

## **What are you doing on Tuesday, October 4th?**

### **Sisters In Spirit National Vigil: A Day of Honour and Remembrance at Acadia University**

This Tuesday, October 4th Acadia University is hosting public events throughout the day to recognize and honour the missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls, joining with others across the country who are hosting Sisters In Spirit vigils.

Sisters In Spirit is a research, education and policy initiative driven and led by Aboriginal women, with the primary goal is to conduct research and raise awareness of the alarmingly high rates of violence against Aboriginal women and girls in Canada. The Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) is one of the partners of the SIS Initiative. For more information:  
<http://www.nwac.ca/programs/sisters-spirit>

**You're Invited!** Students, faculty, staff and local community members are invited to participate throughout the day's events at Acadia University, sharing support and showing solidarity with Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians who seek to advance human rights for Aboriginal women and girls.

### **TAKE A WALK FOR SIS @ NOON:**

A group of students from Acadia welcome you to join walk of remembrance at 12 noon: "We are welcoming any and all students interested in showing their support to thousands of women who have lost their lives."

Who: Students, Faculty, Staff and Local Community Members

When: 12 pm

Where: Starting outside of the KCIC and concluding at front garden at the Wolfville Post Office

What: If you can, please bring an Autumn flower to leave at the post office in memory of many Aboriginal women and girls who are missing or murdered over the years.

### **LEARN MORE ABOUT SIS: 3 - 4:20 pm, KCIC Auditorium**

Come to KCIC Auditorium (lower level) to learn more about the national Sisters in Spirit program from Darlene Copeland, a case worker with Mi'kmaq Family and Children's Services of Nova Scotia

### **OFFICIALLY REGISTERED EVENT:**

#### **6 - 8:30 pm commencing in the KCIC Foyer at 6 pm**

Join a University-Community Event, hosted by Darlene Copeland. Acadia University President and Vice-Chancellor Ray Ivany will offer words of welcome. Join MADD, Wolfville Raging Grannies, Katimavik and other community organizations in this special event, including an opening information and discussion session, honour walk, and get-together.

This event is registered as part of the national day of action:

<http://www.nwac.ca/programs/2011-vigil-locations>

Please bring a candle or flashlight for the Honour Walk portion of the evening.

### **What's SIS?**

The SIS was created in 2005 to honour Aboriginal women who have gone missing or have been murdered across Canada, with an untold number of cases that remain unsolved over the past decade alone. The SIS program was created by the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC), in hopes to bring attention to the issue and to create a national database. In recent years, the federal government funding for this National program has been cut. The links below provide more information about the organization and the perils it has been facing. Since 2005, Sisters in Spirit has been gathering complex statistical information on violence against Aboriginal women. It has shown that more than 582 Aboriginal women have gone missing or been murdered in Canada since roughly 1980. Twenty of the cases have occurred in 2010, and 226 in the past 10 years. Such information was previously scattered and highly deficient. Status of Women officials made clear to NWAC that any new funding proposals would not permit the use of the Sisters in Spirit name or the continuation of their groundbreaking and growing database.

<http://www.nwac.ca/programs/sisters-spirit>

<http://rabble.ca/news/2010/11/sisters-spirit-program-used-feds-squeeze-native-womens-association-canada>

<http://creekside1.blogspot.com/2010/11/sisters-in-spirit-update-nwac-not.html>

<http://www.dominionpaper.ca/articles/3764>

<http://backofthebook.ca/2010/11/15/ambrose-disappears-sisters-in-spirit/4212/>

## *Native Women's Association of Canada*

### *Joint Statement*

*Read nationwide on October 4th 2009 as part of the movement of Sisters In Spirit vigils.*

The violence experienced by Aboriginal women and girls in Canada is a national tragedy. The disappearance and murder of our Aboriginal sisters is felt nationwide, with countless First Nations, Inuit and Métis families and communities grappling with the loss of a loved one and struggling to find answers. We are speaking out, as individuals and organizations, because we believe this violence should be of urgent concern to everyone in Canada. More than that, this concern must lead to action—action to ensure that the rights and safety of Aboriginal sisters, daughters, mothers and grandmothers are respected and protected.

October 4<sup>th</sup> is a day where we honour the lives of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls. The Sisters In Spirit movement began with the courage, strength and love of families. We must take the time to give thanks to these families who are our inspiration and the reason we all continue to demand action. Many of them are here with us today and we thank them for sharing their stories. There are more than 520 missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in this country. Each one of these women is loved and missed terribly by their family, friends and community. Their loss is our loss. Their grief is our grief. Together we demand action.

Across Canada, there are countless individuals who dedicate their professional and personal lives to the betterment of Aboriginal women and girls. Some of us are community workers, service providers

or teachers. Others are policymakers, leaders and funders. Each of us plays a role in ensuring that Aboriginal women and girls receive the support and protection they need to live in safety. The positive initiatives that have been taken at the community and local level tell us that the public has the will to stop this violence and that solutions can be found.

However, much more needs to be done. Aboriginal women face disproportionate levels and severe forms of violence no matter where they live in Canada. There can be no piecemeal solution to a problem of this scale. Therefore, we are calling on all levels of government to work with Aboriginal women, including the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) and other key stakeholders, collaboratively on issues of justice, safety, economic security and the well-being of Aboriginal women and girls. We call for a national plan of action that:

- Recognizes the violence faced by Aboriginal women because they are Aboriginal and because they are women,
- Ensures effective and unbiased police response through appropriate training, resources and coordination,
- Improves public awareness and accountability through the consistent collection and publication of comprehensive national statistics on rates of violent crime against Aboriginal women,
- Reduces the risk to Aboriginal women by closing the economic and social gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada; and,
- Improves the child welfare system.

We are ready to start this very important work.

This Joint Statement is supported by:

Amnesty International Canada

Assembly of First Nations

Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies

Canadian Federation of Students

The Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action (FAFIA)

KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives

Métis National Council

National Association of Friendship Centres

New Democratic Party of Canada Federal Caucus