Exhibit: National Inquiry into Missing and

Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

Location/Phase: Part 2: Calgary

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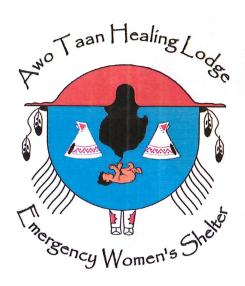
Roundtable

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women

February 27, 2015

Calgary, Alberta

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Event Held in Partnership with:









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Purpose of the Roundtable:

An opportunity for understanding and healing.

Historically, Indigenous people have experienced immense abuse and violence. Today, Indigenous women continue to experience disproportionately high rates of violence and abuse,, sometimes resulting in death.

There remain many unsolved cases of murder or disappearance, and numerous stories of women who have gone missing.

Across Canada, people have rallied to support a call for a National Inquiry into these cases, and to give voice to families of missing and murdered Indigenous women.

On the afternoon of February 27, 2015 a roundtable discussion was held in Ottawa on the tragedy of missing and murdered Indigenous women.

A similar event was held in Calgary on the same day, in solidarity with the roundtable in Ottawa.

This event brought together people of all backgrounds, including Indigenous elders and two honorary witnesses: Calgary's Chief of Police, Rick Hanson, and Liberal MP and Aboriginal Affairs Critic, Carolyn Bennett.

At the roundtable, seven families told their stories of unimaginable loss. The purpose of the event was to promote understanding and healing.



Women's Honour Song / Drummers at Vigil



Events of the day

The Roundtable brought together families of missing and murdered women to talk about their experiences. These families were then asked to make recommendations for action to move towards healing.

Seven families came together to share their stories of loss and grief. They talked about the circumstances of their loss, as well as their experiences with the police, community and family systems. Hearing their stories, though difficult, is so necessary as we move toward justice, and toward ending this violence against Indigenous women and girls.

The event began with prayer, and was followed by a peaceful walk to city hall for drumming and a round dance.

The committee agreed to invite honorary witnesses who were influential in their fields to hear the stories from the families affected. The Chief of the Calgary Police Services and a high ranking federal political figure were asked to share these stories within their circles of influence to create awareness and greater understanding

Emphasis on our culture

The Roundtable discussion was framed from within a cultural, family and community-led perspective throughout the planning process and the event.

In a private and sacred pipe ceremony, two Elders (one male and one female) started the day off with Indigenous cultural understanding of good intentions.

They led with prayers to help the families who were going to share their private, painful stories, and to help the organizers of the Roundtable to meet the challenges the day would bring.

A tobacco offering was made, and ceremony followed the events of the day at the Awo Taan Healing Lodge. The Elders lifted their pipes in prayer, for strength and love, and for these families to find peace and healing. They also asked for kindness and empathy as families continue to seek justice under horrific circumstances.

Tobacco and prints (cloths) were offered in asking our ancestors for their assistance to bring this issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls to the forefront for healing, justice and resolution.



Acknowledgments

The organizing committee would like to acknowledge the spirit of the grandmothers and grandfathers for guiding us through our collective experience of the loss of so many women.

Through this event, we recognize the spirits of the women who were murdered, or remain missing. We strive to bring awareness and continue to seek justice so that their lives will be forever remembered with honour and respect.

We are grateful to the individuals who organized the roundtable. Special thanks and recognition go out to the organizing committee. The committee was made up of a group of dedicated individuals from Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society, Social Workers for Indigenous Social Justice (SWISJ), The City of Calgary, and 12 Community Safety Initiative.

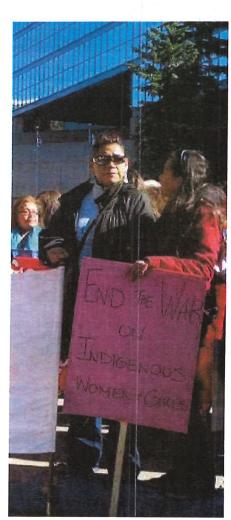
Special thanks to the Elders and cultural advisors Victoria Crowchild, Patrick Deranger, and Doreen Roy for their guidance and wisdom. Thank you to the United Way who provided financial support for the event, and to the two young women who prepared, and served, bagged lunches.

