



Launch of Website for Community-led Database for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women on Anniversary of Bella Laboucan-McLean's Death

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE July 16, 2014 - As Indigenous peoples, working for justice for #MMIW is a process that starts within our own communities. The launch of this website is one example of the resurgence of community documentation as justice.

In April of 2013, No More Silence, Families of Sisters in Spirit and the Native Youth Sexual Health Network began what has become a long term vision for a community-led database documenting the violent deaths and disappearances of Indigenous women. It is our collective hope that the lives of Indigenous Two Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, queer, questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQQIA) will also be recognized as gender based violence also impacts these communities and is often invisibilized.

The website is available for viewing at: www.ItStartsWithUs-MMIW.com

FSIS, community partner on this initiative said that they “support a grassroots led community database because Indigenous people are first and foremost the experts in gathering data and information about missing and murdered Indigenous women”. The launch of this website is an outcome from many community conversations with impacted families and individuals affected by colonial gender based violence.

1 year later and still no justice...

The purpose of the database is to our honour women and provide family members with a way to document their loved ones passing. As the one year anniversary of Bella Laboucan-McLean's death approaches the family has provided the first of many tribute pieces on the website, available to read at: www.ItStartsWithUs-MMIW.com/bella

According to Melina Laboucan-Massimo, “Our family still does not have answers from the Toronto Police about Bella's death which is still listed as suspicious. We appeal to anyone with information to come forward with answers. We urge the Toronto Police to investigate her death as if Bella were part of their own family and not just another police statistic. This new website and database gives families like ours the ability to not only document the lives of our loved ones but also commemorate and celebrate their lives and achievements.”

As the search for answers persists, we continue to urge the Toronto Police Service to maintain their focus on the details surrounding Bella's death as the family and larger community follow this case closely. We are honoured to have Bella's story be the first tribute that is shared on the website as a way of recognizing her life and spirit.

We also call attention to Sonya Cywink, murdered in London, ON who's family and community are preparing a memorial on the 20th anniversary of her passing and are also holding out hope that one day they will uncover the mystery surrounding her murder.

Krysta Williams of the Native Youth Sexual Health Network and community partner said, "We know there are many other stories, families and anniversaries, this is just the beginning. We continue to build capacity within our networks to respond and support."

For more information and background on #ItStartsWithUs please read "Supporting the Resurgence of Community-Based Responses to Violence" at: <http://www.nativeyouthsexualhealth.com/march142014.pdf>

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