



Native Women's Association of Canada

PRESS RELEASE - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NWAC Announces Family Gathering in Ottawa, Ontario

January 26, 2012 (Ottawa, ON) - The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) will be convening its 6th annual family gathering to support and hear first-hand the experiences of those families who have lost a woman or girl through violence and who are missing and/or have been murdered.

"This weekend, families from the North, South, East, and West, including local families will come together in a closed-door meeting to share their personal experiences and to work with NWAC in the development of tools and resources to address the high rates of violence experienced by Aboriginal women and girls," said NWAC President Jeannette Corbiere Lavell. "This is a sensitive time for many families; we understand this through our work with those who have attended previous family gatherings. We are reminded of the need to provide families with a safe, secure, and respectful environment where they can meet in peace to share their stories, some for the very first time. In this regard, NWAC requests that media and the general public respect the privacy of the many families as they gather together this weekend."

The NWAC has worked with families of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls since 2004 with the Sisters In Spirit (SIS) which was primarily a "research, education, and policy initiative" that ended on March 31, 2010. This work has evolved, moving forward with the Evidence to Action (ETA) project. The ETA project is designed to move these issues from the research phase into the action phase with a focus on the development of tools and resources to enable communities, educators, stakeholders, police and victim services, and the justice system to better respond to experiences of violence faced by Aboriginal women and girls.

While the family gathering may be emotionally difficult for some, NWAC remains hopeful that the event will result in the same positive outcomes and opportunities as it has for families who have attended gatherings in the past. "Our only regret is that we cannot bring together more families," said President Corbiere Lavell. "The sad reality is that our women and girls continue to go missing or are found murdered, resulting in an increase in families reaching out for support right across Canada".

NWAC remains committed to developing concrete actions and activities that will end the cycle of violence, particularly that which may lead to the disappearance and death of Aboriginal women and girls. In securing funding for the ETA project, NWAC ensured

that elements specific to the SIS initiative continue such as the need for family gatherings, providing families with opportunities to share their life stories, convening community engagement workshops, and the October 4th Sister In Spirit Vigils.

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