

Statement on the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and Calls for Justice

Ottawa – June 27, 2019 The Child Welfare League of Canada (CWLC) witnessed the closing ceremony of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. We welcome the Final Report and the related Calls for Justice and thank the families of those who were lost, the survivors, and all others who shared and heard the truth. We wish to express our deep sadness to each of the families for the tragic loss of their loved ones.

We acknowledge the role that child welfare and other public systems have played, and the devastating harm that has been inflicted on Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people in Canada, by failing to support families and provide for the needs of those facing mental health issues, substance abuse and addiction, family difficulties and crises in a context of poverty and historical trauma. The National Inquiry deepened our understanding of the root causes of violence against women and girls, linking early childhood trauma and family separation with incidents of violence throughout a person's lifetime.

Restoring the inherent rights of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples to care for their children, families, and communities is at the heart of reconciliation in child welfare. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) recognizes the "right of Indigenous families and communities to retain shared responsibility for the upbringing, training, education and well-being of their children, consistent with the rights of the child." Discussions regarding First Nations, Inuit and Métis jurisdiction over child welfare have been taking place with the introduction of Bill C-92 – *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families*, which received Royal Assent on June 21, 2019. Much work remains to be done to ensure that Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people live in safety, dignity and respect.

First Nations, Inuit, and Métis families must have the same opportunities provided to non-Indigenous families in Canada to safely care for their children. A 2016 Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ruling has resulted in additional funding being provided to First Nations families to better care for their children. However, underlying issues such as inadequate housing, lack of clean water, intimate partner violence, and substance abuse related to trauma still need to be addressed, as they have lasting and devastating effects on First Nations, Inuit and Métis women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people.

CWLC aspires for all children to thrive, to know that they are loved, and to have a strong sense of belonging. Moving forward, CWLC's guiding principles in approaching the work of reconciliation will be grounded in the Touchstones of Hope for Indigenous Children, Youth, and Families, a movement that engages First Nations, Inuit, Métis, and non-Indigenous peoples in the process of open exchange. This movement acknowledges the past and embraces new possibilities for the future, while also recognizing that First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples are in the best position to make decisions regarding the care of their children.

Implementing the National Inquiry's Calls for Justice will require sustained co-development with First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples both on and off reserve. Throughout this process, First

Nations, Inuit and Métis communities must be supported to exercise their inherent rights and all those working with children, youth and families must recognize and honour the strengths, wisdom, and resilience embedded in Indigenous ways of knowing and caring for children and families.

To this, we are deeply committed.



Rachel Gouin, Executive Director

Please join us in reading and sharing the National Inquiry's Calls for Justice through a social media campaign. Film yourself reading one of the Calls for Justice and post it on social media using #MMIWG2S. Tag @CWLC_LBEC and we'll help you spread the word.

Access the Calls for Justice here: <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Calls-Web-Version-EN.docx>

Associated Links

First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada. (n.d.). Touchstones of Hope. Retrieved from <https://fncairingsociety.com/touchstones-hope>.

First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada. (2016). Victory for First Nations children: Fact sheet. Retrieved from https://fncairingsociety.com/sites/default/files/information_sheet_-_chrt_decision.pdf.

Government of Canada. (2019). Bill C-92: An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families. Retrieved from <https://www.parl.ca/DocumentViewer/en/42-1/bill/C-92/first-reading>.

National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. (2019). Reclaiming power and place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Retrieved from <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/>.

United Nations. (2007). United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples.html>.