



**PROPOSED PARTICIPATION BY THE NATIVE WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF  
CANADA (NWAC) IN A FEDERAL ACTION PLAN TO ADDRESS THE FINDINGS OF  
THE INQUIRY INTO MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND  
GIRLS**

**DISCUSSION PAPER**

**May 13, 2020**

## SITUATION

The federal Liberal government, promised, as part of its election-campaign platform of 2015, to hold an inquiry to determine why a disproportionate number of Canada's Indigenous women are murdered or go missing. An inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) was subsequently called in the summer of 2016.

NWAC has been the leading voice on the issue of the murdered and missing women and created a database of those who were murdered or who have disappeared that brought the matter to national attention. Even so, the government provided no funds for NWAC to participate in the Inquiry and, only towards the end of the Inquiry's mandate, did NWAC receive limited funds to cover some of the organization's expenses.

The Inquiry commissioners tabled a report of their findings on June 3, 2019, which contained 231 "Calls for Justice" aimed at reducing the number of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and reached a conclusion of genocide. The government received the report and, in December 2019, Carolyn Bennett, the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, told a meeting of national chiefs that her department was preparing a national action plan in response. Minister Bennett said the plan would be delivered in June 2020 to mark the first anniversary of the Inquiry's findings.

NWAC held a national roundtable in January 2020 to consider the Inquiry's Calls for Justice and to set priorities for the plan of action. More than 65 participants attended that roundtable and a report was generated containing findings and recommendations.

As of mid May, it appears that the government will not be releasing the long-awaited national action plan as intended on June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020, the anniversary date of the handing down of the MMIWG report.

In the past few weeks, NWAC and Minister Bennett have engaged in a number of conversations on how to move forward on the 231 Calls for Justice.

NWAC proposes to move forward with eight immediate key actions that are all Calls for Justice actions now. We know that COVID has further exacerbated the situation of violence for Indigenous women and there is even more urgency to act now.

## CONSIDERATIONS

- The issue of the missing and murdered Indigenous women has received little attention since the report of the national Inquiry was tabled in June 2019. The government has national and international human-rights obligations to ensure safety and justice for all members of Canadian society, including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit women, girls, and gender-diverse people.
- The government must take concrete action for Indigenous women specifically and give high priority to specific resources and support for Indigenous women. At this time, despite having an Accord in place, NWAC and other Indigenous women's organizations have had to compete with mainstream organizations for critical COVID funding – only to be ignored - with no response to any of the proposals submitted. (Calls for Justice 3.2)
- While the pandemic is a global emergency, it cannot be used as a reason to delay the development of a national action plan to address the issues leading to the genocide of Indigenous women and girls, or as a reason for devoting little or no money to this urgent issue. (Calls for Justice 1.1)
- Considering that the Inquiry's following statement that "*What little efforts have been made have focused more on reactive rather than preventative measures. This is a significant barrier to addressing the root causes of violence. Further, insufficient political will continues to be a roadblock across all initiatives. We maintain now, as we did then, that proper prioritization and resourcing of solutions by Canadian governments must come with real partnerships with Indigenous Peoples that support self-determination, in a decolonizing way.*"
- Considering the traditional roles of Indigenous women in governance and leadership and their political rights, and considering the Accord signed between the Crown and NWAC, the next steps must be undertaken in a decolonizing way, allowing Indigenous women, as matriarchs, to take a leadership role and make decisions.

NWAC wishes to have the support of the Minister and the government, and wants to support the government by working collaboratively in the spirit of the Accord as the June 3 deadline is looming.

## NWAC'S PROPOSED EIGHT IMMEDIATE NEXT STEPS

- 1. NATIONAL ACTION PLAN:** NWAC asks that the National Action Plan be released on the June 3<sup>rd</sup> anniversary date as promised. **(Calls for Justice 1)**
- 2. NATIONAL TASK FORCE:** NWAC asks the government to immediately establish a national task force, comprised of an independent, highly qualified, and specialized team of investigators, to review and, if required, to reinvestigate each case of all unresolved files of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people from across Canada. **(Calls for Justice 9.9)**
- 3. NATIONAL DATABASE:** Efforts are currently underway by NWAC to quantify the number of Indigenous women who have been murdered or have gone missing since the release of the Inquiry report in June of last year. If that number is not quantifiable, NWAC staff plan to quantify the number of Indigenous women and girls who have been murdered or gone missing since the release of the RCMP report of 2014. A commitment is needed to establish a national database. **(Calls for Justice 9.5)**
- 4. OVERSIGHT/MMIWG UNIT:** NWAC asks the federal government to create an independent mechanism to report on the implementation of the National Inquiry's Calls for Justice to Parliament, annually. NWAC is requesting financial resources to establish its own internal dedicated MMIWG unit within its national office to work on Calls for Justice relating to policy, legislation, research and public education, and external liaison work with communities, police, government, business, and lawmakers. This unit will also provide oversight of the implementation of the MMIWG Calls for Justice. Permanent NWAC staff should also be part of the development and creation of the independent mechanism. **(Calls for Justice 1.10)**
- 5. PUBLIC EDUCATION:** NWAC will be launching a plain language version of the Genocide report, translated into English, French and Spanish. NWAC has entered into a partnership with the author of the report, a University and with private donors to complete this initiative. We anticipate the publishing of this report at the end of June 2020. NWAC is requesting assistance from the government to help develop a national awareness campaign that aims to educate Canada's citizens about, and to confront and eliminate, racism, sexism, homophobia, and transphobia and to work with NWAC to develop and implement an Anti-Racism and Anti-Sexism National Action Plan to end racism and sexualized stereotypes of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people. **(Calls for Justice 1.9, 2.6)**
- 6. POLITICAL RIGHTS AND END MARGINALIZATION:** NWAC has an Accord with the Crown. We ask that the government immediately bring NWAC to all decision-making tables that impact Indigenous women's, girls and gender diverse issues and rights including when developing budgets and determining government activities and priorities. **(Calls for Justice 1.3)**

7. **BEST PRACTICES SUMMIT:** NWAC is keenly interested in addressing the issues that led to missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and wants to organize and lead a virtual international “Best Practices Summit” that would include NWAC, a number of federal ministers, UN Women representative, an OAS representative, a representative of the CAMIs from Mexico and Indigenous leaders and matriarchs from the World Indigenous Women’s Business Network to discuss the impact of COVID in their countries and propose practical solutions. The goal of the Summit is to discuss existing solutions in other countries to help implement specific Calls for Justice **(To assist in implementing all the Calls for Justice)**

