

Raising Our Voices to Honor Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and 21 years of
Women's Memorial Marches

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ATTENTION: ALL NEWS MEDIA OUTLETS

On February 14th in Toronto, Vancouver and across Turtle Island we will gather to Honour the over 600 missing and murdered Indigenous women as well as to celebrate the over 20 years of marches, rallies, vigils, gatherings and ceremonies that have taken place to support families and communities through grief and loss.

This year in Toronto The Native Women's Resource Centre, The Native Youth Sexual Health Network, Sistering, No More Silence, Camp Sis and other community organizations are getting ready to come out in huge numbers to support the demand for a United Nations Investigation, through the Committee to End all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

The Vancouver February 14th Women's Memorial March Committee (WMMC) and the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre (DEWC), along with the Feminist Alliance for International Action (FAIFA), and the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) have recently made submissions to CEDAW, requesting the international body initiate a formal inquiry, under the Optional Protocol which Canada signed and ratified in 2002. This Protocol outlines a process of inquiry into human rights violations when local and domestic actions have not yielded results. The UN submissions of the DEWC and WMMC were formally supported with letters to the UN by the Native Youth Sexual Health Network, Union of BC Indian Chiefs, PIVOT Legal Society, BC Civil Liberties Association, West Coast LEAF, PACE, WISH, Ending Violence Association, and the DTES Neighbourhood Council.

In Vancouver the BC Missing Women's Inquiry has been met with outrage as community groups, originally granted legal standing in the process, were denied resources necessary for participation. Currently, almost all community groups are boycotting this process.

According to Marlene George, member of the February 14th Women's Memorial March Committee and one of the groups unable to participate in the Missing Women's Inquiry:

“We are boycotting this Sham Inquiry because we have been shut out from it and it has continued to marginalize the voices and experiences of women from the Downtown Eastside. Women continue to go missing or be murdered with no action from any level of government to address these tragedies of gendered violence, poverty, racism, or colonialism.”

Local Toronto advocates and national organizations are looking to the intervention by the United Nations in the belief that grave and systemic discrimination against Indigenous women across the country must be investigated by an independent body. This should include a visit by CEDAW members to the country and the participation of Indigenous women advocates and family members of missing and murdered women.

This year, events, rallies and marches to honor missing and murdered women on February 14th, will also be held in at least 10 other cities including Victoria, Montreal, Ottawa, Winnipeg, Edmonton, Saskatoon, Edmonton, Calgary, London and Vancouver. More information about these events can be found at: <http://womensmemorialmarch.wordpress.com/national/>

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