

July 26, 2017

## **Anova stands in solidarity with Indigenous communities and their decision to request a restructuring of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Inquiry.**

Anova (newly unified Women's Community House and Sexual Assault Centre London) acknowledges that the Inquiry in to the Missing and Murdered Indigenous women of Canada brought hope to Indigenous families across Turtle Island. As women's advocates, we know that the threat of violence continues to loom too large as a reality in the lives of Indigenous girls and women in Canada. On average, Indigenous women aged 25 to 44 are *five times more likely* than other Canadian women of the same age to die as a result of violence<sup>1</sup>. According to Amnesty International, hundreds of Indigenous women have been reported missing or murdered in Canada; most of these cases remain unsolved. The Inquiry in to the Missing and Murdered Indigenous women of Canada – and a lack of justice associated with this issue to date – also reflects this reality.

The Inquiry brought hope to Indigenous families and many others. This hope was accompanied by an expectation that this epidemic would finally be acknowledged and addressed in a manner which encompasses justice and healing.

We also acknowledge that the current execution of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Inquiry has been based upon settler perspectives, as well as settler principles, and has ultimately fallen short of expectations. The exclusion of respected elders, advocates, and activists within Indigenous communities – which has occurred within the Inquiry process – is unacceptable and violates the concept of "Reconciliation". A lack of communication and support offered to the families in this process is truly disheartening and leads to re-traumatization. The practices that are being used to execute this Inquiry are colonial-based, and not representative of Indigenous folks or their journey to healing. Indigenous ceremonial protocols have been disrespected by the enforcement of colonial structuring in the process of this Inquiry.

Anova supports, fundamentally, that Indigenous healing must incorporate Indigenous world-views and the use of Indigenous healing ceremonies. We recognizes the importance of this Inquiry and its success —however, these families and communities are entitled to being adequately supported with the inclusion of practices from their own culture and healing traditions throughout. This right must be respected by the Inquiry's Commission.

It is our understanding that the Inquiry has recently seen the resignation of one of the five commissioners, and the decision of an important First Nations women's group to withdraw its support for the process. Anova stands in support of Indigenous leaders, their experiences and expertise on this matter.

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<sup>1</sup> 2004 Amnesty International report: Stolen Sisters: A Human Rights Response to Discrimination and Violence Against Indigenous Women in Canada.

**Anova stands behind all survivor of violence, including Indigenous communities.** We are honored to stand in solidarity with our Indigenous communities, which include the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, the Oneida Nation of the Thames, and the Munsee-Delaware Nation.

Anova seeks to create an inclusive world of shared power where everyone lives freely without fear of violence. We provide shelter, counselling and support, and education around domestic violence and abuse, and sexual violence in London & Middlesex County. Our 24/7 helpline is 519-642-3000.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kate Wiggins', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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