

## **CNW Group Portfolio E-Mail**

### **ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS**

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Women's History Month: AFN says Ottawa must take meaningful action on missing and murdered Indigenous women

OTTAWA, Oct. 1 /CNW Telbec/ - While international agencies like the United Nations and Amnesty International have expressed serious concerns about human rights issues surrounding more than 500 missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada, the federal government has responded with apathy.

Today, to mark the beginning of Women's History Month, AFN National Chief Shawn Atleo and AFN Women's Council Chair Kathleen McHugh called on Ottawa to take meaningful and concrete actions to address violence and discrimination experienced by Indigenous women and their families.

Next month, Canada is due to report to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) on how it is addressing violence and the lack of attention by law enforcement and other justice officials. The committee asked for the report last November. Over the past year, Canada has not worked with Indigenous women or leadership in crafting a plan to address these issues, and has declined the AFN Women's Council's offers to assist.

Yesterday, AFN Women's Council Chair Kathleen McHugh endorsed a report by Amnesty International expressing frustration that government has failed to get to the heart of why so many Indigenous women have been murdered or gone missing and why 25 per cent of the cases remain unsolved.

"Gaps in human rights and the justice system have allowed perpetrators to remain free, cases to remain unsolved. Meanwhile the epidemic of missing and murdered women and girls continues," said AFN Women's Council Chair Kathleen McHugh. "We know what must be done to better protect Indigenous women and girls. Police and the justice system must be more responsive. We need more shelters, better victim services, and specific programs to assist women who have been trafficked. We also need to address the dismal poverty that traps women into high-risk situations."

"What is happening to our families is a serious breach of human rights that requires an urgent and full response. In order to prevent similar tragedies and to provide answers and comfort to grieving families, all parties must be fully resolved to work together in supporting, protecting and caring for Indigenous

women," said AFN National Chief Shawn Atleo.

The AFN is calling on Parliament, and particularly the Standing Committees on Aboriginal Affairs and Justice and Human Rights to strike a joint committee to review the matter of violence against Indigenous women and girls and to ensure that Canada's response to CEDAW has input from Indigenous women and leaders.

In addition, the AFN is calling on Parliament to work with Indigenous women and leaders on a National Action Plan that will bring clear focus and attention to this issue and hold authorities to account for their actions.

The National Chief and Women's Council Chair will join families of missing and murdered women, the Native Women's Association of Canada, Amnesty International Canada, KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives, the National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC) and the Canadian Federation of Students, Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies, the Métis National Council, the Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action (FAFIA), and others in reading a Joint Statement calling for a National Plan of Action at a vigil to be held on Sunday, October 4.

The Assembly of First Nations is the national organization representing First Nations citizens in Canada.

The AFN Women's Council ensures the perspectives of First Nations' women are included in all AFN policy directives and activities, as well as ensuring that the AFN is an effective advocate on behalf of First Nations women.

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