



News Release

Community and Advocacy Groups Respond to Missing Women Commission of Inquiry's Final Report

December 17, 2012

(Coast Salish Territory/Vancouver, B.C.) Community and advocacy groups who were shut out of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry expressed full support today for the families of the missing and murdered women, and strongly reiterated the call for a national public inquiry into the hundreds of murders and disappearances of Aboriginal women and girls. These organizations also expressed continued support for the previously announced investigation by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The final report by Commissioner Wally Oppal was released to the families this morning at 9:00 a.m. and to the general public at 1:00 p.m.

The Inquiry has been deeply and systemically flawed from the beginning. The voices and experiences of Downtown Eastside women, Aboriginal organizations and women's groups were shut out. Family members' needs and wishes have been, and continue to be, blatantly disregarded and disrespected, and the proceedings favoured police and police evidence. This failed Inquiry, far from assisting Aboriginal women and women from the Downtown Eastside, has ironically reinforced their marginalization.

Community and advocacy organizations that were granted participant status at the Inquiry were denied natural justice when the Province refused to provide the necessary funding to support their complete participation. Groups were betrayed by Premier Christy Clark and former Attorney General Barry Penner, who made the discriminatory decision to not fund their counsel, contrary to the Commission's own recommendation, a decision unprecedented in Canada. At the same time, the Province provided public funding for twenty-five lawyers for

police agencies and individual police officers. On April 2, 2012, fourteen groups sent an open letter to Commissioner Oppal advising that they would not be participating in the Policy Forums or Study Commissions aspects of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry, citing concerns about discrimination and the conduct of the Commission to date.

There is a glaring and outstanding need for a full and thorough examination of the systemic factors that underpin the issue of missing and murdered women and girls- the deep sexism, poverty, racism, and colonialism. There is also a need, that is tragically evident, for the Province to work with the families and community organizations to make real change. The alarming and disproportionately high rate of Aboriginal girls and women that continue to go missing and be murdered must be addressed. We cannot continue to lose our daughters, sisters, wives, mothers, and aunts.

Although the members of this coalition were shut out of the Inquiry process, we have been meeting informally to discuss how to move forward in order to support the families, and to pursue justice for the missing and murdered girls and women. These groups received the report along with the general public at 1:00 p.m. today. Because the report is approximately 1500 pages long, the coalition will review the report and release a more detailed response in early 2013.

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