

The Canadian government must publicly commit to supporting the Sisters In Spirit Initiative

For the last five years, we have stood alongside the Native Women's Association of Canada to promote vigils across Canada to honour the lives of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls. In these five years, the Sisters in Spirit vigils have become a genuine national movement, with events in more than 80 cities and communities.

The vigils in which we participated were part of a larger programme of work by Sisters in Spirit that included vital research, public education, police and government engagement, and support to affected families. We have no doubt that the work of Sisters in Spirit has played a crucial role in building public awareness and advancing the necessary solutions to uphold the rights and safety of Aboriginal women and girls.

In fact, the federal government has publicly acknowledged the importance of these vigils and the other vital research and advocacy work carried out by Sisters in Spirit.

Therefore, we are profoundly concerned that there is still no secure funding in place to ensure the continuation of the Native Women's Association of Canada's Sisters in Spirit Initiative.

On the occasion of the most recent Sisters in Spirit vigils, we called for a commitment from all Canadians that systemic forms of violence and indifference to the lives and wellbeing of Aboriginal women and girls must end. All levels of government need to work collaboratively with Aboriginal women, including the Native Women's Association of Canada and other key stakeholders, on issues of justice, safety, economic security and the well-being of Aboriginal women and girls.

As individuals and as organizations, we are calling on the federal government to make a clear public commitment to:

- supporting the ongoing work of the Sisters in Spirit Initiative;
- providing sustained, long-term funding for research and advocacy led by Aboriginal women;
- ensuring that Aboriginal peoples' organizations, including Aboriginal women's organizations, are centrally involved in the identification and delivery of effective solutions to address the high rates of violence faced by First Nations, Inuit and Métis women;
- working with Aboriginal women's organizations to develop a comprehensive national plan of action consistent with the scale and severity of violence faced by Aboriginal women and girls.

We encourage all others who are concerned for human rights and justice to join us in the call.

Endorsed by

Advocacy Standing Committee of the Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women
(OCTEVAW)

Amnesty International Canada

Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies

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This statement is open for additional signatures.