

**Manitou Conference Minute for Right Relations:
Finally! An Inquiry into Murdered & Missing Indigenous Women**

“Nobody knows,” she sings. “Nobody knows where we’ve been or where we go... .” Through song, Iskwe, a Cree-Dene singer cries out for her murdered and missing Indigenous sisters, hoping that somebody will hear the call for an inquiry into this Canadian epidemic of violence.

Finally, after voices coming from many directions, including The United Church of Canada, the Federal Government launched a national, independent, public Inquiry from September 2016 to December 2018. Chief Commissioner of the Inquiry is Marion Buller, a First Nations Judge, and citizen of the Mistawasis Saskatchewan First Nation.

The Inquiry’s mandate is to identify systemic causes of violence and make recommendations to help end violence against Indigenous women and girls. When announcing the Inquiry, Federal Justice Minister Jody Wilson-Raybould said, “We need to get at the root causes of why this situation exists in the first place, whether that be poverty, marginalization, discrimination and address those in a substantive way.”

A 2015 United Nations Report found that First Nations, Métis and Inuit women are five times more likely to die under violent circumstances than their non-Aboriginal counterparts. The Inquiry will not bring back a lost friend or family member but perhaps there will be some measure of healing through the process of inquiry and ultimately through much-needed changes in our society, that must occur as a result of it.

October 4th vigils to remember murdered and missing Indigenous women will take place across our country again this year. Check on-line for a vigil near you; go to: www.october4th.ca Be there in person or in spirit!

What else can we do? I believe the God of Love and Justice is calling us to hold the Commissioners of the Inquiry in our prayers; affirm the importance of the Inquiry with our MPs; follow the progress of the Inquiry so that we can be ready to receive and accept the findings; be prepared to make changes personally and socially, and to hold those accountable in positions of authority and governance who must act to end this national tragedy!

*Written by Rev Teresa Jones, MTU Conference Right Relations, 08/16;
Supported by information from www.cbc.ca*