

**Submission
to**

**THE RIGHT HONOURABLE JUSTIN TRUDEAU
PRIME MINISTER OF CANADA**

By



**The Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women
*La Fédération canadienne des femmes de carrières commerciales et
professionnelles***

Member of the International Federation of BPW Clubs

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**Working towards improving economic, political, social and
employment conditions for women in Canada**

“Women working for working women.”

December 2015

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INTRODUCTION

In 1930, BPW Canada was a founding member of the International Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, which has grown to include clubs in more than 100 countries around the world. BPW International, the recognized voice of gainfully employed women in all professions and occupations, promotes equal opportunities and status for women. As a non-governmental organization (NGO), BPW International has Category I Consultative Status at the United Nations.

The Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women (BPW Canada) is an equality-seeking group working towards improving economic, political, social and employment conditions for women. We are "**Women working for Working Women**". Our membership includes women from a variety of professions and occupations, including women entrepreneurs, in clubs across Canada. BPW Canada develops the professional and leadership potential of women through education, awareness, advocacy and mentoring within a supportive network.

For 85 years, we have been advocating for just and equal status of women in all levels of society and have played a significant role in achieving advancement for women. For more information on our achievements, please visit our website at www.bpwcanada.com.

Currently, local BPW Clubs across Canada offer a range of opportunities and activities for members based on the four pillars of our Membership Model: Awareness, Advocacy and Action on women's issues; Leadership skills and Career advancement; Supportive networking; and Personal development.

The Annual General Meeting was held August 6-8, 2015.. Our Bi-Annual Conventions and Annual General Meetings are where our policy is decided. Resolutions contained in this document were initiated at the club level, researched and formulated, and brought to the Annual General Meeting where they were discussed and debated. Once accepted, resolutions become part of the official policy of BPW Canada.

The issues raised by BPW Canada are issues of concern to our society as a whole. We look forward to the opportunity to meet with our federal government representatives to present our resolutions and our concerns in more detail.

Colleen Allan, President, BPW Canada

Kathleen Allen, Secretary, BPW Canada

Linda Davis, Resolutions Chair, BPW Canada

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RESOLUTION 01 - 2015

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that BPW Canada urges the Government of Canada, Deputy Minister of the Department of Justice, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, Minister of Health and Social Services, and Minister for the Status of Women to immediately adopt and implement the recommendations as outlined in the Amnesty International 2004 report: *Stolen Sisters: Discrimination and Violence against Indigenous Women in Canada: A Summary of Amnesty International's Concerns*.

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that BPW Canada urges the Government of Canada, Deputy Minister of the Department of Justice, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, Minister of Health and Social Services, and Minister for the Status of Women to engage the expertise of Native leaders and Native women's organizations in order to establish effective mechanisms to combat violence against aboriginal women

RATIONALE

Amnesty International 2004 Summary on the Discrimination and Violence against Indigenous Women, outlines issues Indigenous women face. These issues of racism, discrimination, social and economic marginalization, and poor government policy are considered the root causes of disproportionate numbers of Indigenous women living in extreme poverty and homelessness making them vulnerable to exploitation and extreme brutality due to the social indifference to Indigenous women's safety and welfare. Amnesty International urged Canadian officials at all levels of government to implement the required measures to eliminate the marginalization of Indigenous women in Canada and to build better relations between Indigenous people and the justice system¹.

As of 2014, 1,181 Indigenous women were missing (164) or murdered (1,017) with 225 unsolved cases which are significantly more than other Canadian women. In 2009, the rate of victimization of Indigenous women was three times higher than non-Indigenous women. As of September 2013, 1455 missing women were reported with 164 being Indigenous women. The *Missing and Murdered Aboriginal women: A National Operational Overview Report* identified key risk factors such as employment status, social assistance, use of intoxicants, and sex trade involvement though these numbers were not significantly higher than non-Indigenous women. Recommendations included: enhancing the efforts to solve these cases including sharing of information with all police jurisdictions, focus on prevention efforts especially in high risk communities/areas, increase public awareness, and strengthening the data².

SOURCES

1. Amnesty International (2004). *Stolen sisters: Discrimination and violence against Indigenous women in Canada: A summary of Amnesty International's concerns*. Retrieved from <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/AMR20/001/2004/en/48f05a31-d589-11dd-bb24-1fb85fe8fa05/amr200012004en.pdf>.

² Royal Canadian Mounted Police (2014). *Missing and murdered Aboriginal women: A National Operational Overview*. Retrieved from <http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/pubs/mmaw-faapd-eng.pdf>.

