



NEWS ADVISORY

STOP THE DISCRIMINATION

Why are First Nations Shelters worth less than other Shelters in Alberta?

June 7, 2005

The Alberta Council of Women's Shelters (ACWS) with member First Nation's On-Reserve Shelters undertook a comparative analysis of funding between provincially funded women's shelters and federally funded on-reserve shelters earlier this year. The results were shocking. The report shows that on-reserve shelters in Alberta are receiving over one million dollars less in operating funds compared to their Provincially-funded counterparts.

Family violence in Alberta is at an unacceptable rate, and First Nation's shelters see this on a daily basis.

"We are hearing of too many women and children that die as a result of family violence." says Kathy Bellerose from the Sucker Creek women's shelter. "We are trying our best day after day to find appropriate resources to help the women and children that enter our shelter. We do not discriminate, as our policy states that we accept any abused women regardless of culture. It's the inadequate funding that on reserve shelters receive, and the continuous run around we face that play a major role with those women who return to their abusers. Any women dying at the hands of their abusers is one too many.

Without adequate funding, resources and programs for our shelters, we will continue to see the women staying with us become frustrated and return to the abuse. The funding for on reserve shelters must be increased."

Janet Gladue from Bigstone Cree Nation Women's Emergency Shelter in Wabasca says, "Our community needs to heal, the abuse needs to stop. How can we help our women and children if we have to extend ourselves too much to provide the support they need with few resources."

ACWS and member On-Reserve Shelters have presented their findings and requested parity in funding to Deputy Prime Minister, Anne McLellan. To date there has been no response. However, Federal Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Andy Scott has responded by letter stating that they can't look at this situation until next year. This issue has been under review by Indian Affairs for more than a decade and on reserve shelters still do not have an equitable funding formula to support their organizations. How many more First Nations women & children will die during the bureaucracy's waiting period?

Jan Reimer, Provincial Coordinator says that "there appears to be a pervasive discrimination against First Nations shelters on reserve. The women and the children who come to shelter and those providing shelter services, should not be worth less than the women and children who are able to access provincially funded shelters.

We also hear reports that many women killed due to domestic violence are often not counted as that. Even worse their deaths go virtually unnoticed by the media and public at large. In order to have effective community collaborative response, we need to be able to know the magnitude of the problems that exist, and acknowledge them - not deny them. We also need to have more fatality inquiries into the deaths of First Nation's women and children. I often wonder how many of the 500 missing Aboriginal women in Canada are a result of family violence, directly or indirectly."

"The abuse and death on-reserves is everywhere" says Dorothy Sam from Eagle's Nest Stoney Family Shelter. "I wish I could give you an example of the extent – but to even relay a situation is dangerous to abused women and children or the loved ones left behind. This is just another problem we deal with in a small and isolated community. Everybody knows each other and it has proven very dangerous to victims of abuse and their families. Sometimes it just feels like there is no escape, no help for First Nations people. This can't continue. We need real funding and real solutions."

We are inviting you, the media to be part of the solution by educating the public and exposing the sheer magnitude of the problems facing First Nation's On-Reserve Shelters. The Alberta Council of Women's Shelters with Elders, Chiefs, and member First Nations On-Reserve Shelters will be informing their guests of this issue as well as a making plea for support from our Provincial Ministers and MLA's, MP's and Federal representatives. The event will take place on Thursday, June 9th, 2005 at 10:00 am at the Wingate Hotel (18220 100 Ave.) in Edmonton.

What: Media Conference, First Nations On-Reserve Shelters seeking funding parity.

**When: Thursday, June 9, 2005
10:00 am**

**Where: Wingate Hotel in the Gladstone Room (A)
18220 100 Ave.
Edmonton**

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**More information, media requests, call Patricia at ACWS
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