



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **BCCLA, aboriginal leaders, family members call for public inquiry into murdered and missing women**

**Vancouver** – A coalition of aboriginal leaders, community groups and family members brought together by the BCCLA released an open letter and a set of demands today calling for a public inquiry into the missing and murdered women of the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver and the Highway of Tears, supports for families enduring the current appeal process, and commencement of the trial for the 20 further alleged victims of Robert William Pickton.

“We feel it is critically important that this inquiry into the police actions, or inaction, on these files takes place now; we should not be forced to wait until all of the appeals are exhausted by the accused,” said Grand Chief Stewart Phillip of the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs. “Truth, accountability, reform and reconciliation measures relative to this continuing horrific tragedy are all part of what the families of the victims and our Aboriginal communities need to see.”

The open letter says that the Provincial Government should not wait for William Pickton to exhaust his appeal routes, and should call an inquiry into the policing and government failings surrounding the murdered and missing women. Pickton’s appeal will be heard for two weeks starting March 30, 2009. The letter also calls for the Inquiry to examine the cases of the missing and murdered women along the “Highway of Tears”, also known as Highway 16 between Prince George and Prince Rupert in northern British Columbia.

“Our community sees what’s happening along Highway 16 as exactly what happened in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside,” says David Dennis, President of the United Native Nations, an organization that represents off-reserve aboriginal people. “We can’t have this tragedy of ignoring these disappearing and murdered women repeat itself – we need to break this cycle.”

The letter was sent on Wednesday morning to the Attorney General of B.C., the Solicitor General of B.C. and the Premier of British Columbia.

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