



FEMMES AUTOCHTONES DU QUÉBEC INC.
QUEBEC NATIVE WOMEN INC.

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Quebec groups join their voices to denounce the chronic under-funding of Aboriginal women's shelters

Montreal, May 14, 2007 – The women's shelters in the Aboriginal communities receive less than one-third of the funding that the other shelters in Quebec receive. "This situation can be described only as discriminatory, unjust and unacceptable," said Ellen Gabriel, president of Quebec Native Women (QNW), at the launch today of an awareness campaign to build support for the Aboriginal women's shelters. Also attending the launch were several of QNW's Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal partners.

QNW and its partner organizations denounce the difficult situation facing the five shelters located in Aboriginal communities. Several studies have shown that the resources available for Aboriginal women who are victims of domestic violence and for their children come far short of meeting their needs. The shelters are also no longer able to keep up with the demand for their services. They require more adequate financial support to hire new resources, provide specialized support services and assist a greater number of victims. The funding that the shelters were granted upon their inception in 1995 has not increased since that time and no longer meets their needs.

To provide professional services and the same number of beds, the non-Aboriginal shelters in Quebec each receive close to \$487,000 per year from the provincial government. The shelters in the Aboriginal communities each receive just \$150,000, through funding provided by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. "The federal government must accept its responsibilities and stop throwing the ball back into Quebec's court. Aboriginal women are the ones who pay for this quarrelling," said Ms. Gabriel. "We must put an end to this discrimination which illustrates the neglect being shown by the governments and has disastrous consequences for women who are trying to get back on their feet."

During the First Nations Socio-Economic Forum, held in Mashteuiatsh last October, the Conservative ministers in attendance said that providing assistance to Aboriginal women experiencing difficulties was a priority and gave assurances that the federal government would make additional funding available to support the Aboriginal women's shelter network.

An announcement that \$6 million was to be allocated for all the Native women's shelters in Canada has done nothing to ease the situation at the shelters and the federal government has not

yet confirmed funding for 2007-2008. “Our action is a direct consequence of the Conservative government’s abandonment of our network, despite its promises,” said Ms. Gabriel.

An unjust situation

The funding that goes to the Aboriginal women’s shelters in Quebec stands at just 31% of the core funding received by the non-Aboriginal women’s shelters in the province.

But the task of the shelters in the Aboriginal communities is more daunting. They must assist women who are coping with a wide range of social problems, including suicide, substance abuse, and all forms of violence.

“The non-Aboriginal shelters receive a higher level of core funding because they have justified their needs and gained the provincial government’s recognition of those needs. The Aboriginal shelters face even greater challenges, yet they receive a third of the funding. This is an injustice which must be denounced and which must be remedied,” said Michèle Asselin, president of the Fédération des femmes du Québec, which is one of QNW’s many partners.

QNW is demanding that the federal government revise its funding formula and take firm action this year to end the under-funding of the Aboriginal women’s shelters. To achieve this goal, it will be seeking the support of the federal MPs from all parties in Quebec.

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Some background facts

- The Aboriginal women’s shelters receive their core funding from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC).
- In Quebec, there are five Aboriginal communities with women’s shelters.
- INAC acknowledged the under-funding of the Aboriginal women’s shelters by allocating additional funding in 2006.
- Nothing permanent has been proposed for 2007-2008.

Statistics tell the story:

- Aboriginal people are three times more likely to be victims of violence than non-Aboriginal people.¹
- Aboriginal women are much more likely to suffer the most severe forms of spousal violence, such as being beaten, choked, threatened with or attacked by a firearm or knife, and sexually assaulted (54% vs. 37%).²
- There are other influencing factors, such as the break-up of families due to the residential schools tragedy and the impact that colonization has had on traditional culture and values.³

List of partners supporting QNW's demands:

- Fédération des femmes du Québec
- Native Women's Association of Canada
- Women's Centre of Montreal
- Regroupement provincial des maisons d'hébergement et de transition pour femmes victimes de violence conjugale
- Regroupement Naissance- Renaissance
- Regroupement québécois des centres d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel
- L'R des centres de femmes du Québec
- Fédération du Québec pour le planning des naissances
- Fédération des associations de familles monoparentales et recomposées du Québec
- Fédération de ressources d'hébergement pour femmes violentées et en difficulté du Québec
- Conseil d'intervention pour l'accès des femmes au travail
- Relais-femmes

¹ *Victimization and Offending among the Aboriginal Population in Canada*, Statistics Canada (catalogue no. 85-002-XIF, vol. 26, no. 3)

² *Measuring Violence against Women: Statistical Trends 2006*, Statistics Canada (catalogue no. 85-570-XIE), p.71

³ Ibid