



NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Aboriginal Relations
and Reconciliation

Gathering For B.C. Families of Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women

VANCOUVER – B.C. and Aboriginal leadership partners have agreed to jointly plan and host a family gathering to provide a safe and supportive place for families of missing and murdered Aboriginal women to heal together by sharing their stories and their strength, and identifying a path forward to end violence against Aboriginal women and girls.

B.C. family members of missing and murdered Aboriginal women have long emphasized the importance of bringing together as many family members as possible to share their experiences and stories. Recent reports by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Standing Committee on the Status of Women speak to the need for broad reconciliation policy in order to address violence against Aboriginal women and girls.

The gathering, proposed for this fall or spring 2016, follows up on the inaugural National Roundtable on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women held in Ottawa in February, 2015. John Rustad, Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation attended the Roundtable with a provincial delegation, which included Aboriginal family members.

On June 13, 2014, Aboriginal leadership and the Province of British Columbia signed the *Memorandum of Understanding Regarding Stopping Violence Against Aboriginal Women and Girls (MOU)*. The MOU signatories subsequently committed to developing the MOU Joint Partners' Table (JPT). The overarching goal of the JPT is to facilitate collaboration between MOU signatories on shared priorities, core relationship and implementation principles, intended outcomes, and actions needed to stop violence against Aboriginal women and girls.

The MOU signatories met on June 16, 2015 to mark the one-year anniversary, review progress and focus on next steps, which include the commitment to host a family gathering in B.C., working in partnership with families and impacted communities. Following the family gathering, the JPT will work to implement identified actions.

Quotes:

Christy Clark, Premier of British Columbia –

"I thank the Joint Partners' Table, the signatories of the Memorandum of Understanding, for agreeing to help plan and co-host this important event for the families of missing and murdered

Aboriginal women and girls. Your willingness to work in collaboration with the Province is vital to ensuring a safe, more secure future for the vulnerable.”

John Rustad, Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation –

“The cases of murdered and missing women and girls are tragic for the families, their friends, and our entire province. It’s my hope the stories and experiences shared at B.C.’s Family Gathering will help strengthen families and communities, and provide a valuable legacy for the victims. As part of the Vision for a Violence Free BC Strategy, the Province is working in partnership with Aboriginal women, organizations and Aboriginal leadership to end violence and support Aboriginal women and children.”

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, Union of BC Indian Chiefs –

“We are hopeful that the gathering will provide much needed support to families who have tragically lost their loved ones. The heartbreaking death of Paige Gautier, described in the Representative for Children and Youth’s recent report “Paige’s Story” demonstrates the institutionalized attitude of indifference to the safety of Aboriginal women and girls that we absolutely must change.”

Cheryl Casimer, First Nations Summit Political Executive –

“The First Nations Summit fully supports BC family members of missing and murdered Aboriginal women in their call to bring together as many family members as possible to collectively share their experiences and to support one another in their journey of healing. The proposed family gathering is a positive and critical first step in this important journey. We also encourage the BC Government to formally endorse and support all recommendations recently announced by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in the summary of their final report, in particular those related to missing and murdered Indigenous women.”

Chief Maureen Chapman, BC Assembly of First Nations Spokesperson –

“Reconciliation takes many forms, key among which is healing, and advancing reconciliation will require strengthened partnerships between our citizens, organizations, and all levels of government. The Family Gathering is an excellent example of both. It is one step among many that we will have to take to honour victims of violence, provide space for the families of missing and murdered women and girls to heal, and to develop actions to ensure we can do better for those who are still at risk.”

President Bruce Dumont, Métis Nation British Columbia –

“A gathering of the families of the missing and murdered Aboriginal women is strongly supported by Métis Nation BC as an important step in the healing process for the families who have lost their mothers, daughters and sisters. This is a loss that will affect the families forever, and whatever we can do to help them cope and heal, we will do. ”

Learn More:

Memorandum of Understanding Regarding Stopping Violence Against Aboriginal Women and Girls: <http://ow.ly/MUUFu>

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