



Native Women's
Association of Canada

L'Association des
femmes autochtones
du Canada

Head office

85 Albert Street, 12th floor
Ottawa, Ontario
K1P 6A4

T: 613-722-3033 613-722-7687

Toll: 1-800-461-4043

reception@nwac.ca www.nwac.ca

March 9, 2020

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, PC, MP
Prime Minister of Canada
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Re: **First Ministers' Meeting, March 13, 2020, Ottawa, ON**

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

I am writing today to express my extreme disappointment that the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) was not invited to participate with other national Indigenous organizations in the First Ministers' meeting planned for March 13th in Ottawa. I have made several calls to your office and I have received no response.

On February 1st, 2019, NWAC signed an historic Accord with Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada as represented by the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations ("Canada"). Our role as a national voice of Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit and gender diverse people is formally acknowledged in this historic agreement, and is of equal status as the agreements signed with other national Indigenous organizations who also represent section 35 rights holders.

Furthermore, NWAC has participated in past FPT and First Ministers' meetings, including the most recent meeting with the Ministers of Transportation and Infrastructure of the Provinces and Territories. NWAC's exclusion from the upcoming First Minister's meeting is a departure from past practice and –simply put– unacceptable. The leaders of the Assembly of First Nations, the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and the Métis National Council were all invited to “discuss how they can work together to advance the priorities of First Nations, Inuit and the Métis Nation.” This meeting will determine critical issues impacting First Nations, Inuit, and Métis women, girls, Two-Spirit, and gender diverse people.

The voices of Indigenous women are no less valuable than other Indigenous voices. The NWAC can provide expert advice on complex gender and intersectional issues and contribute solutions and strategies to the discussions.

NWAC was founded on the collective goal to enhance, promote and foster the social, economic, cultural and political well-being of First Nations, Métis and Inuit women. Since 1974, NWAC has been a national voice of Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit and gender diverse people from coast to coast to coast.



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Prime Minister, you said there is “no relationship more important to Canada than the relationship with Indigenous Peoples.” We believe the exclusion of the grassroots voices of Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit and gender diverse people is a violation of our human rights and is contrary to the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

In the spirit of reconciliation, I respectfully ask that you extend an invitation to NWAC to attend the First Ministers' meeting on March 13th so that our voices may be heard. I look forward to receiving your prompt reply.

Sincerely,

Lorraine Whitman
President
Native Women's Association of Canada

c: Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations Carolyn Bennett, PC, MP
Chrystia Freeland, Deputy Prime Minister
Katie Telford, Chief of Staff, Office of the Prime Minister
Rick Theis, Policy Advisor, Office of the Prime Minister