

Press Release

'Sisters in Spirit': NWAC calling on Feds for \$10 Million to deal with violence against Aboriginal Women

(Ottawa, ON, January 31, 2004) As the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) gets ready to launch its "Sisters in Spirit" campaign, there have been nine more DNA matches of women found on the Pickton pig farm in Port Coquitlam, British Columbia. This is a harsh reminder of the dangers of being an Aboriginal woman in Canada and it demonstrates the necessity of this powerful campaign.

"Sisters in Spirit" is a campaign being launched by NWAC to raise awareness of the 500 missing or murdered Aboriginal women in Canada. The one-year, national campaign will be launched on March 22nd, 2004. It calls on the federal government to establish a \$10 million fund to support research and education related to violence against Aboriginal women.

The research will document the number of and circumstances around the missing or killed Aboriginal women. A public education process will enhance understanding of the underlying causes of violence against Aboriginal women. NWAC would like to see educational workshops on the missing women and their families, and the creation of a hotline and registry to report disappearances and register statistics.

"This is an outrage", said Terri Brown, President of NWAC, "even as we issue this press release, families are giving notice that their daughters are missing, and are seeking the public's help to find them. These families live in constant fear and uncertainty until they find out what happened to their loved ones."

Brown further stated, "First and foremost, we remember the spirit of our sisters and their families left behind to grieve and mourn the loss of their loved ones. This is one of the darkest periods in the history of colonialism. However, we are not alone because we have the support of each other and that of our ancestors on the other side."

NWAC has the support of the United and Anglican Churches of Canada, the ecumenical coalition KAIROS, the Law Commission of Canada and Amnesty International. These groups have provided the initial funding and in-kind assistance to produce information for distribution across the country.

NWAC's regional groups will hold demonstrations or campaigns in memory of the missing and murdered women in their own regions. NWAC is asking every person, community and organization in Canada, who is concerned with this human rights violation against Aboriginal women, to take the time to join in the campaign. They may contact the Sisters in Spirit campaign by calling 1-800-461-4043, ext. 229 or by email at sistersinspirit@nwac-hq.org.