

MMIWG - MANITOBA COALITION RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE NATIONAL INQUIRY

36. The National Inquiry has provided a Master List of previous recommendations prepared by the Research Team.¹ The National Inquiry is directed to the evidence and recommendations of the families and survivors that are already included in the record under Part 1 of the Inquiry Evidence. These painful stories were told for a reason:

I'm the sister of – of Dawn. I'm the second-youngest in the family. My sister Dawn was the youngest, and I just wanted to share a little bit of, like, who I am. I'm a very strong Indigenous woman, and I work hard at trying to change the pathway for us. I come from a very strong family who is deeply rooted in their culture and their language. It's very difficult for us to share our truth, but it's also important for us to share our truth. We come from a family of 11, and now we have 10 after losing my sister. We're very protective of one another in our family, and we're also very supportive, and we grew up a lot – we grew up most of our childhoods living off the land. My father was a commercial fisherman and a trapper, and I feel, you know, this has really grounded us in who we are as Indigenous people and as a family., and it has taught us survival, and I feel, you know, when we're gathered here today, we're gathered here in strength for one another, and also, you know, to create a pathway for change for Indigenous women and girls across this country...²

37. The MMIWG – Manitoba Coalition refer the Commissioners to Appendix A of this written submission which sets out recommendations to the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women; Its Causes and Consequences in Canada.

38. The MMIWG – Manitoba Coalition met on September 24, 2018 and November 6, 2018 with families and survivors in order to obtain from them directly their final recommendations to the Inquiry. These recommendations are now placed on the record, and are as follows:

- i. It has been difficult for families and survivors to follow Inquiry process. Families and survivors feel left out. It has been difficult to receive or to share information with the National Inquiry. When staff were contacted directly, they were often rude and unhelpful. Many found the interactions between the National Inquiry and

¹ http://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Interim_Report_Master_List_of_Previous_Recommendations_Organized_By_Theme-FINAL.pdf

² Transcript Evidence Hilda Anderson-Pyrz, Tuesday, March 20, 2018, Public Volume 72, page 2

the families to be frustrating. Information sent to the National Inquiry by or on behalf of families has been lost.

ii. Families and survivors need financial assistance to deal with trauma before, during and after National Inquiry. The \$3,500.00 stipend promised for healing has not been provided. The families feel pressured to justify their healing journeys which are intended to be trauma informed. This has resulted in many families and survivors being unable to access the therapy or programs they require to heal. In addition, they have not been provided with any information regarding deadlines, if any, to obtain trauma informed healing.

iii. The National Inquiry has created jobs for others but not for the families and survivors. Although millions of dollars have been spent to reconfirm facts that have been available to the Federal Government for many decades, there are no concrete plans identified to help the families of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

iv. The costs of addictions treatment is out of reach for many Manitoba families and survivors of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. This leaves families feeling scared and hurt and they have no way to help those that need it.

v. The families and survivors seek a safe house for women travelling from the north to Winnipeg and more safe places for the sexually exploited. There needs to be a better reporting system available. The families and survivors report that there are “trap houses” in Winnipeg which confine sexually exploited women and girls. This needs to be followed up.

vi. What does healing look like? How can victims of sexual trafficking access appropriate counselling? There are Indigenous centres such as Thunderbird House in Winnipeg that could be used as a counselling resource, but funding tends to go to non-Indigenous organizations.

vii. The MMIWG – Manitoba Coalition is willing and available to help the National Inquiry. They are prepared to collate data on an ongoing basis to ensure that a record exists.

viii. The Coalition reminds the Province of Manitoba that the 62 Recommendations of the Phoenix Sinclair Inquiry have not been implemented. The Coalition approves new legislation passed by the Province of Manitoba ensuring that children in Manitoba are not apprehended on the basis of poverty.

ix. The Coalition supports Indigenous led best practices such as Ka Ni Kanichihk's Medicine Bear Counselling Circle, aimed at reducing violence against Indigenous women and girls by increasing the knowledge and tools that promote the health and strength of the family unit.³

x. The Manitoba Coalition wishes to work with the Human Trafficking National Coordination Unit (RCMP).