Indigenous women represent only 4.3% of the Canadian population. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights December 2014 report reiterated much of the findings in the 2004 Amnesty International Report regarding police practice, the root causes associated with government policies that promote a history of discrimination and increased vulnerability of Indigenous women to violence. This history of discrimination has resulted in Indigenous females constituting, "one of the most disadvantaged groups in Canada"³. Canada as a member of the Organization of American States, has a legal obligation under, "the OAS Charter and the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man"⁴ to perform due diligence and implement measures to address these social and economic disparities. These measures must also address the factors associated with the racial and gender discrimination as a result of past and current institutional and structural inequalities. The IACHR stated that a national coordinated response must address the social and economic issues impacting Indigenous women and ensure that the implementation of the policies includes the consultation of, "different parties involved, especially including indigenous women, indigenous women's groups, civil society organizations and families and relatives of missing and murdered indigenous women, in order for those mechanisms to be successful"⁵

BPW Canada supports action to stop violence against Indigenous women, with the resolutions: *Sisters in Spirit, Native Women's Association of Canada*⁶, (2010 BPWCanada Convention) and *Re-Affirmation – Sisters in Spirit 2010 Resolution*⁷ (2012 BPWCanada Convention). The Sisters in Spirit was a research, education and policy initiative led by aboriginal women within the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC). These resolutions asked for Government of Canada, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, to work on the eradication of violence within Native communities by addressing the root and systemic causes of violence as identified by the interim report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, to reconsider the need for a national action plan and to make funds and resources available to experts working in partnership with Native people. In spite of the actions, funds and working in partnership with Native Peoples, little has changed⁸. Murdered and missing women in the native communities in Canada continue to make headlines in the papers again during the past few months⁹. It is time for the Government of Canada to solve these systemic problems within native communities. Aboriginal women and all Canadians need an assurance that tangible results are being realized.

REFERENCES

Action Plan to Address Family Violence and Violent Crimes Against Aboriginal Women and Girls, released September 2014, <http://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/violence/efforts/action-eng.pdf>

AFN in Thunder Bay, Ontario <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/thunder-bay/5-things-an-inquiry-into-missing-murdered-indigenous-women-could-achieve-1.2954279>

Amnesty International (2004). Stolen sisters: Discrimination and violence against Indigenous women in Canada: A summary of Amnesty International's concerns. Retrieved from <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/AMR20/001/2004/en/48f05a31-d589-11dd-bb24-1fb85fe8fa05/amr200012004en.pdf>

³ Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (2014). Missing and murdered Indigenous women in British Columbia, Canada. *OEA/Ser.LV/II., Doc. 30/14*. ISBN 978-0-8270-6324-2. Retrieved from <http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/reports/pdfs/Indigenous-Women-BC-Canada-en.pdf>. 12 p.

⁴ Ibid, 12 p.

⁵ Ibid, 13 p.

⁶ 2010 National BPW Canada Convention

⁷ (2012 BPWCanada Convention).

⁸ Sisters in Spirit <http://www.nwac.ca/sisters-spirit>

⁹ Action Plan to Address Family Violence and Violent Crimes Against Aboriginal Women and Girls, released September 2014, <http://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/violence/efforts/action-eng.pdf>; AFN in Thunder Bay, Ontario <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/thunder-bay/5-things-an-inquiry-into-missing-murdered-indigenous-women-could-achieve-1.2954279>

RESOLUTION 02 - 2015

Re-Affirmation of the declaration of a National Equal Pay Day in Canada

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that BPW Canada reaffirms the 2014-02 Resolution “Declaration of a National Equal Pay Day in Canada” by *re-urging* the Government of Canada to declare the use of the date March 18 (or the date calculated yearly based on the annual income of Canadian women and men) as Equal Pay Day to mark the additional number of working days that women must work longer than men in a given year, by announcing a nationally calculated annual stat on that date) as the end of 420 days that Canadian women must work compared to the 365 days that men work performing the same job to earn the same wage.

FURTHER IT BE RESOLVED that in addition to declaring Equal Pay Day nationally, BPW Canada urges the Government of Canada to promote the role of the Canadian and Provincial Human Rights Commissions across the nation in providing employers and corporations with support and guidance to create merit based workplace policies and standards, and, to encourage discussion of equal pay in various forums across the country.

RATIONALE

BPW Canada has been addressing Pay Equity since 1990 when it adopted the Resolution - Supporting Pay Equity and reaffirmed it in 1992. In this resolution, it urged the Government of Canada to legislate pro-active pay equity programs throughout the federal public sector and federally regulated employers. BPW recommended using as a starting point the requirements of its own Regulations relating to the implementation of the EQUAL PAY for Equal Work provisions of the Canadian Human Rights Code.

Associated topics and areas of advocacy work by BPW Canada include Employment Equity, Equal Pay and Affirmative Action. Gender wage gap issues have been raised several times by BPW Canada as part of its work on other initiatives such as addressing poverty in retirement including a resolution to review formulas in private pensions and annuities for women in 2006. Since 2012, BPW Clubs have engaged in public rallies, and delivered presentations in the classrooms, libraries and boardrooms to raise awareness on the issue of equal pay. In 2014, BPW Canada filed a petition for Equal Pay to be presented in the House of Commons through the Green Party Leader’s Office and submitted a resolution to the Prime Minister’s Office to declare Equal Pay Day across Canada to encourage employers, employees, businesses, corporations, government and civil society leaders to work collectively to narrow the gender wage gap.

