



NATIVE WOMEN'S  
ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

L'ASSOCIATION DES FEMMES  
AUTOCHTONES DU CANADA

Dear Families, Communities, Stakeholders, and Commissioners,

On behalf of the Native Women's Association of Canada, I would like to present our second Report Card assessing the success of the Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Women and Girls in fulfilling its responsibilities over the past three months.

NWAC has a history of working with families of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and creating networks of families through a series of projects such as Family Gatherings, Narrative and Digital Storytelling, Sisters In Spirit Vigils, and its premiere research. We feel a deep responsibility to the families and communities who are at the heart of our work and remain dedicated to producing results and taking actions that we hope can begin to fulfill our duty to the Indigenous women and girls whose interests we represent.

In order to provide feedback that is strength-based, solution-focused, and productive, fairness must be our primary concern. We have acknowledged our personal connections to this work and applied a critical eye to eliminating any emotional reactions from this document. [Our last Report Card](#), drafted with minimal information from the Inquiry, called for transparency, communication, and a process that is trauma-informed and culturally sensitive. It is now our solemn task to identify the areas where this Inquiry has failed and once again appeal to have families come first and for NWAC to be meaningfully consulted in a process in which we are deeply invested.

We are not asking anyone, especially families, to be patient with this Inquiry as it progresses. We are asking that you remain strong and face adversity with the same determination that has made this Inquiry possible. In solidarity, we will not back down until this Inquiry is what we were promised. To the families and communities, this is your Inquiry to shape and your opportunity to share your stories. To the stakeholders, this is a chance for healing as a nation and a vital step in the process of decolonization and reconciliation. To the Commissioners and staff of the Inquiry, the great challenge presented by this work is an impetus to incredible growth and possibility.

I urge you to find your voice in holding this Inquiry accountable and to continue to join us in advocating for a process that reflects our shared values, hopes, and dreams. We need you to keep writing and signing letters to the Inquiry, holding your own community gatherings, and speaking to the media in order for your stories to be told and your positions to be known. It is my hope that our shared focus may result in an outcome that honours our MMIWG in the way that they deserve and contributes to a future free from violence for the Indigenous women and girls we love.

Sincerely,



Francyne Joe  
Interim President, Native Women's Association of Canada

Your concerns are important. Please email or call us at:

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NATIVE WOMEN'S  
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**THE NATIONAL INQUIRY INTO  
MISSING AND MURDERED  
INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS**

## **NWAC REPORT CARD**

January 2017 - April 2017 (second)

### **LEGEND**

<b>GREEN - PASS</b> Commitment has been met.	<b>YELLOW - ACTION REQUIRED</b> Commitment is incomplete or needs more attention.	<b>RED - FAIL</b> No progress made on the commitment.	<b>GREY - INSUFFICIENT INFORMATION</b> Cannot assess at this time.
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**1. The Commission's overall responsibility to develop and adhere to timelines regarding to operational/administrative structure.**

**FAIL**

#### **Observations:**

NWAC believes that a trauma-informed process would begin with the sharing of timelines and structural plans. This necessary first step to building trust with First Nations, Inuit and Métis families and communities was missed and as the Inquiry progressed, milestone dates went unannounced and regular progress reports were not released. In response to pressure the Commissioners felt to share information and provide reassurance, the Commissioners asked the public and families of MMIWG for patience and understanding. The Inquiry has not shared their organizational structure and has allowed critical positions to remain unfilled for too long. Hiring the Legal and Research teams was given priority, while the Communications, Community Relations, and Health teams remain incomplete and severely understaffed. In a Families First model, these crucial teams that are responsible for reaching out to impacted families and communities and should be treated as priorities. Director positions remained unstaffed for far too long, robbing teams of access to the Commissioners.

It is likely that outside factors, such as the approval of the budget as well as a lack of access to funds, may have contributed to the delays. The Commissioners are ultimately responsible for presenting any delays openly and honestly, as well as asking for the support and assistance of key stakeholders who are ready and willing to help. This lack of transparency is a symptom of a much larger systemic problem that must be remedied in order for the Inquiry to succeed.

