

# Not Enough

All Words and No Action on MMIWG



**Interim report of the Standing Senate Committee  
on Aboriginal Peoples**

The Honourable Brian Francis, Chair  
The Honourable Dan Christmas, Deputy Chair



**JUNE 2022**

## NOT ENOUGH: ALL WORDS AND NO ACTION ON MMIWG



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**Red Dress Brooch Designed and Beaded by  
Geraldine Thunder Chief**

Geraldine is a residential school survivor whose grandmother, Sally Provost, was murdered. She designed and beaded the red dress pin to represent missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls (MMIWG).

Geraldine was married to Richard Thunder Chief for 49 years (until his death in February 2015); she is the mother of two sons and one daughter; has 10 grandchildren and five great-grandchildren; and currently resides on Kainai/Blood Tribe First Nation.

## THE COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Honourable Brian Francis, *Chair*

The Honourable Dan Christmas, *Deputy Chair*

### **The Honourable Senators**

David M. Arnot

Michèle Audette

Patrick Brazeau

Mary Coyle

Sandra M. Lovelace Nicholas

Nancy J. Hartling

Yonah Martin

Kim Pate

Dennis Glen Patterson

Scott Tannas

### ***Ex-officio members of the committee:***

The Honourable Senator Gold and/or The Honourable Senator Gagné

The Honourable Senator Plett and/or The Honourable Senator Martin

### ***Other Senators who have participated in the study:***

The Honourable Bernadette Clement

The Honourable Pat Duncan

### ***Parliamentary Information, Education and Research Service, Library of Parliament:***

Brittany Collier, Analyst

Sara Fryer, Analyst

### ***Senate Committees Directorate:***

Andrea Mugny, Committee Clerk

Daniel Charbonneau, Committee Clerk

Lori Meldrum, Administrative Assistant

### ***Senate Communications Directorate:***

Ben Silverman, Communications Officer

## ORDER OF REFERENCE

Extract from the *Journals of the Senate* of Thursday, March 3, 2022:

The Honourable Senator Francis moved, seconded by the Honourable Senator Cordy:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples be authorized to examine and report on the federal government's constitutional, treaty, political and legal responsibilities to First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples and any other subject concerning Indigenous Peoples;

That the documents received, evidence heard and business accomplished by the committee since the beginning of the First Session of the Forty-second Parliament be referred to the committee; and

That the committee submit its final report no later than December 31, 2023, and that the committee retain all powers necessary to publicize its findings for 180 days after the tabling of the final report.

The question being put on the motion, it was adopted.

*Interim Clerk of the Senate*

Gérald Lafrenière

## INTRODUCTION

The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (the National Inquiry) was mandated to “report on the systemic causes of all forms of violence against Indigenous women and girls” and, more broadly, to “examine the underlying social, economic, cultural, institutional, and historical causes that contribute to the ongoing violence and particular vulnerabilities of Indigenous women and girls in Canada.”<sup>1</sup>

The National Inquiry held public and private hearings across Canada, and gathered statements in small, remote communities.<sup>2</sup> Families told the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples (the committee) about their experience participating in the National Inquiry. Denise Pictou Maloney explained “[t]he national inquiry, for our family, provided a safe space where I could refer to my mother not as a victim but as a human being, where I could express the intergenerational loss.”<sup>3</sup> Jana Schulz stated that: “The inquiry process allowed me and a loved one to feel heard and provided ceremony and culturally specific supports. We left the inquiry feeling lighter and thought that it was the start of our healing journey.”<sup>4</sup> Nancy Jourdain told the committee: “women, girls and their families spoke their truths about the violence they had experienced, demonstrating courage, humility and resilience through the sharing of their stories. Their efforts must not be in vain.”<sup>5</sup>

In June 2019, the National Inquiry published its [final report](#) including 252 Calls for Justice<sup>6</sup> aimed at governments, institutions, industries, social service providers and all Canadians. In 2022, the committee decided to undertake a short study over the course of two and a half meetings to examine the implementation of the final report of the National Inquiry. The committee wishes to thank all of the witnesses who appeared for sharing their stories and experiences.

