



FEMMES AUTOCHTONES DU QUÉBEC INC.
QUEBEC NATIVE WOMEN INC.

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Kahnawake – October 23 - Quebec Native Women Inc. welcomes the comments made by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing during his preliminary report on homelessness in Canada at a press conference in Ottawa on October 22.

Mr. Kothari said his two-week cross-country investigation produced shocking evidence on the number of homeless in Canada and the conditions endured by Aboriginal people on and off reserves. He denounced the Federal Government's lack of a comprehensive and properly-funded poverty reduction strategy and said that this strategy should include funding directed to groups that have been systematically marginalized, including women, Aboriginal people, elders, youth, and others.

Mr. Khotari named the major deficiencies of protection law for women living on a reserve, the impossibility to file complaints to the Canadian Human Rights Commission and matrimonial real property laws on reserves as being some of the greatest barriers to the enjoyment of the right to housing and a life free of violence. This supports the work that Aboriginal women's organizations have been doing for numerous years in our fight for equality and dignity of our human rights.

Canada has had an annual multi-billion dollar federal budget surplus for almost a decade yet it continues to cut back funding to Aboriginal communities that contributes to the deterioration of the quality of life on reserve. The right to housing includes adequate water quality, safety and freedom from violence: all issues that have been of concern for Aboriginal women's groups but which continue to be marginalized in an atmosphere that supports economic development over human rights.

QNW therefore is encouraged and grateful to SR Mr. Khotari in his recommendations to the Canadian Government mentions the need for adequate funding to support and create more Native Women shelters on and off reserve. Mention was made as well regarding the need for adequate funding and support for transitional and long term housing policies to be implemented as soon as possible.

Mr. Khotari stated that he was also disturbed to see the devastating impact of the paternalism that marks federal and provincial government, legislations, policies and budgetary allocation for Aboriginal people on and off reserve. He said "these policies

have seriously compromised the right to self determination that Aboriginal people enjoy under the original treaties and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights”. He then recommended that the “Federal Government commit funding and resources for a targeted national Aboriginal housing strategy – both on- and off-reserve – that ensures that Aboriginal housing and services are under Aboriginal control”.

The United Nations deems it a "national emergency" when reviewing Canada's compliance with the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

“We are encouraged by the preliminary assessment by the Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing as it validates the culminative work of Aboriginal people in our quest for an improved quality of life. It is unfortunate that society demands the observations of the international community for the voices of Aboriginal peoples to be heard” says Ellen Gabriel, President of QNW.

Kothari presents his final report to the United Nations Human Rights Council next year.

Quebec Native Women (QNW) is a non-profit political organization created in 1974 to defend the rights and interests of Aboriginal women and their families, whether they are living in the Aboriginal communities or in urban centers.

– 30 –

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