## **Recommendations:**

The families of First Nations, Inuit and Métis women and girls deserve to be respected by this process. The Inquiry may show respect for the families by admitting that there has been a lack of transparency and explaining why the key positions that were created to support them remain understaffed after 8 months. NWAC further recommends that the Commissioners publicly report on the remaining operational and administrative tasks that remain incomplete, with reasonable deadlines as to when they will be completed. Moreover, the Commissioners are urged to reach out to organizations that have a vested interest in the success of the Inquiry and outline what barriers they are facing and how others can help remove them.

## **2. The Commission's overall responsibility to develop and adhere to Communication that provides information, transparency and accountability.**

**FAIL**

### **Observations:**

A lack of informative, transparent and accountable communication is at the heart of why so many families and communities are wounded and frustrated. It took four months for the Inquiry to launch a website and hire a Director of Communications. It quickly became evident that the Communications team lacked capacity and support to effectively launch a project of this size. For example, Communications has been providing updates through Social Media. Although the use of online social networks is free, Social Media has a limited reach and excludes communities that have limited or no access to the Internet. Videos and podcasts that have been posted lack a professional touch and the savvy of someone trained in Social Media marketing and outreach. The Inquiry's website receives few visits, signalling that the Inquiry has not reached a wide enough audience, has not generated interest, and/or has become irrelevant.

At the single Press Conference, held on February 7th, Commissioners promised that regular updates would follow, yet families remain in the dark as no Press Conferences followed, reducing credibility with those families expecting future updates. Newsletters were sent out via email in March but the official communications are not in plain-language and provide little information. For example, the fact that the onus is on families to register for the Inquiry, regardless of whether they participated in the Pre-Inquiry process or have participated in the justice system (eg. RCMP case file), has not been clearly relayed. Formal communications also reflect a legalized and colonial process where families must 'register' via email and wait to be contacted, rather than a community approach or welcoming intake process where people can call and get all the answers they need. The nearly 300 family contacts now gathered, up from 92 in March, do not represent nearly enough families to host a series of National Hearings. The Indigenous community has expressed that its most marginalized groups, including our homeless, our incarcerated, our remote and rural communities, and those without regular or reliable internet access, must be included in the National Hearings. To date, the Inquiry has not stated how the essential voices of these women will be included in and invited to be part of the process.

The media is desperate to share news about the Inquiry, as are stakeholders and leadership who are responsible to their membership. However, the Commissioners remain silent and communications remain a low priority. It is the responsibility of the Commissioners to deliver coordinated key messaging and failure to do so signals that the very people who need and want to be part of this process are a low priority.

### **Recommendations:**

The families of First Nations, Inuit and Métis women and girls deserve a public apology for not putting their needs first and not sharing information openly and effectively. Families are wounded and they need to be acknowledged.

Once communications have greatly improved and the focus moves from a top-down approach to one where families and communities are respected, NWAC and others have offered their assistance in reaching out to the families they are in contact with. NWAC encourages the Commissioners to accept their aid in building momentum for this important work once this has been achieved.

## **3. The Commission's overall responsibility to develop and build Community Relations that include families, survivors and external stakeholders of plans, interview dates, etc.**

**FAIL**

### **Observations:**

It is unlikely that Community Relations can develop without transparent timelines as well as clear and open communications. Families, survivors and external stakeholders know extremely little of what is being planned and how they will be involved. The substantial release published on the website, dated March 13th, presented complicated information regarding applying for National and Regional Standing. This notice was not led by the Community Relations team and did not present the list of communities that had come forward to receive the Commissioners. The fact the applications for National or Regional Standing were released ahead of notices regarding hearing locations and dates is a signal that the Inquiry process is far more legalized than was initially hoped.

As stakeholders saw the deadline for applications move from April 10th to April 18th and then to May 1st, NWAC felt that priorities were not where they needed to be. Organizations interested in applying for Standing had difficulty doing so without knowing the dates and locations of where the Hearings would take place. Despite this, several organizations did meet the deadline and demonstrate a continued vested interest in the success of this Inquiry.

