



**Canadian Association of  
Statutory Human Rights Agencies**

**Association canadienne des  
commissions et conseil des droits de la personne**

March 28, 2013

Rt. Hon. Stephen Harper  
Office of the Prime Minister  
80 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2  
E-mail: [pm@pm.gc.ca](mailto:pm@pm.gc.ca)

Dear Prime Minister Harper:

The Canadian Association of Statutory Human Rights Agencies (CASHRA) is the umbrella organization for federal, provincial and territorial human rights commissions, Canada's statutory agencies charged with administering human rights legislation. CASHRA's goals are to foster collaboration among its members and to serve as a national voice on human rights issues of common concern.

It is in this capacity that we write to you on an issue that has dominated our discussions and caused great concern. It is the national issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls and the painful effects it has on all communities, particularly Aboriginal communities, across the country.

On March 8<sup>th</sup> this year, marking the UN's International Women's Day, CASHRA member agencies agreed to send the attached motion to the Government of Canada. The unanimous motion calls on the Government to focus urgent and immediate attention on tackling the situation of the alarming number of Aboriginal women and girls who have gone missing or have been found murdered in communities across Canada.

We recognize the importance of the Government of Canada's proposal to strike a Parliamentary Committee, and we strongly urge you to quickly adopt a national action plan that includes establishing an independent and inclusive inquiry into missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls.

This is a national issue of utmost concern. We, therefore, strongly urge you to address this very disturbing situation.

If we can help in any way, please contact us either collectively or individually.

In closing, please keep us informed of any developments or steps being taken to deal with this matter.

Sincerely,

Barbara Hall, B.A., LL.B., Ph.D. (hon.)  
President of CASHRA and Chief Commissioner, Ontario Human Rights Commission

Enclosure: CASHRA Motion on Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women and Girls



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Cc:

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**Feb. 21/13**

### **CASHRA Motion on Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women and Girls**

**Preamble:** The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) provides an important legal framework in the promotion of Indigenous rights in Canada and globally. On the domestic front, a number of important developments have signaled an openness for constructive change, notably: the official apology in 2008 from the Government of Canada to survivors of residential schools; the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which stemmed from the settlement agreement of a court case launched by survivors; and the full repeal of section 67 of the Canadian Human Rights Act in 2011, which opened the Indian Act to human rights scrutiny for the first time.

Yet Aboriginal women and girls continue to experience systemic discrimination and they bear a persistent and disproportionate burden of violence. According to Statistics Canada, Aboriginal women are seven times more likely to be murdered than non-Aboriginal women in Canada. The Native Women's Association of Canada reports that over the past 30 years, an alarming number of Aboriginal women and girls have gone missing or have been found murdered in communities across Canada. Most of these cases remain unresolved.

These chilling facts highlight the need for urgent action to address the root causes of violence against Aboriginal women and girls. There is also an important need for closure for the people who have lost their loved ones to this needless violence.

**Motion:** That CASHRA urge the Government of Canada to work together in partnership with Aboriginal peoples' organizations to: (1) develop and implement a national action plan that will focus urgent attention on addressing and preventing the root causes of violence against Aboriginal women and girls, including poverty and systemic discrimination; and (2) noting that Canada has proposed a Parliamentary Committee, CASHRA still urges the establishment of an independent and inclusive inquiry into missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in Canada.