



May 28, 2021

Kennedy Stewart
 Mayor, City of Vancouver
 Via email only: kennedy.stewart@vancouver.ca

Paul Mochrie
 City Manger, City of Vancouver
 Via email only: paul.mochrie@vancouver.ca

RE: Removal of Missing Indigenous Women Posters

Dear Mayor Stewart and City Manager Mochrie, City of Vancouver

The Coalition on Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) in BC (“the Coalition”), is writing to request an exemption to the City of Vancouver’s [policy](#) of impounding signs that are posted on city property including sidewalks, boulevards, medians, parks, street lights, and other sidewalk amenities. We are seeking an exemption for missing persons posters.

The Coalition is an alliance of organizations and individuals that came together in 2010 at the time of the Oppal Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Women in British Columbia. The Coalition includes a broad range of organizations representing Indigenous women and their allies in women's anti-violence, human rights, and labour organizations. Members have deep knowledge and expertise, and lived experience of discrimination and violence; some are family members and friends of murdered and disappeared women, girls, and two-spirit people; and many have been engaged for years in front-line, grassroots anti-violence work on the streets and in shelters. Members of the Coalition also have expertise in policy development and analysis regarding Indigenous rights, child welfare, and policing, as well as knowledge and practice in human rights, civil liberties criminal, constitutional, and international human rights law.

Indigenous women and girls and two-spirited people continue to face disproportionate rates of gender-based violence across BC. Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside is unfortunately known across Canada for violence and marginalization of Indigenous women. Belinda Williams missing since 1977, Angeline Pete missing since 2011, Chelsea Poorman missing since September

2020, and April Parisian missing since March 2020, are all Indigenous women who remain missing from Vancouver and surrounding areas. Their families continue searching tirelessly and fight to bring awareness to their disappearance.

The Coalition is deeply concerned by the City's removal of missing Indigenous person posters from ((X^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish) and səliiwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) territory as a form of continued erasure of Indigenous people. On May 5, the National Day of Awareness of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, the City of Vancouver removed banners hung by families of missing Indigenous women on Cambie Bridge, and in a dehumanizing act, disposed of them in the garbage compacter without thinking of the impacts of this on the families. The City's insensitivity caused significant harm to families and further demonstrated the reality of systemic violence that continues to target Indigenous people, on a day meant to commemorate murdered and missing Indigenous women. Community advocates and families receive sparse resources from government or police to assist with finding their loved ones, and the burden of organizing a missing person search often falls solely to them. Removal of signage by the City of Vancouver stands in direct opposition to honouring the tragedy of MMIWG and to the City's own commitment to reconciliation.

The Coalition requests that the City of Vancouver permit the display of missing person materials as well offer designated hubs for signage throughout the City to heighten awareness of the grim reality of MMIWG and reduce barriers for families searching for their loved ones.

Given the urgency of this issue, we seek a response as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Atira Women's Resource Centre
BC Assembly of First Nations
BC Federation of Labour
Butterflies in Spirit
Downtown Eastside Women's Centre
Ending Violence Association of BC
First United Church
Indian Residential School Survivor Society
Jenny Kwan, MP NDP
Myrna Cranmer, Committee member, February 14th Memorial March
Native Women's Association of Canada
PHS Community Services Society
Poverty and Human Rights Centre
Safe Rides for Women
Union Gospel Mission
Union of BC Indian Chiefs
Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter
West Coast LEAF
WISH Drop in Centre Society