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Prime Minister Justin Trudeau
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
Canada
K1A 0A6

November 5, 2015

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau:

Re: National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women and Girls

As a group of longstanding feminist activists on issues of violence against women and girls, we are writing to you in relation to the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women and Girls that you have committed to hold. We commend you for that commitment on behalf of our country -- which is long overdue. Our group, made up of front line violence against women community leaders and senior violence against women scholars, has been working together for the past four years under a SSHRC funded partnership grant, entitled Community First: Impacts of Community Engagement. We bring a wealth of experience and knowledge to the issue of violence against women and girls.

This long awaited Inquiry is of huge significance to Aboriginal women and girls, to Aboriginal peoples, to the women and girls of Canada and to the people of Canada. The Inquiry process and outcomes will be under the scrutiny of the world. At its core, this Inquiry is about Aboriginal women's and girls' right to substantive equality, safety and security of the person. Through this Inquiry, Canadian society needs to see and learn respect for Aboriginal women. The Inquiry needs to model the respect that it seeks to promote. We urge you to take the time needed to make sure that the Inquiry is done with integrity and dignity. The only way that this can be ensured is by having Aboriginal women in a leadership role, from the Inquiry's planning to its completion. The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) is the national voice of First Nations and Metis women in Canada. As the sole national Aboriginal women's organization, NWAC must play the primary leadership role at all stages of the inquiry -- pre-inquiry consultations, inquiry set up, through the inquiry process and in the implementation of inquiry recommendations.

As a first step, we ask that you set up a pre-Inquiry consultation with groups and experts in the field, with NWAC playing a lead role. The consultation would be to develop a plan for the Inquiry including its mandate, terms of reference, criteria for

appointments to the Inquiry panel, and procedures and processes that would enable the Inquiry to fulfill its mandate and allow full and fair participation. Under NWAC's leadership, the plan would make sure that the Inquiry stays true to its purpose and maintains the focus on Aboriginal women and girls.

NWAC will need resources to enable them to play this leadership role. We urge you to provide NWAC with adequate funds to enable them to successfully fulfill this critical mandate.

In order for Aboriginal women to be able to trust the process and be willing to tell their painful stories, they need to see and know that the Inquiry is led by Aboriginal women. You cannot let this important process be yet another example of colonial imperialism or patriarchal dominance. You have, on a number of occasions, demonstrated strong leadership in recognizing and promoting the equality of women and the importance of women's leadership. We trust that you will show this same leadership and commitment to women's equality in the process that you establish for the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women and Girls.

We look forward to working with you to end violence against women and girls in Canada.

Sincerely yours,



Kim Pate
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Sallows Chair in Human Rights, University of Saskatchewan College of Law
Executive Director, Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies

Diana Majury
Academic Co-Lead, CFICE VAW Hub
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On behalf of the CFICE VAW Hub:
Bonnie Brayton, National Executive Director DAWN Canada
Leighann Burns, Executive Director, Harmony House, Ottawa

Gail Gallagher, Senior Manager, Violence Prevention & Safety Native Women's Association of Canada

Yasmin Jiwani, Professor, Department of Communication Studies and Journalism, Concordia University

Holly Johnson, Associate Professor, Department of Criminology, University of Ottawa

Lee Lakeman, Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres

Barbara MacQuarrie, Community Director, Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children, Faculty of Education, Western University

Sunny Marriner, Executive Director, Ottawa Rape Crisis centre

Diane Matte, Coordonnatrice Concertation des Luttes Contre L'Exploitation Sexuelle

Charlene Senn, Professor, Department of Psychology and Women's and Gender Studies, University of Windsor

Cc: Dawn Harvard, President, Native Women's Association of Canada
Claudette Dumont-Smith, Executive Director, Native Women's Association of Canada
Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs
Patricia Hajdu, Minister of the Status of Women
Carla Qualtrough, Minister of Sport and Disability
Jody Wilson-Raybould, Minister of Justice and Attorney-General of Canada
Thomas Mulcair, M.P., Leader New Democratic Party of Canada
Elizabeth May, M.P., Leader Green Party of Canada
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