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# FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

## News Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

December 11, 2007

### **First Nations Leadership Council calls for inquiry into case of murdered women of Downtown Eastside**

**Coast Salish Territory/Vancouver** – The First Nations Leadership Council is calling for an inquiry into the disappearance and subsequent murder of dozens of women from the Downtown Eastside in the wake of the guilty verdict in the Robert “Willy” Pickton trial.

“Based on media reports of the testimony and evidence heard in the Pickton trial, the public should be very concerned about the extreme delay in the time it took to start the police investigation into the disappearance of women from the downtown eastside”, said Grand Chief Edward John, a member of the First Nations Summit political executive. “Many of these women were from First Nations communities around this province. In the interest of public safety and the confidence of BC First Nations and all British Columbians, we are calling on the Solicitor General to launch a full public inquiry into the timing and thoroughness of the police investigation of Robert William Pickton and the missing women in the downtown eastside”.

“This verdict brings to a close a sad chapter in the lives of six women. Yet there are many other Aboriginal women either missing or living in a very vulnerable state”, said BC Assembly of First Nations Regional Chief A-in-chut (Shawn Atleo). “We must look at the broader picture and address the poverty, substance abuse, and systemic issues in society that has contributed to the marginalization of First Nations people and especially First Nations women,” he added.

“Regardless of the outcome of this trial and the upcoming trial involving the other 20 women, it is absolutely essential that there be a public inquiry,” said Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs. “When the families and friends of the missing and murdered women attempted to report their loved ones missing, those in authority callously ignored and arrogantly dismissed their desperate pleas for action even though fingers were pointed directly at the Pickton farm. All police and civic officials responsible for this tragic screw-up must be held fully accountable.”

Pickton was found guilty of six counts of second degree murder. He still faces 20 more counts in a possible second trial. Attorney General Wally Oppal says a second trial is not a certainty. The First Nations Leadership Council agrees with the families the second trial should go ahead giving the families of the other 20 women their day in court.

*The First Nations Leadership Council is comprised of the political executives of the BC Assembly of First Nations, First Nations Summit, and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs. The Council works together to politically represent the interests of First Nations in British Columbia and develop strategies and actions to bring about significant and substantive changes to government policy that will benefit all First Nations in British Columbia.*

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