



## ***Submission to the Government of Canada on the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls***

*A joint submission by co-chairs of the Yukon Roundtable on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls: Yukon Government, Kwanlin Dun First Nation, Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council*

In Yukon, we have been working on the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls for many years, through a variety of collaborative efforts between Government of Yukon, First Nation governments, Aboriginal women's organizations, RCMP and communities. We appreciate the opportunity for input into the design of the national inquiry, to ensure that it is a meaningful and sensitive process that leads to national change in this country -- change that fully considers the perspectives and needs of Northern Indigenous women and girls.

We believe, where possible, it is important that work at the local and national levels be connected and collaborative. To this end, an advisory committee was established to direct a Family Gathering and a Yukon Roundtable on MMIWG, prior to the second National Roundtable and in preparation for the national inquiry.

In December 2015, Yukon Government supported the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle to coordinate a gathering for families of MMIWG to ensure family's voices were heard. In February 2016, Government of Yukon, the Kwanlin Dun First Nation Government and the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council co-hosted a Yukon Roundtable. This event brought together governments, agencies, communities, families and loved ones to discuss current initiatives and identify areas for further collaboration.

We hope our input will help inform the national inquiry's design so that it can facilitate and support a fair, responsive, and effective process.

### **Key issues for Yukon:**

The Yukon co-chairs support an Inquiry that is truly national in scope, with participation of Provinces and Territories.

- Recognizing the unique history, character and culture of the Northern territories and the Yukon in particular:
  - Recognition of Yukon's self-governing First Nations and the government-to-government relationship is key.
  - Yukon's unique relationship with the federal government, recent history of devolution of responsibilities, continuing federal jurisdiction over non-self-governing

First Nations – history of challenges with ‘on and off- reserve’ funding in Northern jurisdictions.

- Recognizing the role of RCMP ‘M’ Division – and recent protocols with Yukon women’s organizations
- Integrate cultural practices and ceremonies into the inquiry design – take time to reach out to individual Nations and incorporate their traditions in meetings and interactions.
- Support for participation in the inquiry through provision of resources (childcare, travel expenses, etc.) to support input to the inquiry.
- Recognizing the importance of traveling to rural communities (or at least regions) and facilitating participation outside of urban centres. Inquiries in the North that have gone to the people (the regional and community hearings held by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission are an example) have been the most meaningful and accessible.
- Continuing the collaborative Yukon approach to work on missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.
- Recognizing the crucial importance of listening to the voices of Indigenous women and girls directly, and the long-established Yukon women’s groups who have years of experience working on issues of safety, security and empowerment of Yukon Indigenous women.
- Ensure the inquiry is informed and understands the work that has gone on in Yukon to-date.
- Recognize that the scope of the inquiry should be broad enough to address the root causes of violence against Indigenous women, and allow for the inclusion of the experiences of survivors of violence as well as the families of those who are missing.

**Response to discussion questions on designing the inquiry:**

1. Who do you think should provide views or have an opportunity to participate in the inquiry?
  - First and foremost – Indigenous women. Yukon Indigenous women have lived experience with this issue. Hearing their voices is not only essential to an informed process, the process itself is part of valuing and hearing women and changing relationships with the state.
  - Survivors, family members and loved ones, who have experiences with the justice and social response to violence, and will have key recommendations for change.
  - Yukon Indigenous women’s organizations, who have years of experience working on these issues.
  - Yukon First Nations and Council for Yukon First Nations (CYFN)

- Grassroots and front-line organizations, other equality-seeking organizations and advocacy groups
- Government of Yukon
- Youth, in particular, young women and young mothers

2. What are the key issues that need to be addressed by the inquiry?

For Yukon:

- identify the underlying causes for the high levels of violence and victimization of Indigenous women and girls including gender-based violence, racism, poverty and the ongoing effects of colonialism, including residential schooling
- review the effectiveness of current programs, policies and governance structures to address those causes, and identify best practices
- the incorporation of a response-based approach to violence, which honours the resilience and resistance of victims and the importance of using language and social response aligned with this approach
- Inclusion of Two-spirit and transgendered peoples in the inquiry
- The inclusion of men and boys as part of solution to violence

3. How can the process be set up so it results in providing concrete and practical recommendations for specific actions?

- Allow for immediate and interim actions throughout the inquiry process; don't wait until the inquiry is over to act on recommendations
- Incorporate accountability and measures by which to hold service agencies and others accountable

4. How can cultural practices and ceremonies be incorporated into the design of the inquiry?

- It is important to ensure that the leaders of the inquiry and those involved in the design take the time to research and reach out to Yukon First Nations and understand the diversity of cultures in the Yukon. It is then important to incorporate culturally-relevant ceremony into the process.

5. How is it best to involve the families, loved ones and survivors in the inquiry?
  - Provide social, spiritual and financial support that is culturally relevant to encourage safe participation in the process
  - Use existing networks already established – Yukon Family Gathering held in December 2015
  - Follow recommendations from the Yukon Family Gathering held in December 2015 and any future family gatherings
  
6. How should Indigenous groups (National Aboriginal Organizations, front-line workers, band councils, etc.) be included in the inquiry?
  - Ensure that the inquiry is aware of the specific organizations (Council of Yukon First Nations, Yukon Indigenous Women’s Organizations (Liard Aboriginal Women’s Society, Yukon Aboriginal Women’s Council, Whitehorse Aboriginal Women’s Circle), other community organizations (Skookum Jim Friendship Centre etc.) and relationships that operate in the Yukon
  - There is a need for good understanding, in the national inquiry design, of the organization of self-governing and non-self-governing First Nations in the Territory, the role of the Council of Yukon First Nations and the protocols associated with these bodies
  
7. What supports (health supports, counselling, translation, etc.) may be needed during the inquiry for individuals who are participating?
  - Ensure that supports and support people are offered by Indigenous people and that supports are informed by cultural safety and relevance
  - Use existing support networks established in Yukon for Family Gathering, Pre-inquiry design meeting and Yukon Regional Roundtable
  - Explore developing capacity in rural communities, such as working with First Nations, to provide support services.
  - Ensure that support mechanisms are clearly communicated to participants in advance of the inquiry
  - Provide support pre and post- inquiry
  - Provide participants with clarity and open communication around expectations and outcomes of the inquiry from the outset