

Questions and Answers

National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

What is the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG)?

Indigenous women account for 16 per cent of all women murdered in Canada between 1980 and 2012, but comprise only four per cent of Canada's female population. There is an urgent need to develop a national response to the threats to safety and sources of vulnerability faced by Indigenous women and girls.

One of the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action is to undertake a National Inquiry. It is a step towards reconciliation and building trust between government and Indigenous peoples in Canada.

This National Inquiry will identify and examine the systemic causes of violence against Indigenous women and girls in Canada and make recommendations for effective action.

A Commission of Inquiry has been set up to include five commissioners. The Inquiry will begin on September 1, 2016, with the final report due December 31, 2018.

The Commission is authorized to:

- set-up an inquiry process that is trauma-informed and culturally appropriate, recognizing the diversity of Indigenous cultures in Canada;
- provide opportunities for individuals, families and community members to share their experiences and views, including recommendations for increasing safety and preventing/eliminating violence through the use of informal processes; and
- organize outreach and travel to communities to hear their experiences.

How will the Inquiry work in Nunavut?

National Indigenous organizations called for a "National Inquiry", and the provinces and territories have supported that call. In response, Canada has led the process to create a "National Inquiry", which to be truly national in scope, requires each province and territory's cooperation.

Therefore, the Government of Nunavut (GN) departments of Justice, Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs and Family Services are coordinating with all other

jurisdictions to ensure that the Commission can conduct the Inquiry in Nunavut, and address the needs of Inuit in our territory to participate in the process.

In anticipation of the Inquiry announcement, the GN and other key stakeholders - Qullit Nunavut Status of Women Council, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, RCMP and others - have formed a working group to ensure an effective response to the Inquiry in Nunavut. This group will plan details, support families and help with appropriate follow-up.

How will the Inquiry apply to Inuit in Nunavut?

The Government of Canada has confirmed that the Commission can establish regional and issue-specific boards to advise them, which could include Inuit and Nunavut-specific representatives. The GN departments of Justice, Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs and Family Services will assist in coordinating with the Commission, as well as federal, provincial and other territorial governments to ensure Nunavut's languages and Inuit culture will be considered.

A total of \$16.17 million will be distributed by the Commission over four years for the creation of family information liaison units in each province and territory and to increase victims' services funding for families of MMIWG and survivors of violence. These supports will be available to families, loved ones, survivors, Elders, youth, local organizations, etc.

The family information liaison units will provide centralized, dedicated resources for families of missing or murdered Indigenous women and girls, and gather the information families are seeking. These services will be provided in a respectful and coordinated manner during the Inquiry. Details will become available as the Commission is set up and begins their work.

In Nunavut, the focus of the Inquiry should also include an examination of the underlying causes of the higher levels of violence and of the greater vulnerability to violence within the territory.

The Minister of Justice, Keith Peterson, and the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, Monica Ell-Kanayuk, are co-leads on this issue on behalf of the Government of Nunavut.

Can an inquiry examine individual cases of missing or murdered women or girls?

The conduct of the Inquiry will depend mainly on the Commission and how it chooses to proceed. They may look at individual cases to assist them in reviewing the larger issue of MMIWG as a whole. However, it is important to note that the purpose of the public inquiry is not to make decisions or assign blame in specific cases.

What will the Inquiry look at?

The Inquiry will look at the systemic causes of all forms of violence against Indigenous women and girls in Canada. It will also examine institutional policies and practices that respond to violence experienced by Indigenous women and girls in Canada, including identifying best practices in reducing violence and increasing safety.

Will the Inquiry have the ability to summon Nunavummiut as witnesses?

Yes, the Inquiry will have the ability to summon witnesses, including police, government and others to testify. The GN will help coordinate with all jurisdictions to address any procedural issues faced by the Commission to carry out its mandate.

Will the Inquiry have the ability to force police to re-open cases?

No, but in accordance with the federal terms of reference for the inquiry if the Inquiry finds evidence, it will be able to make recommendations to police or an auditor general to look into them.

One of my loved ones was murdered or is missing. What does it mean for me?

If you have a loved one who was murdered or is missing, you may have the opportunity to participate in the Inquiry. Details on dates, locations and participants are still being finalized, including setting up family information liaison units.

In the meantime, you can call the GN victims' services toll-free line at 1-866-456-5216 to speak to someone about the Inquiry and your story.

If you or someone you know needs help or support, you can also call the national, toll-free crisis call line 24/7 at 1-844-413-6649 or the Nunavut Kamatsiaqtut Help Line at 1-800-265-3333.

Who will be able to participate in the Inquiry?

The Commission can provide anyone with significant and direct interest in this issue with an opportunity to participate. It will be up to the Commission to determine how this will work.

Once the Commission is underway, it will establish its process for conducting the Inquiry. There will likely be public notices about upcoming opportunities to participate. These notices should also specify how people will be able to participate.

What will be available to Inquiry participants?

The Commission is authorized to make trauma-informed and culturally appropriate counselling services available to family members and to survivors during their appearance at the Inquiry. Pre and post participation preparation and counselling is also an important component for families and survivors.

The Commission is also authorized to recommend that funding be provided to any person who would not otherwise be able to participate. For example, participants may need to travel, perform ceremonial activities, require childcare, or other things in order to participate. The limits and rules for this funding are yet to be determined.

The Government of Canada has confirmed that the inquiry process must be culturally appropriate and acknowledge, respect and honour the diverse cultural, linguistic and spiritual traditions of Indigenous peoples across the country. The GN will assist in facilitating this process.

What is the GN doing in preparation of the Inquiry?

The departments of Justice, Family Services, and Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs will be coordinating with the Government of Canada and the provinces and territories via a national working group throughout the life of the Inquiry to address any issues relating to the conduct of the Inquiry in Nunavut.

The GN started a working group with various departments and external stakeholders, including Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, the RCMP, Qullit Nunavut Status of Women Council, Public Prosecution Service of Canada, and the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth to discuss preparation for the Inquiry in Nunavut.

What is the Government of Nunavut doing to help?

The GN has several initiatives that address violence against women. They include:

- funding for Community Justice Outreach Workers to assist individuals in applying to a designated Justice of the Peace for an Emergency Protection Order (EPO) or a Community Intervention Order (CIO).
 - EPOs are used to stop abuse from continuing and ensuring all parties have a “calming period” to decide what to do with the harmful relationship. An important provision of the EPO is that the respondent not be “threatening, annoying or harassing”.
 - CIOs are used to assist those who choose to continue in their relationships to seek the counselling and guidance needed to repair past harm and learn to resolve their differences in healthier ways.
- funding for any person, group or organization involved in providing services to victims of crime in Nunavut through the Victim Assistance Fund.

- a working group to create Nunavut's first Child Advocacy Centre. Through partnership with Arctic Children and Youth Foundation, a needs assessment and feasibility study has been created with the next stage to be to create and pilot the Umingmak Child and Youth Protection Centre.
- raising awareness about family and domestic violence, by developing community resource information materials related to family violence for community-based agencies.
- exploring options for the development of Second Stage Housing to provide longer term assistance to women and children fleeing family violence.
- seeks ways to reduce violence against women and children by:
 - having two full-time, indeterminate family violence specialists leading the family violence file, with a focus on prevention;
 - providing financial assistance to support the capacity of men's and boy's programming;
 - providing funding to the five family violence shelters across Nunavut, and providing online and in-person training to the workers at the family violence shelters; and
 - providing funding to support the Qullit Nunavut Status of Women Council.