After months of wondering when and where the Hearings would take place, an announcement was finally made on March 28th that the Whitehorse community would be hosting a Regional Advisory Meeting. This announcement was made giving only two short weeks for participants and local support workers to prepare. It is unknown whether discussions were held in the community before the announcement as to the formal "pause" announced on April 13th, after the Whitehorse meeting. Reportedly, fifty families attended this meeting, although the event was not public and required an official invitation letter. Families came anyway, demanding to be heard and to share their stories. It is likely that Commissioners were unprepared for the volume of attendees or their level of distress.

A sense of urgency and desperation has been created because the Commissioners are not making themselves available and are communicating irregularly. While it can be imagined how overwhelming this process must have been and continues to be, to postpone the remaining Regional Advisory Meetings has put the communities of Thunder Bay, Edmonton, Halifax, Winnipeg, Northern British Columbia and Saskatoon in limbo. NWAC also understood that the Community Relations team is understaffed and cannot possibly take on the challenging work of building relationships and understanding regional protocols alone. It is unfortunate that the Commissioners have not reached out to key stakeholders to ensure that those who need to be 'at the table' are encouraged to come together to ensure a smooth transition from one community to another. The power of community leadership and ownership has been ignored due to this top-down approach, which hinders community building.

**Recommendation:**

As recommended in the first Report Card, the Commission should advise families and survivors, as well as stakeholders such as the NIOs, Provincial and Territorial organizations, and service providers about the nature of their inclusion in the Inquiry and an outline of what is expected of them so that all those that wish to participate may do so.

## 4. The Commission's overall responsibility to develop and build capacity to ensure that all those involved are compensated to a degree that ensures their ability to meaningfully engage in the Inquiry process.

**FAIL****Observations:**

Several requests have been made to uncover whether the Inquiry's budget has been approved as well as how the budget has been allocated. The Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN) recently reported that only ten percent of the overall \$53.8M has been spent, primarily on travel and salaries. NWAC hopes that there is room to adjust the budget as several positions remain to be staffed. The Community Relations and Communications teams also remain understaffed and it is NWAC's hope that a significant investment will be made to ensure that families and survivors receive the support and information they deserve.

NWAC believes that the majority of the budget will be spent on the National Hearings, bringing families to the locations, hosting cultural events to open and close the visit, securing a venue and catering, as well as providing adequate health and wellness supports throughout the gathering. It is unclear how supports will be provided before and after the Hearings.

NWAC is aware that the National Family Advisory Circle has been called and has met just once, from February 21st to 22nd, outside of Toronto. About twenty families have participated but their names and the regions they represent are not public. Respecting that privacy is important, it is essential that First Nations, Inuit and Métis, rural and remote communities, and the LGBTQ2S communities from diverse areas of Canada are present. It is unclear whether families will be contacted regularly in order to provide feedback or whether this was a one-time meeting. There are also numerous families that have been engaged in this advocacy work for many years, sometimes decades, who could serve as mentors. It is unfortunate that more effort is not being made to adopt a Families First model.

It is unfortunate that more funding was not invested to effectively and meaningfully engaging all impacted families and survivors. Families continue to bear the burden of becoming informed, registering themselves, and ensuring that their community has invited the Commissioners. The onus is on families who may already be dealing with a great deal of trauma to also learn to navigate the process if they want to participate. This reality proved too much of a burden for families in Manitoba, prompting the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs to hire a car load of staff to drive across the province and personally register families. It would be ideal if NWAC and other organizations had enough resources to conduct this work and the Commissioners had been public about expectations. There was an understanding by NIOs that organizations would be funded to do this work, especially those that are subject matter experts.

