

FOR RELEASE
February 26, 2016

Communiqué—Outcomes and priorities for action to address violence against Indigenous women and girls

Joint communiqué

Winnipeg—Inuit, Métis, and First Nations leaders, families of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls (MMIWG), Manitoba Premier Greg Selinger, Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne, federal, provincial and territorial ministers today committed to ongoing urgent and coordinated action to prevent and address violence against Indigenous women and girls, and to continue this work during the national inquiry on MMIWG.

The group met today in Winnipeg for the 2016 National Roundtable on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls hosted by Manitoba Premier Greg Selinger, and agreed to action-based collaboration outlined in the document: *2016 National Roundtable on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls: Outcomes and Priorities for Action to Prevent and Address Violence Against Indigenous Women and Girls*. This roadmap document provides governments with 20 priorities for action in three theme areas: prevention and awareness; community safety; and culturally relevant policing measures and justice responses, and builds on commitments of the 2015 roundtable held in Ottawa.

Participants of the 2016 national roundtable agreed to work with families and local partners to:

- continue with coordinated collaboration and action to prevent and address violence against Indigenous women and girls during the national inquiry;
- the importance of a national inquiry on MMIWG, with federal, provincial and territorial governments committing to participation and full cooperation in the process;
- build on the current Aboriginal Affairs working group to include the federal government as a co-chair, with time dedicated to MMIWG issues including the ongoing coordination of efforts, monitoring progress, and identifying priorities for action, including appropriate federal and provincial/territorial ministers;
- supporting the development of Indigenous-led cultural competency, anti-racism and anti-sexism training programs for all public servants across governments, police and the justice system to include components focused on Indigenous history, impacts of policies, legislation and historical trauma;
- create and implement a set of common performance measures to assess progress toward addressing and reducing the socio-economic gaps experienced by Indigenous peoples;
- work collaboratively to improve communication and coordination between Indigenous families and: communities; victim services; policing; prosecutions; women's groups; anti-violence groups; and shelter workers; and
- implement the proposed Canada-wide prevention and awareness campaign focused on changing public perception and attitudes to help end violence against Indigenous women and girls.

Highlights:

Families of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls met with participants of the 2016 national roundtable at a separate gathering yesterday to discuss directly with provincial and territorial leaders their recommendations for achieving justice and ending violence.

Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne provided an update on the Canada-wide prevention and awareness campaign committed to at the 2015 national roundtable.

Alberta Indigenous Relations Minister Richard Feehan shared an update on work underway through the Aboriginal Affairs working group to develop a socio-economic action plan for Aboriginal women. The plan will present a comprehensive account of the challenges and barriers that adversely impact socio-economic outcomes for Aboriginal women. It will share best practices and identify collaborative means to improve socio-economic outcomes of Aboriginal women.

Federal Ministers Jody Wilson-Raybould, Dr. Carolyn Bennett and Patty Hajdu provided an update on the engagement process and planning for a national inquiry. Participants shared their support for a national inquiry and views on how to best engage and reflect regional interests and perspectives.

All participants want to acknowledge the excellent work accomplished at the 2016 Justice Practitioners' Summit, and will work to examine all of the recommendations contained within the report. The summit gathered together nearly two hundred participants from across Canada representing experts and practitioners in three key sectors: victim services; policing; and prosecutions.

Roundtable participants expressed support for ongoing efforts among all governments and organizations engaged in ending violence against Indigenous women and girls.

Quick Facts:

- Violence against Indigenous women and girls is systemic and a national crisis that requires urgent, informed and collaborative action.
- Indigenous women are three times more likely than non-Indigenous women to be victim of violence.
- Current public data on MMIWG oversimplifies and underrepresents the scale of the issue, yet still demonstrates a complex and pervasive pattern of violence against Indigenous women and girls who are often targeted because of their gender and Indigenous identity.

- While there have been a number of reports stating numbers are significantly higher, the 2014 RCMP Operational Overview notes that police recorded 1,017 incidents of Aboriginal female homicides between 1980 and 2012 and 164 missing Aboriginal female investigations dating back to 1952.
- From 2001 to 2014 the average rate of homicides involving Indigenous female victims was four times higher than that of homicides involving non-Indigenous female victims.
- Indigenous women make up 16 per cent of all female homicide victims, and 11 per cent of missing women, even though Indigenous people make up 4.3 per cent of the population of Canada.