xi. The Coalition needs to ensure that systems are held accountable, and support a separate and specific body similar in structure to the National Centre for TRC with sustainable funding and support. An annual report card should be available to the Coalition.

xii. The Coalition is seeking a formal apology by the government and National Inquiry and Manitoba for its failure to act on and implement its 1200 recommendations referenced in the Interim Report. The Coalition is seeking an implementation plan by the National Inquiry as early as November, 2018.

xiii. The Coalition notes that Manitoba does not have a policy dealing specifically with Indigenous women's rights. This gap should be addressed. Manitoba should institute an Office for Indigenous Women's Advocate responsible for designing and developing strength based policies to increase Indigenous women's autonomy, and implemented by government, agencies, boards and commissions.

xiv. The Coalition seeks to stop the claw back of the Child Tax Benefits by Manitoba Child and Family Services and redirect benefits to families seeking help with reunification seeking help with reunification with their children.

³ <http://www.kanikanichihk.ca/programs/medicine-bear-counselling-support-elder-services/>

xv. The Coalition is seeking a national plan of action with a joint contribution by the provinces which will dramatically reduce missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

xvi. How does political will work? How can we engage effectively with politicians to act on the recommendations that are already before them?

xvii. The Coalition emphasises that Indigenous peoples are not wards of the state. They want to live their lives fully and without government interference. They want to empower families and remove barriers to self determination. Child welfare creates trauma and is a gateway to crime and incarceration.

xviii. The Coalition supports spirituality and recognizes the importance of both traditional and Christian beliefs.

xix. The Coalition strongly supports Indigenous LGBTQ2S who are included in the MMIWG –Manitoba Coalition and are particularly vulnerable to violence and sexual exploitation. The Coalition does not support the glamorization of sexual exploitation.

xx. The Manitoba Coalition seeks policing reforms. Policing on Manitoba First Nations such as those provided by DOPS First Nations Police Services and Garden Hill should be expanded to all Manitoba First Nations communities. Indigenous peoples want violence between each other to end. Laws must recognize that punishment, including incarceration, is appropriate. Families and survivors are concerned that some offenders may be treated too leniently by the Courts. They fear that restorative justice Courts may be biased, prioritizing the needs of the offender over that of the victim.

xxi. Education needs to be supported in order to reduce MMIWG2S. Sexual exploitation in Manitoba targets younger and younger children. It is important that these children are protected through education and resources.

xxii. The Coalition continues to be concerned with ongoing police harassment and bullying. There is no trust between Indigenous complainants and police. Indigenous family members report their missing relatives as Caucasian in the hopes that the police will respond more diligently. Newcomers to Canada are often cautioned by authorities

not to interact with Indigenous peoples because they are dangerous. This results in ongoing prejudice. Police and social workers too often view Indigenous people as numbers rather than people.

xxiii. There is a need in Manitoba for more FILU workers. At present, there are only two representing both the north and the south.

xxiv. The Coalition supports the Inuit people who are seeking justice for themselves and for their communities.

xxv. The Coalition encourages all Indigenous political leaders to act as examples for their people. There are some chiefs and band members who abuse their position and power.

xxvi. Families need to move to a place of wellness. A National Summit should explore opportunities for the Manitoba Coalition to be a part of this plan. Manitoba will be the loud voice needed to make changes.

xxvii. Families and survivors have experienced conflict of interest when dealing with the justice system. One victim services worker provided services and counselling to both the murder victim's family and to her killers family. This format of victim services should be immediately discontinued.

xxviii. Other inquiries, such as the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, have produced insufficient resolution for Indigenous peoples. It took a lot of courage and effort for families and survivors to tell their stories. They did so in the hopes that by putting their stories on the record this would help their missing and murdered family members. They wonder whether they should sue the Federal Government to get redress for their families.

xxix. The Coalition encourages the use of social media as a reporting tool to assist Winnipeg Police Services, Victim Services and the RCMP. Social media can also be used as an education resource but confidentiality of families should be respected. There continue to be missing and murdered women across the nation following the National Inquiry from city to city.

xxx. The Coalition would like to invite the Commissioners to a feast after their report is completed in order to bring closure for families and survivors.