The following report will discuss the Government of Canada’s implementation of the Calls for Justice and the committee’s intention to seek an Order of Reference from the Senate to further study oversight mechanisms for the Government of Canada’s implementation of the Calls for

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<sup>1</sup> National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Our Mandate, Our Vision, Our Mission, [“The Mandate of the National Inquiry.”](#)

<sup>2</sup> APPA, [Evidence](#), 4 April 2022, Marion Buller, Former Chief Commissioner, National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

<sup>3</sup> APPA, [Evidence](#), 25 April 2022, Denise Pictou Maloney, as an individual.

<sup>4</sup> APPA, [Evidence](#), 25 April 2022, Jana Schulz, as an individual.

<sup>5</sup> APPA, [Evidence](#), 25 April 2022, Nancy Jourdain, as an individual.

<sup>6</sup> This includes 231 Calls for Justice in the National Inquiry’s final report and 21 Calls for Justice in the National Inquiry’s Supplemental Report specific to Quebec.

Justice. We believe accountability is vital to ensure that families and survivors remain at the heart of the implementation of the Calls for Justice.

## THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CALLS FOR JUSTICE

The 252 Calls for Justice aim to address the violence and oppression experienced by Indigenous women, girls and Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex and asexual people as well as people who are non-binary or gender non-conforming (2SLGBTQQIA+) while ensuring they live dignified lives.<sup>7</sup> The following section will examine what witnesses said about the implementation of the Calls for Justice, activities taken to implement them since the release of the National Inquiry's final report and the committee's findings for further action.

The committee agrees with witnesses who were concerned about the safety and well-being of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples. Witnesses concluded that implementing the Calls for Justice is urgent.<sup>8</sup> Witnesses highlighted the importance of improving socio-economic outcomes for Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.<sup>9</sup>

Several years after the release of the National Inquiry's final report, witnesses indicated that action to implement the Calls for Justice was already lagging in important areas like access to culturally appropriate health care and safe spaces to live.<sup>10</sup> For example, several witnesses identified uneven access to services in Indigenous communities, including a lack of culturally appropriate programming for Inuit women in the correctional system.

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<sup>7</sup> APPA, *Evidence*, 4 April 2022, Qajaq Robinson, Former Commissioner, National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

<sup>8</sup>For example, see APPA, *Evidence*, 4 April 2022, Qajaq Robinson, Former Commissioner, National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls; APPA, *Evidence*, 4 April 2022, Gerri Sharpe, Interim President, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada; and APPA, *Evidence*, 25 April 2022, Brenda Vanguard, Women's Council Representative, Assembly of First Nations; APPA, *Evidence*, 4 April 2022, Brian Eyolfson, Former Commissioner, National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls; APPA, *Evidence*, 25 April 2022, Jana Schulz, as an individual; APPA, *Evidence*, 4 April 2022, Elmer St. Pierre, National Chief, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples.

<sup>9</sup> For example, Coalition Canada, Basic Income - revenu de base, *Brief*, 20 May 2022.

<sup>10</sup>APPA, *Evidence*, 25 April 2022, Nancy Jourdain, as an individual; APPA, *Evidence*, 4 April 2022, Marion Buller, Former Chief Commissioner, National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls; APPA, *Evidence*, 4 April 2022, Qajaq Robinson, Former Commissioner, National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.



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Delays to implement the Calls for Justice have significant consequences, as explained by Denise Pictou Maloney:

[W]e will continue to be trapped in a Jordan's Principle situation where governments at all levels waste valuable time arguing over whose responsibility it is to implement the 231 Calls for Justice while advocacy groups and organizations continue their perpetual lottery with inadequate funding and maintaining the status quo, and our women and girls continue to die.