2016 national roundtable participants included families of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, Manitoba Premier Greg Selinger, Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne, federal ministers of Justice, Indigenous Affairs and Status of Women, provincial and territorial ministers, Assembly of First Nations National Chief Perry Bellegarde, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples National Chief Dwight Dorey, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami President Natan Obed, Métis National Council President Clément Chartier, Native Women's Association of Canada President Dawn Lavell-Harvard, Pauktutit Inuit Women of Canada President Rebecca Kudloo and Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak/Women of the Métis Nation President Melanie Omeniho.

Quotes:

Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada The Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould:

"A priority for our government is to create a pathway for substantive and true reconciliation and a renewed relationship with Indigenous peoples in this country – how we address Indigenous issues in this country will be the lasting legacy of our government. Many of the women and girls who are missing or murdered are certainly victims of crime, but the issues extend well beyond our criminal-justice system, and we must look at the root causes of this tragedy. Our commitments to assess our progress in reducing the social and economic inequalities in Indigenous communities, and to improve communication between Indigenous communities, victim services, policing and prosecutions, will represent important first steps in healing that relationship."

Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada The Hon. Dr. Carolyn Bennett:

"Today the Government of Canada joined families, Indigenous organizations, provinces and territories and made real progress by committing to a much needed national inquiry. With provincial and territorial support, a national inquiry can look at many of the critical issues under their jurisdiction, such as child welfare and policing. I would like to thank all the families, survivors, and elders for their input which will continue to be essential in designing the best possible inquiry. We are determined to do this right, to honour the spirits and memories of those we have lost, and to protect future generations."

Minister of Status of Women The Hon. Patty Hajdu:

"Violence against Indigenous women and girls will not stop on its own – it will take the collective effort of governments, organizations and individuals to prevent future tragedies from happening. This roundtable is an important opportunity to explore solutions and to pledge – as a country – to work together to empower Indigenous women and girls and ensure their safety now and in the future."

Manitoba Premier Greg Selinger:

"On behalf of all Manitobans, I'm honoured to have hosted this second roundtable on missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. I'm truly humbled by the stories I have heard here, and by the level of commitment demonstrated by participating leaders. These stories of pain and trauma are difficult to hear just as it's difficult for those families to share their stories, but this is an important part of reconciliation. It's important for us to listen to these painful experiences because it will inform and enlighten the work we do going forward to ensure safety and security for Indigenous women and girls. The violence they have been subjected to is intolerable, and I feel confident this roundtable will inspire leadership at all levels to work collectively to end it for good."

Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne:

"The high number of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls is unacceptable. It's time to work together to take meaningful steps toward making Canada a safer place for all Indigenous women and girls. The national roundtable helped us make progress on a number of key initiatives, including developing a Canada-wide campaign that will promote awareness of the issue. I'm pleased that Ontario is taking a leadership role in developing this campaign – creating awareness is the first step toward resolving this crisis."

Assembly of First Nations National Chief Perry Bellegarde:

"The commitments made by government representatives today are welcome but action on the ground is crucial. Words must lead to results. We will continue to press at every level for action that achieves safety and security for Indigenous women, girls and families."

Assembly of First Nations Regional Chief Shane Gottfriedson:

"Efforts to prevent and address violence against Indigenous women and girls do not start and should not end with a national inquiry. Today is an example of political commitment, and now we must see that commitment turn into action. We cannot wait until the end of an inquiry to see results on the ground. There are efforts we can make now to better ensure the safety of our most vulnerable."

Congress of Aboriginal Peoples National Chief Dwight Dorey:

"I was extremely pleased with the level of commitment and collaboration demonstrated this week during our discussions with all Indigenous, federal, provincial, and territorial leaders at the National Roundtable on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. We must move quickly and decisively to prevent and reduce the unacceptable level of violence that many Indigenous women and girls have endured for far too long - I'm confident these discussions were a significant step forward and will produce results."

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami President Natan Obed:

"Today we have recognized that it is within our power, as representatives of governments and organizations, and as Canadians, to end the cycle of violence against Indigenous women and girls. We have determined that it must end with us."

