



Canadian Network of Women's
Shelters & Transition Houses

Réseau canadien des maisons
d'hébergement pour femmes

The Honourable Carolyn Bennett
Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs
Terrasses de la Chaudière, 10 Wellington, North Tower
Gatineau, QC K1A 0H4

19 December 2016

Dear Minister Bennett:

I am reaching out to you today on behalf of the Canadian Network of Women's Shelters and Transition Houses. As you know, the Network brings together the provincial and territorial shelter associations. As an organization, we led the development of the Blueprint for a National Action Plan on Violence against Women and Girls, which we presented to you in Spring 2015. Central to our call for a National Action Plan on Violence against Women and Girls is the need to ensure that women in all areas of the country have comparable levels of services and protection. Unfortunately, that is not the case today.

We're asking for you to support the call by Amnesty International Canada to close the funding gap to ensure safety and support for Indigenous women and girls escaping violence. Shelters are often at the heart of the community when it comes to violence against women. Shelters offer much more than a safe place to stay; in fact, our data demonstrates that for every two women staying at a shelter, the shelter is providing services to an additional five women. Therefore, we were not surprised to learn from our colleagues at Aboriginal Shelters of Ontario that one of their most pressing issues is the need for increased funding to support their professionals in the area of Family Violence Prevention in order to provide support, resources, programming, and services to First Nations women and families.

The level of service delivered by Indigenous women's shelters across the country clearly does not match up to the level of resources provided. We simply cannot ignore the fact that demand is deeply rooted in the intergenerational impact of colonialism and residential schools.

We strongly urge the Federal Government to work actively with Indigenous shelters and organizations representing shelters, such as the National Aboriginal Circle Against Family

Violence, Aboriginal Shelters of Ontario, the Quebec Native Women's Association, and Pauktuutit, along with provincial and territorial counterparts, to close this gap and to support Indigenous women who are seeking to live violence free lives.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lise Martin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lise" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Martin".

Lise Martin

Executive Director

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cc Sandra Montour, Aboriginal Shelters of Ontario
cc Tracy O'Hearn, Pauktuutit
cc Francyne Joe, NWAC
cc Carole Brazeau and Lindsey Decontie, NACAFV
cc Isabelle Paille, Quebec Native Women's Association
cc Jackie Hansen, Amnesty International Canada