The committee heard about the National Action Plan which was released on 3 June 2021. It was developed by a number of organizations and individuals including the National Family and Survivors Circle<sup>11</sup>, survivors and family members of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.<sup>12</sup> It “identifies the necessary activities that must be taken by all governments...organizations, and communities across Canada to address violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.”<sup>13</sup> The federal government’s contribution to the National Action Plan, the “[Federal Pathway](#),” includes commitments to end violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.<sup>14</sup>

The committee heard about funding commitments since the release of the National Inquiry’s final report. Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada noted the slow pace of progress on the implementation of the Calls for Justice, and explained that they have only seen a “federal commitment to fund five Inuit-specific shelters, one in each region of Inuit Nunangat and one in Ottawa, where the largest population of urban Inuit live.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The [National Family and Survivors Circle](#) was established to “provide guidance on how to engage families, survivors and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people in the development and implementation of a National Action Plan.” The National Family and Survivors Circle is comprised of Indigenous women from diverse backgrounds.

<sup>12</sup> [2021 Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People National Action Plan: Ending Violence Against Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People](#), 3 June 2021, p. 11.

<sup>13</sup> [2021 Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People National Action Plan: Ending Violence Against Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People](#), 3 June 2021, p. 21.

<sup>14</sup> Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, [Federal Pathway to Address Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People](#).

<sup>15</sup> APPA, [Evidence](#), 4 April 2022, Gerri Sharpe, Interim President, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada.

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In their appearance before the committee, officials from Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada provided several examples of budget commitments and identified a few initiatives developed by the department specifically related to missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.<sup>16</sup> However, Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak noted that:

Funding announcements...were not specific, and the funding actually went to more of a broad-based initiative without direct effects on eliminating MMIWG [missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls].”<sup>17</sup>

The committee acknowledges the concerns of witnesses about the slow pace of progress, and believes that there could be more targeted investments clearly related to existing action plans and the critical priorities identified by families and survivors. The committee acknowledges the difficulty in harnessing all levels of governments and various institutions in Canada to respond to 252 Calls for Justice. The committee observes that the federal government could create opportunities to facilitate dialogue and collaboration on the implementation of the Calls for Justice between federal, Indigenous, provincial/territorial governments, and Indigenous peoples and organizations. Initiatives could involve, for example, including the implementation of the Calls for Justice on the agendas of First Ministers’ meetings going forward.

Moreover, witnesses observed it was difficult to obtain information about the Government of Canada’s work related to the implementation of the Calls for Justice. The committee is concerned that families and survivors, who should be at the heart of the implementation of the Calls for Justice, may be unable to find information about progress. The committee was pleased to see that two progress reports were released in 2022, one on the National Action Plan and another on the Federal Pathway.<sup>18</sup> However, the committee believes that regular progress reports are needed to ensure that families and survivors are aware of ongoing initiatives. Therefore, the committee recommends:

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<sup>16</sup> APPA, *Evidence*, May 16, 2022, Daniel Quan-Watson, Deputy Minister, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada.

<sup>17</sup> APPA, *Evidence*, 4 April 2022, Lisa Pigeau, Director of Intergovernmental Relations and Gender-Based Violence Initiatives, Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak.

<sup>18</sup> *2022 Progress Report on the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People National Action Plan*, 23 May 2022; Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, *Federal Pathway Annual Progress Report*.

## RECOMMENDATION 1

**That Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada provide quarterly progress reports starting in October 2022 on the federal government’s implementation of the Calls for Justice to the committee, post them publicly on its website and ensure they are distributed to families and survivors of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.**

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## EXAMINING THE FEDERAL ROLE IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SELECT CALLS FOR JUSTICE

Witnesses highlighted the need to begin to monitor the implementation of the Calls for Justice. Indigenous women and girls already face significant challenges in their daily lives and responsibility for follow-up, implementation or monitoring of the Calls for Justice cannot be left to them alone.<sup>19</sup> Call for Justice 1.10 calls upon the federal government to create an independent mechanism to report annually to Parliament on the implementation of the Calls for Justice. The committee believes that establishing independent oversight is important. The committee intends to ask the Senate for an Order of Reference to pursue a targeted study on missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, related to Call for Justice 1.10. This potential study could explore models and set out recommendations for the form of the independent mechanism including its governance, legislative authority, powers and functions.

