

**Native Women's  
Association of Canada**

**Sisters In Spirit:  
Violence Against Indigenous  
Women in Canada**

**National Victims of Crime Awareness Week**

**April 27<sup>th</sup> 2009**

**Ottawa, ON**





The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) has worked with Aboriginal women and Aboriginal women's organizations for over 30 years



The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) is founded on the collective goal to enhance, promote, and foster the social, economic, cultural and political well-being of First Nations and Métis women within First Nation and Canadian societies.



# NWAC Mission Statement

- To help empower women by being involved in developing and changing legislation which affects them, and by involving them in the development and delivery of programs promoting equal opportunity for Aboriginal women.



# ABOUT NWAC

- national voice of Aboriginal women in Canada
- incorporated in 1974
- Our membership consists of 11 native women's organizations from each Province and Territory (with the exception of Nunavut)



- governed by a Board of Directors
- current president, Beverley Jacobs
- Satellite Office is in Ottawa, ON





# Inside NWAC

- Health
- Youth
- Environment
- Training and Employment
- NAWS
- Violence against  
Aboriginal Women (Sisters  
In Spirit)
- International Human  
Rights



# NWAC





# What NWAC Does

The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) asserts that the unique situation of Aboriginal women in Canada – our story, our lives – must be told and addressed.





# Aboriginal Women in Canada: Demographics

- The female Aboriginal population is very young
- Aboriginal women have a shorter lifespan
- The fertility rate of Aboriginal women is higher





# Aboriginal Women in Canada

## Health Statistics

- High suicide rate for Aboriginal girls and women
- AIDS are at epidemic levels
- Rate of diabetes is at epidemic levels
- Obesity
- Depression
- Young Mothers
- Abuse during Pregnancy



# Aboriginal Women in Canada Education

- Low high school completion
- Low university completion
- Early pregnancy and its impacts on education
- Aboriginal women are now attending school at higher rates than both non-Aboriginal women and Aboriginal men



# Aboriginal Women in Canada Statistics

- Aboriginal women make up 32% of the prison pop.
- 40% live in Poverty
- Women as lone parent





# What do we know about Violence?

*“Violence is the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation.”*

World Health Organization

# Aboriginal Women in Canada Violence & Abuse

- Higher rate of violence and abuse
- 5 times more likely to die by violence
- High rate of victimization
- 8 times more likely to be killed by a spouse after separation



# Aboriginal women & girls have gone missing NATIONWIDE

- British Columbia
  - Vancouver's Downtown Eastside
  - Highway 16 - *Highway of Tears*
- Alberta (Edmonton)
- Saskatchewan
- Quebec
- Manitoba (Winnipeg)
- Northern Ontario



Little to no connection is made regarding the gender and the Aboriginal identity of these women by authorities.



“Over the past 20 years, approximately 500 Aboriginal women have gone missing in communities across Canada. Yet government, the media, and Canadian society continue to remain silent.”



Sisters in Spirit Campaign  
2004-2005 lobby effort

# What is the Sisters In Spirit (SIS) Initiative?

SIS is a five-year research, education and policy initiative.



The SIS initiative focuses on four key areas:

- Community-based research
- Communication
- Education & Awareness
- Policy assessment & analysis





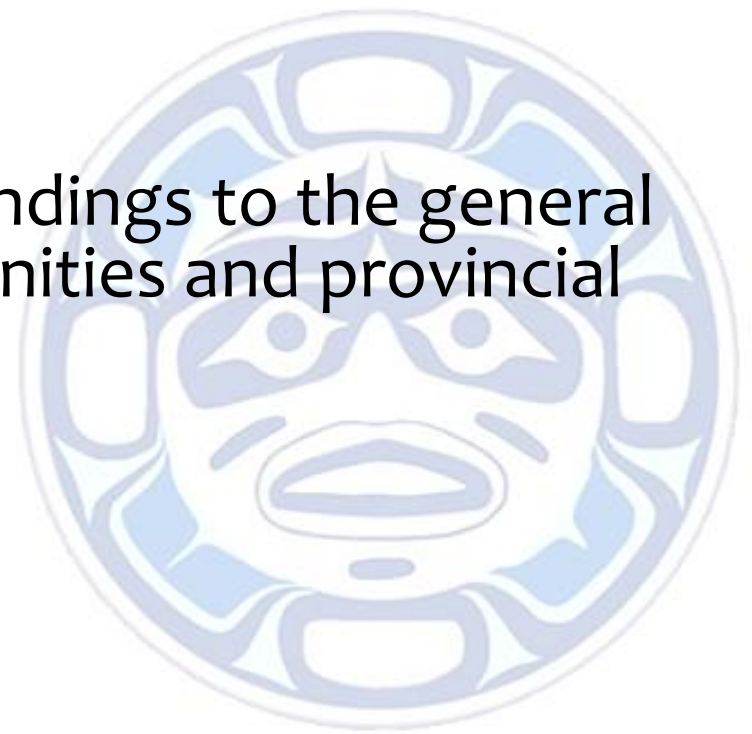


SIS is designed to increase public understanding and knowledge of the impact of racialized, sexualized violence against Aboriginal women and girls in Canada.

The process involves the collection of *life stories* and *statistical* information;

to understand the circumstances, root causes & trends surrounding missing and murdered Aboriginal women;

and successfully relay our findings to the general public, Aboriginal communities and provincial & federal governments.



