



NEWS RELEASE

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Office of the Premier
Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and
Reconciliation

Premier, Aboriginal leaders partner to end violence against Aboriginal women and girls

VICTORIA - Premier Christy Clark and Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Minister John Rustad joined Aboriginal leaders today to sign a memorandum of understanding that confirms their shared commitment to end violence against Aboriginal women and girls.

"We have a responsibility to create a world where all Aboriginal people can live without fear," said Premier Clark. "I'd like to thank all the leaders and members of the Advisory Council on Aboriginal Women who have worked so tirelessly to take this step forward today. This MOU demonstrates that government and Aboriginal organizations are working together to take positive actions to stop violence against Aboriginal women and girls wherever it occurs."

The MOU signing was hosted by the First Nations Summit, and the Premier and Rustad were joined by representatives of the Summit, BC Assembly of First Nations, the Union of BC Indian Chiefs and Métis Nation British Columbia, as well as members of the Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation's Advisory Council on Aboriginal Women (MACAW) and representatives of First Nations and Aboriginal organizations from throughout B.C.

"Stopping violence against Aboriginal women and girls requires shared responsibility, with shared accountabilities," said Rustad. "Government doesn't work in a vacuum, and this MOU proves that collaboration and partnership is the right path towards a safer future for Aboriginal women and girls."

"The extraordinary women who make up the Minister's Advisory Council have done important work over the past few years and it has been an honour to be part of such a dedicated group," said Wendy Grant John, chair of MACAW. "The signing of this MOU is the culmination of one piece of that work and I would like to thank everyone involved for helping bring us to this day."

The work of MACAW and the MOU ties into the provincial government's throne speech commitment to create a long-term, comprehensive strategy to move towards a violence-free B.C. so that all women, including Aboriginal and vulnerable women, have the supports they need to prevent violence, to escape from violent situations and to recover if they have been victims of crime.

As part of ongoing work with the council, the Province is providing \$400,000 to the Giving Voice initiative, which aims to help Aboriginal communities speak out and take action on the issue of violence against women and girls. This funding is in addition to the \$120,000 provided to the project in 2013/14.

“It is unacceptable that in this day and age, violence against women and girls, and in particular Aboriginal women and girls, is so prolific in our society. Unfortunately statistics don't lie, they clearly indicate that Aboriginal women and girls in Canada have a significantly higher risk of being the subject of violence,” said Cheryl Casimer, member of the First Nations Summit political executive. “This MOU represents a much needed collaborative effort for First Nations, Métis and the provincial government to come together and take concrete actions on stopping violence against Aboriginal women and girls.”

“It is my hope that this MOU demonstrates an intent to work together to address the root causes of violence against Aboriginal women and girls – poverty, inequality, and marginalization – symptomatic of a far greater social malaise that can only be addressed through true reconciliation and dealing with the underlying reality of the devastating colonial legacy,” said BC Assembly of First Nations Regional Chief Jody Wilson-Raybould. “Societies are judged by how well they treat their most vulnerable and we are no different. We can and must do better.”

“We must support any and all measures designed to protect Indigenous women and girls from abuse, violence and exploitation. To be completely effective and successful, we must seek to include all voices, groups and parties impacted by this national tragedy”, said Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the UBCIC.

“Violence against our women and girls is a deplorable and a cowardly act and must not be tolerated,” said Métis Nation British Columbia President Bruce Dumont. “We must continue to educate our young men against their impulses and our women and girls to be empowered against men who wish to inflict violence and abuse against them so that this vicious cycle ends and our sons grow to be men who respect women. This memorandum of understanding is a very important milestone and show of solidarity between our nations to bring this issue into the light so our women and our girls no longer suffer in fear.”

In February 2014, the Provincial Office of Domestic Violence released the Provincial Domestic Violence Plan. This three-year, \$5.5-million plan includes \$2 million to develop and deliver programs specifically for Aboriginal women, men and children affected by domestic violence.

Quick Facts:

- The Minister's Advisory Council on Aboriginal Women was created as a direct result of the B.C. government's co-host role at the Collaboration to End Violence: National Aboriginal Women's Forum in June 2011.
- The council was set up to provide advice to government on how to improve the quality of life for Aboriginal women in B.C. The council is chaired by leading Aboriginal women's advocate Wendy Grant-John.
- The work of MACAW and the MOU ties into the provincial government's wider drive to reduce violence against women.

Learn More:

Minister's Advisory Council on Aboriginal Women:

www.gov.bc.ca/arr/social/min_adv_council_on_aboriginal_women.html

Provincial Domestic Violence Plan: www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/podv/pdf/dv_pp_booklet.pdf

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