



## NEWS RELEASE

June 7, 2018

### National inquiry six-month extension “too little, too late,” say coalition members

(Coast Salish Territory/Vancouver, BC - June 7, 2018) – Members of the BC Coalition on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (the coalition) are deeply disappointed that Canada has granted only a six-month extension to the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (the inquiry). Many Indigenous, civil society, and front-line service organizations supported the inquiry’s request for a two-year extension, to allow it to heed calls from the grassroots to reorganize its work and hold in-depth and meaningful institutional and regional hearings.

The inquiry has stated that its priority for the extension “will be to finish gathering statements from [...] family members and survivors.” While community hearings support processes of healing and truth-telling, the inquiry’s terms of reference, set by the Federal Government, direct it to inquire into and report on “systemic causes of all forms of violence — including sexual violence — against Indigenous women and girls in Canada.” The terms of reference will not be met without further regional institutional and expert hearings. Members of the coalition call on the government to revisit their decision and grant a two-year extension such that the inquiry can meaningfully hold the necessary regional hearings with institutional and expert witnesses. The limited six-month extension means a missed opportunity for input from grassroots, women’s and advocacy organizations that all have vital information to share and expertise in extracting information from the structures perpetuating colonial violence.

Lorelei Williams, Butterflies in Spirit founder, responded to the announcement, stating: “As a family member, my wish is that this tragedy never happen to anyone else, but how can we expect to find solutions to these systemic problems without in-depth institutional and regional hearings? The policing, child welfare, and health systems across all regions need to be examined, and this extension does nothing to hold the government or its institutions accountable.”

Kukpi7 Judy Wilson, Executive Member of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, asked: “What can they really do with an extra six months? This inquiry has already charted a clear path that does not place an emphasis on accountability. Hearing stories and commemorating loved ones is key, but how can there

be reconciliation without accountability? It's clear that Canada doesn't want its dirty secrets aired or investigated."

"This extension is too little, too late," stated Beverly McEwan of the Ahousaht Nation, Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Peoples, and Aboriginal Women's Outreach Worker at WAVAW Rape Crisis Centre. "There is absolutely no way that the six-month extension will fully cover the important systemic issues impacting First Nations' families and their communities across Canada. Families have shared their truthful stories, now it's time for government transparency!"

The coalition is a broad network of individuals, grassroots, and social justice organizations who have come together to address the ongoing crisis of murdered and disappeared Indigenous women and girls in BC and across Canada. The coalition and its members have advocated long and hard for a thorough and meaningful inquiry into violence against Indigenous women and girls, one that would offer clear steps towards the structural change needed across Canada to finally end the systemic violence faced by Indigenous women and girls.

**Signatory organizations:**

Yale First Nation

WISH Drop-In Centre Society

West Coast LEAF

WAVAW Rape Crisis Centre

Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter

Vancouver Aboriginal Community Policing Centre

Union of BC Indian Chiefs, *Robyn Gervais, UBCIC Legal Counsel: 604-329-9141*

Neskonlith Indian Band, *Kukpi7 Judy Wilson: 250-320-7738*

Jenny Kwan, MP for Vancouver East

First Nations Summit

Ellen Gabriel, Indigenous Rights Activist, Kanehsatà:ke

Ending Violence Association of BC

Downtown Eastside Women's Centre

Butterflies in Spirit, *Lorelei Williams: 778-709-6498*

BC Federation of Labour

BC Civil Liberties Association

BC Assembly of First Nations

Aboriginal Front Door Society