

Missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in Canada

There are a disproportionately high number of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in Canada: over the past 30 years, 582 Aboriginal women and girls have gone missing or have been found murdered in communities across Canada; and 153 Aboriginal women and girls were murdered between 2000 and 2008.¹ Both Amnesty International and the United Nation's Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women have called upon Canada to protect the human rights of Aboriginal women, to examine the cases of missing and murdered Aboriginal women, and to remedy the system deficiencies related to failed investigations.²

A qualitative study with adult sexual assault victims examined the experiences of Aboriginal women with the criminal justice system in Canada.³ Their results suggest that race is an important determinant of experiences in the justice system. The women perceived the police to be indifferent or unresponsive to Aboriginal victims of sexual assault, sometimes leaving them vulnerable and unsafe. The findings are strongly echoed in evidence from over 150 witnesses from across Canada received by the Standing Committee on the Status of Women.⁴ The murder of so many women by Robert Pickton in British Columbia illustrates the horrific consequences of a failed response into the disappearance of women, many of whom were Aboriginal.⁵

The Sisters in Spirit Initiative, a Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) research and education project, has recorded:

The disappearance or death of more than 582 Aboriginal women and girls across Canada; The murder of 153 of these women and girls between 2000 and 2008.⁶ "Then President of NWAC Beverley Jacobs told a University of Western Ontario class in 2008 that if the same percentage of non-Aboriginal women were missing or murdered, the number would be a staggering 18,000."⁷

¹ Native Women's Association of Canada (2010). What their stories tell us: *Research findings from the Sisters in Spirit Initiative*. Retrieved March 2, 2012 from:

http://www.nwac.ca/sites/default/files/imce/2010_NWAC_SIS_Report_EN.pdf

² Standing Committee on the Status of Women (2011). *Interim Report. Call into the Night: An Overview of Violence against Aboriginal Women*. 40th Parliament of Canada. Retrieved March 15, 2012 from: http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/200/301/hoc_cttee_reports-ef/status_women/interim_report_call-ef/XC71-403-1-1-04-eng.pdf

³ Dylan, A., Regehr, C., & Alaggia, R. (2008). *And justice for all? Aboriginal victims of sexual violence*. *Violence Against Women*, 14, 678- 696.

⁴ Standing Committee on the Status of Women (2011). *Interim Report. Call into the Night: An Overview of Violence against Aboriginal Women*. 40th Parliament of Canada. Retrieved March 15, 2012 from: http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/200/301/hoc_cttee_reports-ef/status_women/interim_report_call-ef/XC71-403-1-1-04-eng.pdf

⁵ Standing Committee on the Status of Women (2011). *Interim Report. Call into the Night: An Overview of Violence against Aboriginal Women*. 40th Parliament of Canada. Retrieved March 15, 2012 from: http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/200/301/hoc_cttee_reports-ef/status_women/interim_report_call-ef/XC71-403-1-1-04-eng.pdf

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