Honour women and girls who have been lost to violence and remember those still missing







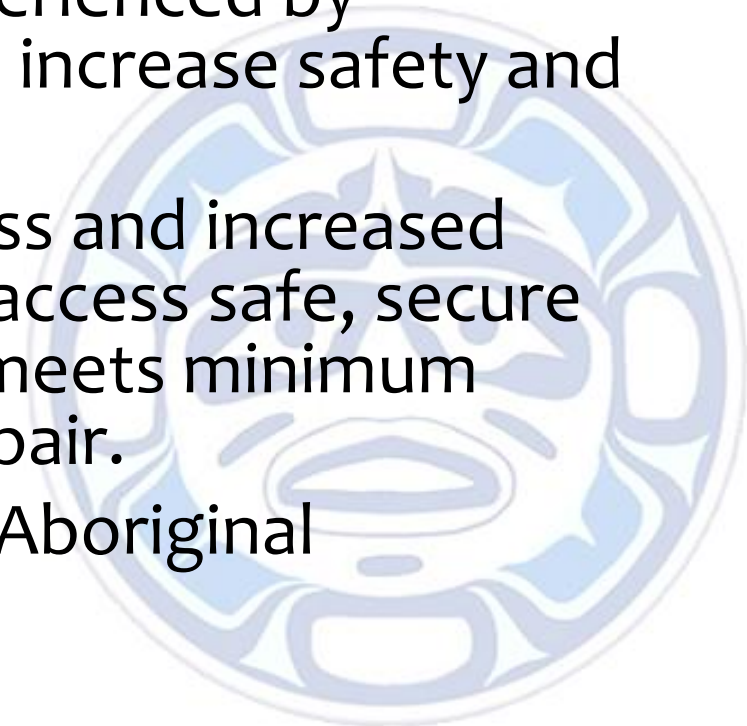
# Preliminary Research Findings

- Our database includes more than 500 names
  - Majority are youth (under 31 years of age)
  - Majority were killed (only 1/4 missing)
  - Majority of the cases remain unsolved (40% cleared)
  - Many had a relationship with their attacker  
(partner, family member, acquaintance)



# Four Key Policy Areas that have been identified

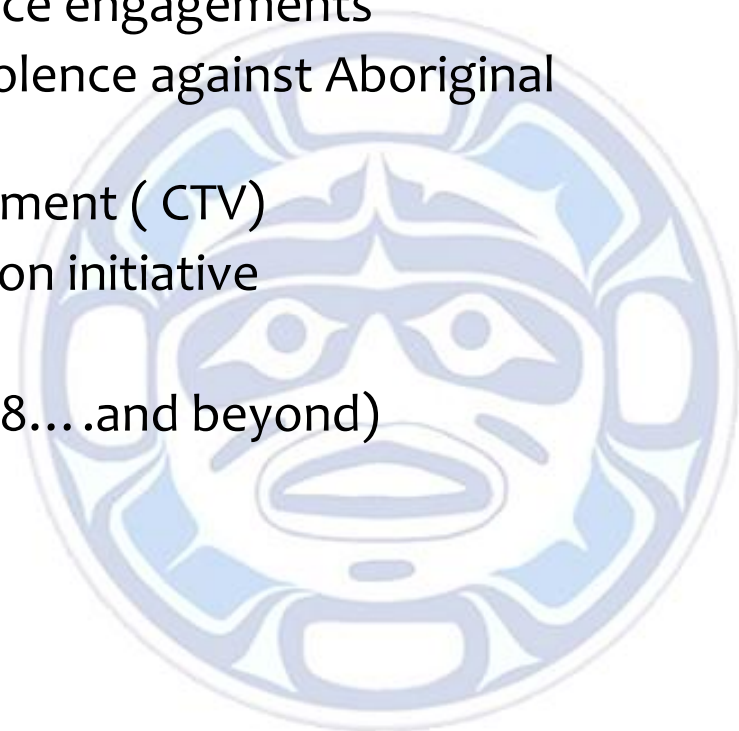
- The reduction of violence against Aboriginal women and girls which results in their disappearance or death
- The reduction of poverty experienced by Aboriginal women and girls will increase safety and security
- The reduction of homelessness and increased ability of Aboriginal women to access safe, secure and affordable housing which meets minimum standards of cleanliness and repair.
- Improve access to justice for Aboriginal women/girls and their family





# SIS Accomplishments To Date:

- SIS database created
- Voices of our Sisters In Spirit Report to families and communities completed in 2008
- Family gatherings: Regina 2006, Vancouver 2007, Edmonton 2008
- National & international partnerships
- National & international conference engagements
- Increased national coverage of violence against Aboriginal women and girls
- National Public Service Announcement (CTV)
- National SIS awareness & education initiative
- 4 Community education tool-kits
- Annual SIS Vigils (2006, 2007, 2008....and beyond)



# Recognize this Canadian Crisis



Tashina General

Age 21

Murdered 2008



Nina Louise Courtepatte

Age 13

Murdered 2005





Amber Redman

Age 19

Murdered in 2005



Gladys Tolley

Age 61

Murdered in 2001

Terrie Ann Dauphinais

Age 24

Murdered in 2002



# Native Women's Association of Canada

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