

March 13, 2015

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister:

On behalf of over 43,000 nurses and health care workers, I write to add our voice to those of countless organizations and individuals across this country, in calling for a national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

This simple request has been echoed by the United Nations and Amnesty International and in Canada by the Assembly of First Nations and The Native Women's Association of Canada. Each of these well-respected bodies have recognized that addressing this national catastrophe warrants a comprehensive set of approaches that, while not limited to a national inquiry, must necessarily include one. The December 2014 report by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights that looked at the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women in British Columbia has come to similar conclusions, adding further impetus to the near universal call for an inquiry.

The British Columbia Nurses' Union has a deep commitment to safeguarding the health and well-being of our members and our communities. We recognize that indigenous communities, in particular, continue to experience serious structural impediments to addressing their health needs. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights observes that "Indigenous women and girls constitute one of the most disadvantaged groups in Canada...[with an] increased vulnerability to violence". The consequence of this is a devastating everyday reality that results in Indigenous women and girls being murdered or going missing at a rate four times higher than the Canadian population.

The British Columbia Nurses' Union calls upon the government of Canada to initiate a coordinated strategy designed to systematically address the structural factors that have resulted in these unprecedented levels of violence. This must be done in full consultation with indigenous communities and with all levels of government. A national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls is a necessary starting point to this process.

Yours truly,

BRITISH COLUMBIA NURSES UNION



Gayle Duteil
President

c: Honourable Bernard Valcourt, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development
Honourable Christy Clark, Premier of British Columbia

Honourable Terry Lake, Minister of Health
John Horgan, President, BC NDP
Kennedy Stewart, Member of Parliament, Burnaby - Douglas
BCNU Council
BCNU Directors
BCNU Coordinators

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