The Roundtable for Missing and Murdered Indigenous women was a sacred event because of the immense loss of life, and the grief felt by the families and community. We asked families to bare their souls and to tell a story of their missing loved one. It was necessary to ask for spiritual guidance, strength and support from the elders through this time. In doing so, we asked for protection of spirit, as well as recognition that these missing and murdered loved ones will forever be in our hearts.

Statistics of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women

- According to a RCMP-led study of known incidents across Canada between 1980 and 2012, 1,017 aboriginal women have been murdered and 164 are missing. While these numbers are very significant, it is believed that these statistics are inaccurate and incomplete. [1]
- Alberta has the second highest number of cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada. There were 206 missing and murdered women and girls in Alberta between 1980 to 2012. In those cases where the information is known, the vast majority (89%) of these women were mothers. [2]
- Indigenous women and girls are far more likely than other Canadian women and girls to experience violence and to die as a result. Between 1997 and 2000, the rate of homicide over-

- all for Aboriginal women was 5.4 per 100,000 almost seven times higher than the rate for non-Aboriginal women, at 0.8 per 100,000. [3]
- In 2012, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) expressed concern about the levels of sexual exploitation of Aboriginal girls and the failure of authorities to fully investigate when those girls have gone missing or were murdered. [4]
- According to the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC), Aboriginal women are more likely to be killed by a stranger than non-Aboriginal women, and nearly half of the murders are unsolved. [5]
- In 2010 the government stopped funding NWAC's data initiative on the murders and disap-



pearances of Indigenous women, and it did not renew funding for the organization's statistical monitoring of cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. [6] As a result, no comprehensive sex— and race—disaggregated data to track the numbers of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls are available since 2010.

- Amnesty International published a report on Canada's missing and murdered Indigenous women in 2004. Among other findings, the report concluded that, "Despite assurances to the contrary, police in Canada have often failed to provide Indigenous women with an adequate standard of protection." [7]



About these statistics

Analysis of the numbers of missing and murdered Indigenous women is problematic.

As a statistical picture of missing and murdered Indigenous women, the RCMP report (May 2014) has important gaps that need to be acknowledged. The statistical figures are generally a national look, with reflection of provincial boundaries and not Treaty boundaries.

The exact methodology used to collect data remains unknown at the time of this report. Attempts to contact the RCMP and KARE (missing person's unit of the RCMP) have been unsuccessful.

With these unknown variables, the actual numbers are likely to be much higher for Indigenous women. We are therefore reliant on NGO's and the United Nations data collection.

Regarding solved cases, access to data from the RCMP and Calgary Police Service was not given at the time of the report although requested. Data is shared amongst policing agencies and Aboriginal Affairs, but inexplicably, not to the families and agencies that assist grieving families.

Most recently, the acquittal of Cindy Gladue's accused murderer, despite evidence that he inflicted the wound that caused her death, intensified these discussions of missing and murdered Indigenous women.

Those who participated in the roundtable echoed these feelings of lack of support for the families left behind, and were frustrated by many unanswered questions about their cases by the police. These families have criticized the authorities for failing to adequately investigate these crimes. They described dismissive attitudes from police officers working on their cases, as well lack of resources allocated to families.

The Stories of Seven Families

Seven family members spoke of their loss of a loved one at the Roundtable.

The families showed great strength and determination as they told their stories, stressing the importance of each personal story, asserting that each loss is so much more than just another "statistic" or "dead Indian"

Their stories are told here in the order they were shared at the round-table.

Speaker One

Our first speaker was a community elder and author. She talked about her sister, who was murdered three decades ago. Her family's grief remains, as the family is left with so many unanswered questions.

