



Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women

The missing and murdered Aboriginal women are our mothers, grandmothers, sisters, daughters, aunts, nieces, cousins, partners and wives and they are missed and honoured every day.

For years Aboriginal families and communities have pointed to the high number of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls, in 2014 the Royal Canadian Mounted Police finally addressed the issue by releasing [*Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women: A National Operational Overview*](#). They report 1,181 police recorded incidents of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls across Canada over the past three decades. The number is significantly higher than previously thought. Aboriginal women make up 16% of all murdered women, and 11% of missing women, yet only 4.3% of the female Canadian population¹.

Rates of Violence Against Aboriginal Women and Girls:

- Between 1997 and 2000, the average homicide rate for Aboriginal people was 8.8 per 100,000 population, almost seven times higher than for non-Aboriginal people (1.3 per 100,000 population)²
- Aboriginal women and girls are three times more likely than non-Aboriginal women to report having been a victim of violent crime; this higher rate of victimization was seen in stranger, acquaintance, and intimate partner violence³
- Women in the sex trade are very vulnerable; between 1991 and 2012, 225 women involved in prostitution were killed in Canada⁴; 45% of these homicides remain unsolved
- Neither the General Social Survey nor Statistics Canada's Homicide Survey collects data on disappearances
- Aboriginal women and girls are more likely to be killed by a stranger than non-Aboriginal women; almost 17% of those charged were strangers⁵

¹ Aboriginal female population data based on Census data and the 2011 Statistics Canada National Household Survey.

² Government of Canada(2013). National Victims of Crime Awareness Week.

³ Statistics Canada. (2011). *Violent victimization of Aboriginal women in the Canadian provinces, 2009*. Ottawa: Minister of Industry.

⁴ Homicide Survey 1991

⁵ Native Women's Association of Canada. (2010c). *What Their Stories Tell Us: Research findings from the Sisters in Spirit initiative*. Ottawa: NWAC.

Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women and Girls in Ontario:

To understand and bring awareness to the tragedy, the Native Women Association of Canada (NWAC) began research for their Sisters in Spirit initiative in 2005, documenting known cases of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and children.

NWAC's research found that:

- 80% of cases are murder in Ontario, higher than the national average of 67%
- 65% of these murders took place in a residential dwelling
- 16% of these murders took place in an open area, slightly higher than the national rate of 14.5%
- 90% of the missing and murdered Aboriginal women in Ontario were mothers
- 64% of cases occurred in urban areas (particularly in Thunder Bay, Toronto and Ottawa)⁶

Root Causes of Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women and Girls:

- Aboriginal women and girls are the group most at risk for experiencing violence in Canada; “this must be understood in the context of a colonial strategy that sought to dehumanize Aboriginal women”⁷
- Colonial and patriarchal values devalue the traditional cultural and governance roles of Aboriginal women and girls
- The impacts of colonization, residential schools, involvement with child welfare and intergenerational trauma are factors that put Aboriginal women and girls at risk
- These systemic issues have directly caused poor health and mental health, economic insecurity, homelessness, lack of justice, addictions and low educational attainment for Aboriginal women and girls, placing them in precarious situations where the risk for violence is greater

Aboriginal Women and Girls are Valued

- Aboriginal women and girls are honoured and valued members of our families and communities; they are our mothers, grandmothers, sisters, daughters, aunties, nieces, cousins, partners and wives
- The roles of Aboriginal women and girls at the centre of our families and communities must be honoured and restored

⁶ Native Women's Association of Canada. (2010a). Fact Sheet: Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women and Girls in Ontario. Ottawa: NWAC.

⁷ Ibid.

- The *United Nations* is devoted to the protection and promotion of Indigenous women - “States shall take measures, in conjunction within Indigenous peoples, to ensure that Indigenous women and children enjoy the full protection and guarantees against all forms of violence and discrimination”⁸

What is the Ontario Native Women’s Association Doing?

- ONWA honours the roles of Aboriginal women and girls at the centre of our families and communities
- ONWA provides culture based services for the families of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls
- ONWA and the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres have written a [Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Aboriginal Women](#)
- ONWA sits with other provincial Aboriginal organizations at the Joint Working Group on Violence Against Aboriginal Women
- ONWA continually advocates for a full National Inquiry on missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls
- ONWA hosts a Sisters In Spirit vigil each October 4th to honour the lives of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls

What is the Provincial Government Doing?

- Canada’s premiers have supported Aboriginal organizations in calling for a National Inquiry on missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls
- 10 Ontario Ministries participate in the Joint Working Group on Violence Against Aboriginal Women
- The Ministry of the Attorney General has funding available for Financial Assistance for Families of Homicide Victims initiative. For more information, call the Ministry 1-855-467-4344 or contact the Ontario Native Women’s Association at 1-800-667-0816

What is the Federal Government Doing?

- The parliamentary Special Committee On Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls has recently ceased to exist as a result of the proroguing of parliament on 13 September 2013
- The federal government has refused to convene a non-partisan National Inquiry on missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls
- The RCMP and Winnipeg Police Service have established *Project Devote* to address unsolved homicides and missing person cases

⁸ United Nations General Assembly (2007). United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

- In January 2013 the RCMP's National Centre for Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains announced the launch of a national website (www.canadasmissing.ca) to engage the public in reporting tips and information related to missing persons cases
- In September 2014 the government released a [*National Action Plan to Address Family Violence and Violent Crimes Against Aboriginal Women and Girls*](#)

What can I do?

- Honour the roles of Aboriginal women and girls who are at the centre of our families and communities
- Participate in a Sisters In Spirit vigil or [virtual vigil](#) on October 4th