**Recommendations:**

NWAC recommends that the Commission releases its budget immediately, with the purpose of reflecting how more resources will be dedicated to the essential work of engaging families. We hope a healthy amount of the



budget is reserved for this important work, possibly paired with the in-kind support of the Family Information Liaison Units (FILUs) funded by the Department of Justice, of which we know very little. There is also a risk that service providers, subject matters experts and the NIOs may not be able to participate in the Inquiry process as time progresses and it is recommended that clear budget lines are put aside to ensure that these key stakeholders can meaningfully engage in the Inquiry process. It is further recommended that locations of the Hearings be released immediately with clear instructions as to how families and observers can apply for funds or have their travel booked to attend. Travel, as well as time off of work, is very expensive and there is no indication that ample warning of the upcoming dates and locations will be provided in order for these parties to enable themselves to attend.

**5. The Commission has acted on its authority to recommend concrete actions to remove systemic causes of violence and increase the safety of Indigenous women and girls in Canada.**

**CANNOT ASSESS**

**6. The Commission has acted on its authority to recommend ways to honour and commemorate missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.**

**ACTION REQUIRED**

**Observations:**

Beyond a formal letter indicating that “Indigenous women and girls are sacred,” we have heard very little as to what the Inquiry has planned to honour and commemorate. There were some discussions months ago that an honouring space would be created on the Inquiry’s official website to post pictures, poems and art. This is well-meaning but cannot be considered adequate to such an important/sacred task. Our stolen loved ones deserve much more.

There is hope that funds are being set aside for numerous honouring projects but there is a fear that each community or organization will be asked to mobilize and fundraise on their own. Overseeing and supporting individual projects is not specifically outlined in the Terms of Reference but the authority to “recommended ways to honour and commemorate” has been given. It is hoped that these recommendations will be announced after the first Hearing is held in Whitehorse and develop further with each visit.

**Recommendations:**

NWAC recommends that the Commissioners release an official Strategy to Honouring and Commemorating Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. This can be a living document that evolves. A large call out could encourage community conversations as to how First Nations, Inuit and Métis women and girls will be honoured and commemorated in each town or jurisdiction. NWAC further recommends that a modest sum of money, possibly \$200, be allocated to all events so that food can be purchased as a welcoming gesture for families.

**7. The Commission has acted on its authority to provide recommendations to the Government of Canada through an interim report by November 1, 2017.**

**ACTION REQUIRED**



**Observations:**

There is growing concern among families and organizations that the Commission will not be able meet the November 1st deadline. The first hearing begins on May 29th in Whitehorse but the dates and locations of subsequent hearings have not been announced, even though each location is supposed to receive at least 6-8 weeks of notice before the Inquiry visits. If a minimum of 6 weeks' notice were to be honoured as of writing this Report Card, the next hearing after Whitehorse would be on the week of June 26th, costing the Inquiry invaluable time.

NWAC believes that there will be at least 20 Hearing locations, although the Commission has not confirmed this information. As the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) recently shared, Part II and Part III will take place before November 1st so that institutions and subject matter experts will be heard first. The hearings with families will now take place after research has been gathered and after the interim report is released. This is an unfortunate announcement as the experiences of loved ones and families must be at the heart of this work. The Commission and the Commissioners will need great leadership in order to meet their deadline and the expectations of families and loved ones who are counting on them.

**Recommendations:**

NWAC recommends that all remaining dates and locations for the Hearings be posted immediately, clearly stating (1) which organizations are welcoming/hosting the Commission, (2) which Commissioners will be attending, (3) clear steps as to how families register, and (4) clear steps on how family travel, accommodations and per diems will be organized.

**8. The Commission has acted on its authority to provide recommendations and a final report by November 1, 2018.**

**CANNOT ASSESS**

**9. The Commission has acted on its mandate to set up an inquiry process that, to the extent possible, is informal, trauma-informed, and respectful of the individuals, families and communities concerned.**

**FAIL**

**Observations:**

Observers waited six months to watch the first Press Conference, delivered on February 7th, where Commissioners shared their vision to "Find Truth. Honour Truth. Give Life to Truth." These catchy statements do not mention families, do not mention honouring the women who have been murdered and/or gone missing, and do not mention communities. These statements focus on gathering research and data, a focus that became clear when the intake process was first shared. In the beginning, emails to the profiles@ address were responded to by the Legal team instead of trained counsellors and crisis workers. This was a signal that the Inquiry is much more of a legalized process than was originally advocated for. NWAC's understanding was that the Inquiry is not intended to be a legal process. Though data-gathering is important, it is ultimately a means to shape recommendations for systemic change. Supporting families, encouraging them to share their own experiences, and giving them voice provide their own recommendations are the top priorities of this work. Families need to know that their voices and their experiences are of concern over the accumulation of research and data. This process was not a trauma-informed one.

