

**Manitou Conference Minute for Right Relations:
“We need a National Public Independent Inquiry!”**

It's been a year since the body of 15 year-old Tina Fontaine, from the Sagkeeng First Nation, was pulled from the Red River in a bag. To date, her murder remains unsolved. Tina's particular story is unique to her but her story is common to Canadian Aboriginal women and girls. They are almost three times more likely to be violently victimized than non-Aboriginal women. They make up 4% of Canada's population but represent 16% of all murdered women (from 1980-2012) and 12% of all missing women on record.

Our UCC General Council recently reaffirmed a call to the Federal government for a national inquiry into this violent reality. The provincial and territorial governments and Aboriginal organizations are all on record as requesting an inquiry. The Harper Government has refused.

The Government convened a one-day National Roundtable on Murdered and Missing Aboriginal women and girls last February that brought together all levels of government, national Aboriginal organizations & some family members of those victimized. At the end of the Day, the current Federal Government remained opposed to the inquiry. Participants agreed to coordinate efforts on policing, community safety and crime prevention but *the root causes that put Aboriginal women at risk, still need to be addressed. A national public independent inquiry would be the first step toward doing this.*

What can we do?

- During the run-up to the federal election, urge candidates of all parties to voice support for a national inquiry.
- Sign the on-line Amnesty International petition 'No More Stolen Sisters' that calls for an inquiry.
- Attend one of the public vigils taking place on October 4 to remember those who have gone missing or been murdered or, participate in the virtual candlelight vigil at: www.october4th.ca

What else can we do? As people of faith who cherish the life God has given to all Creation, we can pray unceasingly that the world will become a more just and gentle place for *all* people. May it be so

*Written by Rev Teresa Jones, MTU Conf Right Relations Team, Aug 2015
Supported by information from: www.cbc.ca; www.amnesty.ca; www.nwac.ca*