

The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada: A step towards reconciliation and peace

Wendake, August 3, 2016 – The Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec (RCAAQ) welcomes the launch of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada. The RCAAQ is also pleased by the nomination of five Aboriginal commissioners. The commissioners, who will begin their work on September 1, 2016, have been mandated to examine the situation and produce a report on the causes of this violence and the systemic racism toward Aboriginal women and girls. Following the 2015 federal elections, the Government of Canada announced its commitment to hold a national inquiry into these human dramas experienced by thousands of women and girls, who, let us remember, are our mothers, our sisters and our wives. The RCAAQ congratulates the Government of Canada for respecting its commitment—at long last a sign of recognition that justice will be had. The RCAAQ considers the National Inquiry to be a significant step toward the peaceful cohabitation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples, a step imbued with mutual respect and based on joint action.

For RCAAQ president Christine Jean, the National Inquiry is part of the answer to improving the living conditions of Aboriginal women. “Concrete actions must be taken now to put an end to the violence against Aboriginal women and girls and to support existing initiatives. However, we also know that the National Inquiry will not solve all the problems, particularly those regarding the actions of Quebec’s police force. This responsibility falls to the Government of Quebec alone and this issue must be examined with great attention.” Last April, the RCAAQ called for a public inquiry into how police treated and enforced the law against Aboriginal people in Quebec following the denunciation of sexual and physical abuse cases committed by Sûreté du Québec officers against Aboriginal women.

The Native Friendship Centres that are members of the RCAAQ can be found in Chibougamau, Senneterre, Val-d’Or, Montréal, Joliette, Trois-Rivières, La Tuque and Sept-Îles. Two Friendship Centres are currently being developed in Roberval and Maniwaki. The Native Friendship Centres of Quebec work to improve the quality of life of urban Aboriginal people, promote their culture and build bridges between peoples.

– 30 –

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