**Observations:**

The intake process recently evolved to include a toll-free number that is answered by an administrator who supports the office of the Executive-Director and the Health team is now returning calls and emails. Inquiry officials also shared that once the Health team works with an individual, the Legal team is tasked with following up to provide a “legal assessment.” This step is a process where the legal team gathers information on what a family wishes to share while gathering details regarding their loved ones’ case. After the assessment is made, the Legal team will decide whether or not there is enough information to brief the Commissioners as well as whether or not the family will be able to speak in front of the Commissioners. This intake process seems cruel and unusual. NWAC has been told that only families that registered with the Inquiry and have been vetted by a “legal assessment” will be seen by the Commissioners; others will speak to Statement Takers. NWAC did not advocate for a process where families are vetted and chosen. If a family wishes to speak to a Commissioner, they have a right to speak, share their story, and provide recommendations. Families are at the centre of this work. This process still remains far from trauma-informed. Half of the 300 family contacts have been called, creating an opportunity to treat the remaining half with the respect they deserve.

**Recommendations:**

NWAC recommends that the Commission review its intake process and replace it with something much more trauma-informed. It is further recommended that the Commission look to the example set by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in the sharing of survivor experiences. Until such time as the intake process changes, NWAC cannot recommend that families participate in the Inquiry process. NWAC will ask that families issue caution when approaching the Commission as it is not-trauma informed and has a demonstrated focus on collecting research and data over providing families with opportunities to shape and lead this process.

**10. The Commission has acted on its mandate to set up an inquiry process that, to the extent possible, respects the diverse cultural, linguistic and spiritual traditions of Indigenous peoples.**

**ACTION REQUIRED**

**Observations:**

It is difficult to assess whether the Commission is respecting the diverse cultural, linguistic and spiritual traditions of Indigenous peoples when a list of locations and hosting organizations has not been released. It is essential that this information become public so that families, the public, and stakeholders can feel reassured that everyone at the table is being engaged. Politics are at play in many of our communities, as is the reality that some nation-based groups work together while others vehemently oppose one another, yet the Inquiry was designed to be an inclusive process where all are welcome. A public list will allow stakeholders to apply a critical lens and extend invitations to all. It will also allow families to be reassured that their leadership has reached out and invited the Commissioners. There are too many unanswered questions and the location of the hearings is essential to understand how the Commission intends to respect the diversity of communities.

**Recommendations:**

NWAC recommends that the Commission publicly release a questionnaire or checklist which explains what the Commission is looking for in terms of a venue and clearly explain what is being asked of host organizations or host communities. This can include basic logistical questions as well as information on specific cultural or regional protocols. This questionnaire must be widely distributed and supplied to organizations willing to gather information before the Commission contacts them.

**11. The Commission has acted on its mandate to set up an inquiry process that, to the extent possible, promotes and advances reconciliation.**

**FAIL**

**Observations:**

The Commission has yet to carry out its mandate in a reconciliatory way or even discuss reconciliation. It is hoped that a Communications Strategy will include a discussion for promoting and advancing reconciliation, with clear steps that individuals, communities, and leaders can take to move forward. Reconciliation must include First Nations, Inuit and Métis perspectives.

**Recommendations:**

NWAC recommends that the Commission release their plans to promote and advance reconciliation. The media and the public are desperate for actionable items with which the Commission's progress can be tracked.