She spoke of the ongoing trauma that has continued to affect her adult life: from addictions to family dysfunction through generations, and the difficulty her family has had to move forward from this loss. She stressed the need for healing for all community members, men in particular, as they are hurting as well.

She maintains that culture and spirituality helped her to survive.

"We must have our traditional component with the programs that we have and use our Elders".

Speaker two

The next speaker lost her sister to a vicious and violent attack in a random murder on July 2007. Her killers remain at large.

She spoke of how she believes that Indian Residential School contributed to her sister's death, saying, "She was an IRS survivor – learned rudimentary skills, not social skills, parenting and relationships".

She added that most Canadians are not emotionally attached to the suffering felt by families left behind, saying that "If they did a national inquiry they would be able to hear precisely how we are suffering with the loss of families and nothing is being done. What does justice mean to a First Nations woman? I don't know because I have never seen equal justice in Canada."

"The ways of my people are gentleness, compassion and perseverance – you can beat me, you can kill me but I am never going to let go and I will not stop until I see justice for my sister."

Speaker Three

Fear and post-trauma continues to affect many families of violence and murder. This speaker was abducted by serial killer Thomas Svekla, who had put her in a hockey bag, but she managed to escape. Her cousin was also abducted, and was then murdered by Robert Pickton. The speaker's aunt was also murdered. Her family's loss has never been resolved.

"My mother and grandmother still cry for me and the women that were murdered. Because of that pain that I was living through, it affected my self-worth, and I was living in a violent relationship," she says.

She feels let down by the justice system with very little support to deal with the issue.

"Stop sweeping us under the rug," she says.

"Hear us."

Speaker Four

With the support of her husband, this mother, grandmother spoke. He held her to give her strength as she told the story of their family's immeasurable grief.

This woman's daughter was murdered, leaving her own baby daughter motherless. Her killer is still at large. She says, "There is no ju-

"What does justice mean to a First Nations woman?

I don't know because I have never seen equal justice in Canada." stice."

She talked about many unanswered questions and the need for justice to heal from her daughter's murder. Based on her experience with the police and justice system she was not confident that a solution would be found.

"My granddaughter was just a baby then. Now she is eight years old. She only remembers one picture of her mom...and she is starting to look like my daughter."

"I cry constantly and I miss my daughter," she says.

"Hopefully I will find closure."

Speaker Five

Several family members stood together to lend support as the speaker who told the story of the loss of a young mother, and a four year old left behind.

Despite filing a missing person report this family stated there was no official response from the RCMP. They went to the extent of pestering the RCMP. The family put up posters, did ground searches and interviewed family members. One family member reported to the police that this woman had left her home in the middle of the night with a man. They received a tip that a paternal family member had killed her, and that she had been stuffed into a freezer.

After some time a ground search was conducted and her body was found 200 yards from the house.

"She was placed there after they knew we were relentlessly looking for her," the speaker said.

"We tried to get the RCMP involved but they all they said was, 'We are sorry, we are doing the best that we can.'"

But "Their best isn't good enough."

"It has been swept under the rug."

Speaker Six

A staff member from Awo Taan Healing Lodge told her story of two family members who were missing and murdered.

Her mother, a residential school survivor, murdered her abuser and she went to jail. She stated her mother suffered from Post -Traumatic Stress

"I cry constantly, and I miss my daughter." Disorder, although she remained undiagnosed at the time.

Her two family members' murders remain unsolved. Because of the lack of support she still feels isolated, with no one to talk to about these tragedies that are unimaginable.

"There should not be confidentiality where death and murder are concerned," she says.

"Stop sweeping us under the rug."

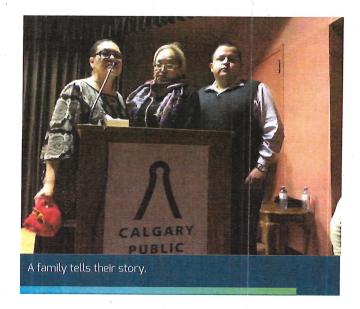
Speaker Seven

A daughter, unable to speak publicly of her mother's murder because of unresolved grief and anguish, emailed her story.

