

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Marchers Call for Action in Canada's Crisis of Missing and Murdered Women**

MONTREAL- The 7th Annual Memorial March for Missing Murdered Women and Girls takes to the streets on February 14th, 2016 at 3 p.m, beginning at the St. Laurent metro station. Marchers seek to raise awareness about the systemic nature of this issue and to pressure the government to provide concrete solutions to address this devastating violence. This year's march comes on the heels of the launch of country-wide consultations for a national public inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG). While news of the inquiry is welcome, it's important that the new federal government recognizes the historical roots of this systemic violence and take concrete measures. Community leaders say that solutions ought to be community-specific, as well as guided by affected family members and frontline workers.

Although the march commemorates women of all backgrounds, emphasis will be given to Indigenous women, who are the disproportionate victims of such violent crimes. While Aboriginal women constitute only 4 per cent of population, they represent 16 per cent of all murdered females. This march, founded in Vancouver in 1991, first came about in response to the murder of a Coast Salish woman that received little attention by police or media.

Recent reports of police officers regularly physically and sexually abusing Indigenous women in the area of Val D'Or, Quebec highlight the pressing need to address this issue. A 2015 report by Femmes Autochtones du Quebec emphasizes that, "the challenge of missing and murdered Aboriginal women is rooted in a long history of assimilation and erasure. The families have demonstrated that they know, perhaps more than anyone, the impact of this history".

Two-spirit people and trans women, especially trans women of colour, are also disproportionately impacted by systemic violence. The Trans Murder Monitoring Project reveals that at least 112 trans and gender-diverse people in North America have been killed since 2008 alone. Newly arrived, refugee and undocumented women are also particularly impacted by gendered violence.

The march features a Montreal version of the REDress project, inspired by the work of metis artist Jaime Black. Black created the project in 2014 as an aesthetic response to the thousands of MMIW in Canada. Lucy Annanak and volunteers at the Native Friendship Centre will also lay down 1200 Inukshuks to honour MMIW.

Invited guests include:

Ellen Gabriel (Kanehsatà:ke Mohawk Territory Indigenous Human Rights Activist), Nakuset (Native Women's Shelter & Urban Aboriginal Strategy Network), Adithi (South Asian Women's Community Center), Buffalo Hat Singers, MJ Tremblay, Odaya, family members and more.

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