

**Minister
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Women's Issues**

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October 1, 2009

Dear Friends:

On Sunday, October 4, 2009, the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) and participating communities are holding vigils across Canada to honour the lives of Aboriginal women who are missing or have been murdered. Last year, 40 communities participated.

As this important date approaches, I would like to commend NWAC for their leadership in the Sisters In Spirit initiative. Through this initiative, NWAC works in collaboration with other Aboriginal women's organizations and the federal government to improve the human rights of Aboriginal women and address the violence facing Aboriginal women, in particular the high rates of missing and murdered Aboriginal women in Canada.

I would also like to acknowledge the families and friends of those Aboriginal women who are missing or have lost their lives to violence. My heart goes out to you. They will be in my thoughts on October 4th as communities come together to share their losses and remember their loved ones.

NWAC has produced several resources that I would like to bring to your attention. Their second report to families and communities, "Voices of Our Sisters In Spirit" (March 2009), is available at: <http://www.nwac-hq.org/en/sisresearch.html>. This report provides the life stories of several Aboriginal women who are missing or have been murdered. Great care has been taken by their families and friends to capture the richness of the women's lives, including their gifts, talents and dreams. It is a beautiful tribute.

They have also developed several community education resources: Sisters In Spirit brochure; Navigating the Missing Persons Process Toolkit; Unlocking the Mystery of Media Relations Toolkit; Raising Awareness Toolkit and Safety Measures for Aboriginal Women Toolkit. These resources are available at <http://www.nwac-hq.org/en/awareness.html>.

If you have any questions about the Sisters In Spirit initiative or the October 4th vigils, please contact Jennifer Lord at NWAC at 1-800-461-4043, extension 235.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Deb Matthews
Minister