

OUR LAND IS OUR FUTURE

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News Release

May 5, 2021

Unbroken and Unsilenced: UBCIC Demands Overdue Justice on National Day of Awareness for MMIWG

((X^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), Sk^wxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səilwətał (Tseil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C. – May 5, 2021) Year after year, loss after loss, Indigenous women and girls have had to face a persisting, haunting reality: in the face of government inaction and delays, they continue to be casualties in an ongoing humanitarian crisis that is fueled by violence, discrimination, and apathy. The Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) marks this National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) with renewed calls to action to ensure that the painful reality Indigenous women and girls face can be replaced with one that fosters justice and healing.

“As Indigenous people we live every day with the memory of our stolen sisters, mothers, daughters, grandmothers and aunties,” stated Kukpi7 Judy Wilson, Secretary Treasurer of UBCIC. “The government-led development of the MMIWG National Action Plan has lacked transparency and has been fraught with challenges. Meanwhile, First Nations women continue to experience staggering rates of violence, as well as on-going oppression and sex-discrimination as thousands of those newly entitled to status under Bill S-3 remain unable to claim the status and rights that were denied to them under the *Indian Act*. We call for a robust National Action Plan that includes full implementation of Bill S-3 to reform these destructive policies, and for the voices of our Indigenous women to be at the heart of the National Action Plan process. Canada must do better if it means to reconcile with its colonial practices, past and present.”

“On this important but painful day of awareness and community healing, we must not forget the red dresses that silently sway around schools, parks, memorials, institutions, and pipelines. They are a crimson reminder of absence and grief that we must hold in our hearts and use to galvanize further awareness and action to combat the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and Two-Spirit People (MMIWG2S) Crisis,” stated Melissa Moses, UBCIC Women’s Representative. “In our mission to unite against and combat the systemic violence and discrimination that are

stealing the lives of our Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirited individuals, we must not let government-led commitments, plans, and policies overshadow the vibrant lives lost to the tragedy – these lives are the heartbeat, the driving force behind all that we do. As the movement for change was sparked by Indigenous women, Indigenous women must be allowed to lead, shape, and breathe life into all the processes that surround it.”

Melissa Moses concluded, “On this particular National Day of Awareness, we honour the life of Hanna Harris, a 21-year-old member of the Northern Cheyenne tribe whose disappearance and murder in 2013 helped fuel the movement to honour and bring awareness to the victims of the MMIWG2S Crisis. Today we mark Hanna’s 29th birthday and call upon the public to not think of the missing and murdered as the faceless and forgotten, but as strong Indigenous women and individuals with incredible depth, life, and light.”

If you fear for your safety, or are in immediate danger, please call 911. If you are not in immediate danger, please refer to the following supports and resources:

- Call [VictimLink BC](#) at 1-800-563-0808 for information about all services that are available throughout the Province.
- [Battered Women’s Support Services](#) can assist with emotional support, safety planning, and legal advocacy
 - Call at 604.687.1867 or toll free at 1-855-687-1868
 - If you’re unable to speak safely, please text 604-652-1867 or email intake@bwss.org
- Ending Violence Association of BC: <https://endingviolence.org/need-help/>
- National Inquiry’s report on MMIWG: <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/>:
- National Indigenous Women’s Resource Centre <https://www.niwrc.org/>

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UBCIC is an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

For more information, please visit www.ubcic.bc.ca