"It is very discouraging that the issue of Murdered and Missing Indigenous women and girls is taken so lightly. Many in society believe that negativity written about murdered and missing Indigenous women; the labels that media attach to them, taking away their individuality and humanness".

"Everyone talks about it but many more people need to be involved with this issue and need to take time to care and to understand. Also, those who do not understand need to be educated about Indigenous people so that they begin to care/understand".

She went on to say that she constantly talks about safety plans with her children and grandchildren, feeling that she must do this



Summary

These women were mothers, sisters, daughters, aunties, and grandmothers. They are still loved by those they left behind.

These stories point to barriers that continue to exist, including a lack of assistance and support for families who have lost a loved one. These families have little or no recourse as they search for answers. As one speaker pleaded, "All I ask for is that we have a voice".

In Spring 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission completed a report that summarized the stories of 6,000 residential school survivors from coast to coast across Canada.

Many of the storytellers talked about unresolved grief and trauma, loss of language, culture and ceremony. They spoke of grief and loss of loved ones due to violence and homicide and

the perpetuation of negative stereotypes of Indigenous women.

Included in their recommendations was the call for a national inquiry and building safer communities across Turtle Island (North America). They also call for healing and reconciliation in partnership with all Canadians.

Awo Taan Healing Lodge remains committed to the issue and will continue to support the families who spoke at the event. Their stories cannot be forgotten. Rather, we must honour the lives of those so tragically taken and re-tell these stories until we are able to breakdown the constructs of racism, oppression and colonization.

Recommendations

Awo Taan Healing Lodge and our community partners have made head-way in the past two decades in bringing awareness to the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women. We also recognize there is still much work to be done.

We continue to work collaboratively with our partners, community and funders on the recommendations and strategies listed below with a goal of safer communities, healing and wellness.

Recommendation 1 - Continue to support and follow up with families of missing and murdered Indigenous women in Calgary and surrounding area.

Recommendation 2 – Create advocacy and healing environments for families of missing and murdered Indigenous women.

Recommendation 3 – Create a sacred place for people to gather, reconcile and to begin the healing process.

Recommendation 4 – Create a Provincial Aboriginal Advisory Committee on family violence.

Recommendation 5 – Inclusion in the "Family Violence Hurts Everyone", A Framework to End Family Violence in Alberta document.

Recommendation 6 – Propose to City of Calgary city council to endorse, and pass, a resolution calling for the Government of Canada to conduct a National Inquiry into the issue of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women.

Recommendation 7 - Create culturally appropriate services for families who are impacted. For example: support for court room attendance, liason between police and families.

Recommendation 8 – Create a 1-800 number / Clearing House or a 24 hour hotline for families of missing and murdered women.

Recommendation 9 – Continue to provide practical resources for education and awareness including fact sheets, safety plans etc.

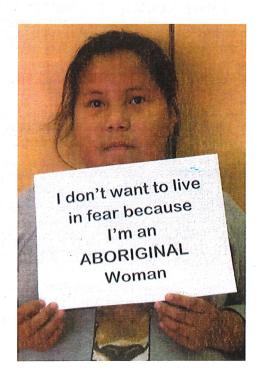
Recommendation 10 – Improve accessibility to the police investigative team by families.

Recommendation 11 – Support families making reports to the police.

Recommendation 12 – Work in partnership with Aboriginal women's representatives to determine the most effective strategies for overcoming barriers.

Recommendation 13 – Call for a National Commission of Inquiry and a National Action Plan.

Recommendation 14 - Work toward building safer communities for Indigenous women.



References

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- 7. Amnesty International, "Stolen Sisters: A Human Rights Response to Discrimination and Violence against Indigenous Women in Canada," AMR 20/003/2004, October 2004, http://www.amnesty.ca/research/reports/stolen-sisters-a-human-rights-response-to-discrimination-and-violence-against-indig (accessed December 13, 2012), p. 2.