**12. The Commission has acted on its mandate to set up an inquiry process that, to the extent possible, contributes to public awareness about the causes of violence and solutions for ending it.**

**FAIL**

**Observations:**

The Commission is struggling to reach impacted families and communities and has yet to engage the public. There have been countless missed opportunities to make information and documents public, to have the Commissioners deliver key messages to the media and at events, in addition to opportunities to ask allies and key stakeholders to support the Commission and its important work. There is an appetite and a genuine desire, following the successes of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, from non-Indigenous Canadians to learn about the root causes of violence. Moreover, conversations can be encouraged now to discuss solutions to ending this violence.

**Recommendations:**

NWAC recommends that the Commission release their plans to contribute to public awareness about the causes of violence against Indigenous women and solutions to ending it. The Commission has many allies who have a vested interest in its success generally, as well as many organizations who have the experience and ability to mobilize their forces and contribute to public awareness.

**13. The Commission has acted on its mandate to set up an inquiry process that, to the extent possible provides opportunities for individuals, families and community members to share their experiences and views, including their views on recommendations for promoting safety and preventing or eliminating violence.**

**FAIL**

**Observations:**

As explained in both Report Cards, individuals, families, survivors, community members and leadership are struggling to find information on the Inquiry process. It is unclear what opportunities are available and whether all families that wish to will be able to share their experiences. Moreover, we as NWAC are looking to the Commission to start conversations on recommendations for promoting safety and preventing or eliminating violence. Unfortunately, we are not being provided with these opportunities and we hope that this process changes quickly.

**Recommendations:**

NWAC recommends that a series of questions or a questionnaire be released immediately so that individuals, families, communities and leadership have the opportunity to meet and prepare recommendations. An official process for sharing recommendations would be helpful. The National Family Advisory Circle must also be engaged and provided resources to meet with and discuss recommendations with other families.

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**14. The Commission has acted on its authority to establish regional advisory bodies, composed of families, loved ones and survivors to advise on issues specific to various regions, within the scope of the independent inquiry.**

**FAIL**

**Observations:**

To date, we have no information on any formal Regional Advisory Bodies that include families, loved ones and survivors. A few Regional Advisory Meetings have been held but this process was not made public and was invite-only. Several other Regional Advisory Meetings in the communities of Thunder Bay, Edmonton, Halifax, Winnipeg, Northern British Columbia and Saskatoon were postponed indefinitely as of April 13th. There is a risk that politics and the reality that not all nation-based organizations may be working against an inclusive Inquiry process. It is imperative that this process becomes public so that all those that want to be engaged can and do. It is also unclear how members of Regional Advisory Bodies will be compensated for their time and commitment.

**Recommendations:**

NWAC again recommends that the membership of all Regional Advisory Bodies are made public to ensure that all those that wish to participate can and do. A process for becoming part of the advisory bodies must also be outlined.

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**15. The Commission has acted on its authority to establish issue-specific advisory bodies composed of Elders, youth, family members of victims, as well as representatives of national, Indigenous, local and feminist organizations to advise on regional matters that fall within the scope of the independent inquiry.**

**FAIL**

**Observations:**

To date, no information on issue-specific advisory bodies has been shared. We hope that when they are called, that a list of Elders, youth, family members of victims as well as representatives of national, Indigenous,

local and feminist organizations will be approached. All of the above have a vested interest in the success of the Inquiry are ready and willing to be meaningfully engaged.

**Recommendations:**

NWAC again recommends that the membership of all Issue-Specific Advisory Bodies are made public to ensure that all those that wish to participate can and do. A process for becoming part of the Issue-Specific advisory bodies must also be outlined.

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*This is the second Report Card released by the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC).  
The Press Release about the first Report Card can be found at:*

*[www.nwac.ca/2017/01/nwac-releases-report-card-on-the-national-inquiry-into-mmiwg/](http://www.nwac.ca/2017/01/nwac-releases-report-card-on-the-national-inquiry-into-mmiwg/)*

*The first Report Card, which includes a primer on the background and history of the Inquiry,  
can be found at:*

*[www.nwac.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/NWAC-Inquiry-Report-Card-and-Backgrounder-Jan-2017.pdf](http://www.nwac.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/NWAC-Inquiry-Report-Card-and-Backgrounder-Jan-2017.pdf)*