Now, we must follow through on the actions we have agreed to undertake together and make them a priority in every aspect of our work and our lives.”

Métis National Council President Clément Chartier:

“The Métis Nation welcomes concerted action by all jurisdictions to deal with violence against Indigenous women and girls. Our governments and communities work tirelessly to improve the lives of our people and require active and ongoing support in their endeavours to achieve community safety and security. An action plan built on real commitment of all jurisdictions is essential to the effectiveness of the measures they put in place to protect lives and create opportunities.”

Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak / Women of the Métis Nation President Melanie Omeniho:

“Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwaké Women of the Metis Nation is very proud of some of the major commitments that have been made by some of our various governments across the country. With their supports we truly hope we can continue to work together to see the statistics change and that our Metis women and girls can feel free and valued as part of society.”

Native Women’s Association of Canada President Dawn Lavell-Harvard:

“The united front we have established here in Canada on violence against Indigenous women and girls is a powerful one. From coast to coast to coast, from NAOs to elected provincial and federal leaders – a chorus of unity has emerged. Violence against Indigenous women and girls will not be tolerated. Coordinated national action is imperative. It is our hope at the Native Women’s Association of Canada that this year’s Roundtable will provide a solid foundation for the next phase of the national inquiry. This crisis must be addressed effectively in order to begin to reverse the cycle of violence against our sisters. We have only one chance to get this right – and we must remain vigilant.”

Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada President Rebecca Kudloo:

“We will no doubt learn from the inquiry, but we already know a great deal about what is needed to prevent violence and abuse in our communities. I welcome the commitments made today by the provinces and territories to work together to coordinate action during the course of the national inquiry.”

Alberta Minister of Indigenous Relations The Hon. Richard Feehan:

“I’m proud to represent Alberta as part of this national roundtable that brings together the hearts and minds of Indigenous families, Indigenous leaders, and government representatives. This forum is a place where we can listen and learn, and where we can work together on actions to eliminate violence against Indigenous women and girls.”

British Columbia’s Attorney General and Minister of Justice The Hon. Suzanne Anton:

“Ensuring the safety of Indigenous women and girls is one of the defining issues of our time. Discussions today were focused on measurable actions to affect change in our society. In B.C., we believe that engaging families about this important issue is critical to success. This engagement will inform our work moving forward, including B.C.’s input into the upcoming national inquiry. Recognizing there is still much to be done, our government is determined to make meaningful progress with our colleagues across the country for the safety and security of Indigenous women and girls.”

New Brunswick Minister Responsible for the Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat The Hon. Dr. Ed. Doherty M.D.:

“This is an important opportunity to stimulate discussion and collaboration in moving forward with the issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in Canada. We are pleased to participate in the roundtable again this year, and to work together to create the conditions to improve the quality of life for Aboriginal women and girls in New Brunswick and across the country.”

Newfoundland and Labrador Minister of Justice and Public Safety and Attorney General The Hon. Andrew Parsons:

“The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador looks forward to working with the Government of Canada, other provinces and territories and national Aboriginal organizations on a National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. We remain committed to eliminating all forms of violence against this vulnerable group and our ultimate goal is for safer communities and a safer country for all Canadians.”

Northwest Territories Minister Responsible for the Status of Women The Hon. Caroline Cochrane:

“The Northwest Territories remains committed in this work and to the principle that the best results are achieved through collaboration, particularly with the people most directly affected by the issue and the governments and organizations that represent them. The roundtable has been an important opportunity for that kind of collaboration and we must continue to work on the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls with all our partners.”

Nova Scotia Minister of Community Services and Status of Women The Hon. Joanne Bernard:

“I am honoured to have the opportunity to continue to be engaged in this important collaborative work. I am hopeful that our decisions today will ensure that all Canadians will become more engaged and aware as we move to address the disproportionate rates of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. I am particularly pleased and hopeful on the commitment of ongoing conversations centred on child welfare”

Nunavut Minister responsible for the Status of Women The Hon. Monica Eil-Kanayuk:

“The struggle of our First Nations, Métis and Inuit women and girls can no longer be overlooked. The second National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls has strengthened our shared commitment to move forward as Canadians to end this tragedy. Violence against Indigenous women is at the very core, and we commit to finding solutions to support victims, strengthen awareness and find solutions to curb this crisis.”