Several witnesses emphasized the importance of Call for Justice 1.7, the establishment of an independent National Indigenous and Human Rights Ombudsperson, by all governments, in partnership with Indigenous peoples, with authority in all jurisdictions, along with a National Indigenous and Human Rights Tribunal. The creation of the office of the Ombudsperson and the Tribunal are also reflected as priorities in the National Action Plan. The National Action Plan further

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<sup>19</sup> APPA, *Evidence*, 25 April 2022, Nancy Jourdain, as an individual.

states that in the absence of the establishment of these institutions, the United Nations' monitoring of Canada's human rights obligations continues to be important for Indigenous peoples.<sup>20</sup>

The committee was pleased to learn that the Government of Canada has recently started to explore what the national Indigenous human rights ombudsperson and tribunal could look like.<sup>21</sup> The committee also notes that the 2022 Progress Report on the National Action Plan states that "At this point in time, no action has been taken on the creation of an independent national Indigenous oversight body."<sup>22</sup> The committee heard that the implementation of the Calls for Justice must be done holistically rather than in a piecemeal manner.<sup>23</sup> Given concerns about the implementation of the Calls for Justice more broadly, the committee believes it is important to examine the Government of Canada's role in the implementation of Call for Justice 1.7 as part of a potential future study on missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

## CONCLUSION

The committee believes that the federal government plays an essential role in implementing the Calls for Justice. The committee intends to ask the Senate for an Order of Reference to contribute to this important work by examining the federal government's role in the implementation of Calls for Justice 1.7 and 1.10. The potential study would be guided by the families and survivors of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, and Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. Ultimately, the committee believes that this work is imperative to support the health and safety of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.

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<sup>20</sup> *2021 Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People National Action Plan: Ending Violence Against Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People*, p.33.

<sup>21</sup> APPA, *Evidence*, May 16, 2022, Chantal Marin-Comeau, Director General, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Secretariat, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada.

<sup>22</sup> *2022 Progress Report on the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People National Action Plan*, 23 May 2022, p. 58.

<sup>23</sup> APPA, *Evidence*, 4 April 2022, Qajaq Robinson, Former Commissioner, National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

## ANNEX A – WITNESSES

### Monday, April 4, 2022

- Marion Buller, Former Chief Commissioner, National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
- The Honourable Senator Michèle Audette, Former Commissioner, National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
- Brian Eyolfson, Former Commissioner, National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
- Qajaq Robinson, Former Commissioner, National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
- Elmer St. Pierre, National Chief, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples
- Elizabeth Blaney, Director of Policy Development, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples
- Rosemary Cooper, Executive Director, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada
- Lisa Pigeau, Director of Intergovernmental Relations and Gender-Based Violence Initiatives, Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak
- Gerri Sharpe, Interim President, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada

### Monday, April 25, 2022

- Natan Obed, President, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami
- Cassidy Caron, President, Métis National Council
- Julie McGregor, Director, Justice Sector, Assembly of First Nations
- Brenda Vanguard, Women's Council Representative, Assembly of First Nations
- Nancy Jourdain, As an Individual
- Denise Pictou Maloney, As an Individual
- Jana Schulz, As an Individual

### Monday, May 16, 2022

- The Honourable Marc Miller, P.C., M.P., Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations
- Chantal Marin-Comeau, Director General, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Secretariat, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada
- Daniel Quan-Watson, Deputy Minister, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada

## ANNEX B – BRIEFS

- Coalition Canada Basic Income – revenue de base



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