Algonquian peoples on whose traditional territory we are meeting.

Today I am pleased to introduce this second edition of the report: *Voices of Our Sisters In Spirit: A Report to Families and Communities*.

Sisters In Spirit is a research, education and policy initiative funded through Status of Women Canada. It is designed to investigate and address the alarming numbers of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in Canada.

This second edition of the *Voices of Our Sisters In Spirit* report presents the life stories of nine Aboriginal women and girls, as shared by their family members with the Native Women's Association of Canada.

Three of these life stories are new – those of Debbie Sloss, Georgina Papin and Terrie Ann Dauphinais. The stories of Amber Redman, Nina Courtepatte and Daleen Kay Bosse (Muskego) have been updated with additional information from their families.

The names of five stolen sisters are included, as are alerts for nine missing sisters. A new alert has been included for Tiffany Morrison, and new information is presented for Claudette Osborne and Marie Krieser.

NWAC thanks the families of these Aboriginal women and girls for sharing their stories with us, and for allowing us to present this information publicly. We know that there are many, many other Aboriginal women and girls who have shared similar experiences of violence. Their names are not included in this report: but we know that each one has a family that loves her and misses her, although they may not have the ability at this time to share her story with us.

Sisters In Spirit is rooted in the power of voice. NWAC is committed to 'giving voice' to Aboriginal women and girls, and to their families. The life experiences of our sisters, daughters, mothers and grandmothers that are shared by their family members in this report reflect our values, traditions, and beliefs.

NWAC presents the stories of our Sisters In Spirit in a positive and respectful manner. We have identified common themes that link the stories of these women and girls.

Eight of the stories involve women or girls aged 25 or younger, and all but one of the incidents take place in the western provinces. Seven of the nine women whose life stories are included are mothers. While two stories illustrate positive interactions between families and police personnel, all of the other families raised serious concerns about the police response to the disappearance or murder of their daughter, sister, mother or grandmother.

We use our research results, some of which are summarized in this report, to identify measures that will help reduce the violence that Aboriginal women and girls experience. Our recommendations include actions that would improve access to housing and reduce homelessness, reduce poverty, and improve the access of Aboriginal women, girls and their families to justice systems and processes.

Sisters In Spirit tool kits have been developed to raise awareness, to provide guidance to family members on talking to the media, to help family members understand and work through the missing persons process, and to provide safety information to Aboriginal women and girls. Sisters In Spirit vigils are held on October 4<sup>th</sup> every year to ensure that everyone, regardless of their cultural background, understands that these women and girls are loved and missed terribly by their families.

Through the Sisters In Spirit initiative, NWAC continues to work to raise awareness of this epidemic of violence affecting Aboriginal women and girls. We hope that this report will help increase the knowledge and awareness of individuals across Canada, so that they are inspired to work with us to take action to the safety and improve their well-being of Aboriginal women and girls across Canada.