According to the World Economic Forum Report of 2014, Canada ranks 19th where the overall gender gap is concerned but falls to rank 27th when it comes to “wage equality for similar work.”ⁱ Despite Equal Pay and Pay Equity legislation, income equity is not a reality in Canada. Women in the workforce still earn only a percentage of what their male counterparts earn – on average, less than 80%.ⁱⁱ In Alberta, the gender wage gap is the worst in Canada, with working women earning an average of 57% of what their male counterparts make for similar work.ⁱⁱⁱ Women’s lower pay results in lower pension, insurance and merit payouts as well as lower sick benefits. We know that today more households are headed by single women and that, women live longer than men. The gender wage gap is, and will continue to, lead women into poverty in their retirement years.

Although no country has been able to close the gender wage gap, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives forecasts that it will take over 200 years to close the gender wage gap. We must work collaboratively to raise awareness, encourage employers to review their hiring, and promotion policies, compensation packages, as well as their employment standards and practices to actively narrow the gender wage gap.^{iv} A Deloitte economy analyst has noted that “what is needed is focused government policy and business engagement at all levels to support women at work. Sound socio-economic policies must underpin and encourage action, and governments, along with business, must innovate, support community investment, and remain committed to making the difference as it relates to women.”^v

It is clear that a coordinated strategy involving collaborative work with Canadian and provincial Human Rights Commissions and agencies across the country is required to address the industry clustering of working women, under-valuation of traditional women’s work, number of women in decision making and leadership roles and the importance of sharing family responsibilities to achieve a work-life balance.

Equal Pay Day has already been declared in the following countries: USA, UK, Japan, Italy and Spain (in April), Australia (in September), France and Germany (in March), Argentina and South Korea (in May), among others. It is time for Canada to join other peer countries and declare Equal Pay Day nationally.

SOURCES

¹ World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report 2014. Retrieved from http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GGGR14/GGGR_CompleteReport_2014.pdf.

¹ Statistics Canada. Retrieved from: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-503-x/2010001/article/11388-eng.pdf>.

¹ Ens, D. (2014, May 30). Alberta Gender Wage Gap Worst In Canada: Little has changed in the last 20 years for women in the province’s workforce. The Calgary Journal Retrieved from: www.calgaryjournal.ca

¹ McInturff, K. (2013, April 2013). Closing Canada’s Gender Gap: Year 2240 Here We Come! Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA). Retrieved from <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/closing-canadas-gender-gap>

¹ Dassen, R. (2011, December 15). The Gender Dividend: An urgent economic imperative. Deloitte Perspectives. Retrieved from <http://globalblogs.deloitte.com/deloitteperspectives/2011/12/the-gender-dividend-an-urgent-economic-imperative.html>

RESOLUTION 03- 2015

Adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous

Therefore be it Resolved, that BPW Canada urges the Government of Canada to vote in favour, adopt and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples so that it can start to integrate the rights of indigenous peoples into its agendas, policies and programmes at all levels.

RATIONALE

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was adopted by the General Assembly in 2007, by a majority of 144 states in favour, 4 votes against (Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States) and 11 abstentions (Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burundi, Colombia, Georgia, Kenya, Nigeria, Russian Federation, Samoa and Ukraine).¹

Although Canada voted against this, the adoption of the Declaration with its 46 Articles was considered a victory for indigenous peoples around the world as UN Member States and indigenous peoples “reconciled with their painful histories and resolved to move forward together on the path of human rights, justice and development for all”. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon called on Governments and civil society to “urgently advance the work of integrating the rights of indigenous peoples into international human rights and development agendas, as well as policies and programmes at all levels, so as to ensure that the vision behind the Declaration becomes a reality”.

When Canada voted against the Declaration in 2007, later that month, the country’s largest class action settlement, the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, was signed between the government, the survivors and the church organizations. In June 2008, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was launched. A part of the agreement was to inform Canadians about what happened at the residential schools that were funded by the government and operated by churches for more than a century and affected 150,000 children. In February 2012, an interim report was released and was titled “Lack of Co operation”. The courts ruled that Canada must disclose records and staff convictions for abusing students. In June 2015 a final horrific report with 94 Recommendations was released by the Commission which has now been passed on to the National Research Centre for Truth and Reconciliation.²

Recommendation #43 in the final report calls upon the government “to fully adopt and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as the framework for reconciliation”. It is important to recognize that the UN Declaration sets the minimum international standards for the protection and promotion of the rights of Indigenous Peoples. Existing and future laws, policies, and programs on indigenous peoples need to be created and modified to be consistent with this international minimum standard.

BPW Canada urges the Government of Canada to vote in favour, adopt and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples so that it can start to advance and integrate the rights of indigenous peoples into its agendas, policies and programmes at all levels.

SOURCES

¹ <http://undesadspd.org/indigenouspeoples/declarationontherightsofindigenouspeoples.aspx>

² <http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2015/06/02/canadas-residential-schools-cultural-genocide-truth-and-reconciliation-commission-says.html>