Prince Edward Island Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy and Minister Responsible for the Status of Women The Hon. Paula Biggar:

“I was deeply touched by the honesty and courage of the family members who shared their experiences with us. These stories will guide and inspire our work as we continue to act collaboratively on the elimination of violence against Indigenous women and girls. Together we can break the cycle of violence and begin a journey of healing and reconciliation.”

Quebec Minister responsible for Native Affairs Geoffrey Kelley:

“Considerable efforts have already been made on the wide variety of issues that arise from violence against Indigenous women with First Nations organizations in Québec, but we are always working to do more. We are convinced that solutions

will come by working together with all levels of government, Native leaders and communities. Our presence here today precisely reflects our willingness to collaborate with our colleagues from other provinces and territories as well as the federal government to share our resources and our experiences so as to end violence against Indigenous women and girls, which is our ultimate shared goal.”

Saskatchewan Minister of Justice and Attorney General The Hon. Gordon Wyant:

“The national roundtable has provided an excellent opportunity to collaborate with my colleagues and national Aboriginal organization representatives on the actions needed to make Canada a safer place for Indigenous women and girls. Significant steps have been taken through this and other forums over the last year, such as the release of the final Federal Provincial Territorial Justice and Public Safety Framework on Addressing Violence against Indigenous Women and Girls, the Justice Summit in Winnipeg and the federal government’s engagement on the National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls.”

Yukon Deputy Premier and Minister Responsible for Women’s Directorate Elaine Taylor:

“Our delegation brings a strong and united voice in support of the families of Yukon’s missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. As leaders, we are committed to addressing violence against Indigenous women and girls, and to taking collaborative action to address this important issue on the territorial as well as national level. Should there be an interest to hold a third National Roundtable, Yukon would be willing to host.”

Participants List:

The Honourable Greg Selinger, Premier of Manitoba
The Honourable Kathleen Wynne, Premier of Ontario
The Honourable Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Government of Canada
The Honourable Jody Wilson-Raybould, Minister of Justice and Attorney General, Government of Canada
The Honourable Patty Hajdu, Minister for the Status of Women, Government of Canada
Honourable John Rustad, Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, Government of British Columbia
Honourable Suzanne Anton, Minister of Justice, Government of British Columbia
Honourable Richard Feehan, Minister of Indigenous Relations, Government of Alberta
Honourable Gordon Wyant, Minister of Justice and Attorney General, Government of Saskatchewan
Honourable Eric Robinson, Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, Government of Manitoba
Honourable Kerri Irvin-Ross, Minister of Family Services, Government of Manitoba
Honourable Gord Mackintosh, Minister of Justice and Attorney General, Government of Manitoba
Honourable David Zimmer, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, Government of Ontario
Honourable Tracy MacCharles, Minister Responsible for Women’s Issues, Government of Ontario
Geoffrey Kelley, ministre responsable des Affaires autochtones, Gouvernement du Québec
Honourable Ed Doherty, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, Government of New Brunswick
Honourable Joanne Bernard, Minister of Community Services & Status of Women, Government of Nova Scotia
Honourable Paula Biggar, Minister for the Status of Women, Government of Prince Edward Island
Honourable Andrew Parsons, Minister of Justice and Public Safety & Attorney General, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
Honourable Elaine Taylor, Deputy Premier and Minister Responsible for Women’s Directorate, Government of Yukon
Honourable Caroline Cochrane, Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, Government of Northwest Territories
Honourable Monica Ell-Kanayuk, Minister responsible for the Status of Women, Government of Nunavut
National Chief Perry Bellegarde, Assembly of First Nations
National Chief Dwight Dorey, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples
Clem Chartier, president of Métis National Council
Melanie Omeniho, president of Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak / Women of the Metis Nation
Dawn Lavell-Harvard, president of Native Women’s Association of Canada
Natan Obed, president of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami
Rebecca Kudloo, president of Pauktutit Inuit Women of Canada

Outcomes and Priorities for Action to Prevent and Address Violence Against Indigenous Women and Girls

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Contact:

Dan Macdonald
Cabinet Communications
867-393-6470
dan.macdonald@gov.yk.ca

Alex Hill
Communications, Women’s Directorate
867-667-8675
alex.hill@gov.yk.ca

News Release #16-062



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