

## STATEMENT OF THE PROVINCIAL INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S STEERING COMMITTEE

### Indigenous Women of Newfoundland and Labrador Support Police Oversight Board and Call on the Provincial Government to Form a Reconciliation Council

*Monday, September 26, 2022*

We, the Provincial Indigenous Women's Steering Committee (PIWSC), fully support the Proposals for Change that have been put forward by First Voice, an urban Indigenous coalition in St. John's, to create a police oversight board for the province that is civilian-led, independent of police, politically neutral, and representative of the province's diverse communities. Because these proposals are rooted in MMIWG Calls for Justice 5.7 and 9.2, we as Indigenous women believe that their implementation is critical to advancing reconciliation.

MMIWG 5.7 and 9.2 align with several policy recommendations that we have already put forward in the Final Report of the 16th Provincial Indigenous Women's Gathering, which was organized by the PIWSC and took place on December 6-7, 2021. That report, entitled *Hear Our Voices: MMIWG Policy Recommendations of the First Women of Newfoundland and Labrador*, calls on the provincial government to "acknowledge the need for a civilian oversight board for police services" (Recommendation 166). Other recommendations (145 and 146) further describe the operation, function, and composition of such a police oversight board in a way that closely aligns with First Voice's own Proposals for Change.

The *Hear Our Voices* report identified a total of 196 policy changes that are urgently needed in the areas of culture, health and wellness, justice, and human security. All of these policy recommendations fall within provincial jurisdiction. For that reason, the PIWSC has also proposed that the province establish a Reconciliation Council to lead the implementation of all 196 recommended policy changes. The Council's membership would comprise four Indigenous representatives appointed by the PIWSC and four senior representatives appointed by key government departments. With the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation approaching on September 30, 2022, we call on the Province to make a commitment to form such a Reconciliation Council.

"We believe the first step to implementing the recommendations that are identified in the *Hear Our Voices* report is to establish a Reconciliation Council. There is a clear and pressing need to establish a coordinating body to advance such a large number of policy changes across a variety of government departments," said Nona Gosse-Matthews, Chair of the PIWSC. "The Premier has been very vocal about his commitment to Reconciliation. Now it's time for him and his Government to take action to improve the lives of our peoples in more substantive ways."

The *Hear Our Voices* report was presented to Premier Furey and senior government officials on July 6, 2022. The Premier then committed to making a formal response to the report sometime this month, but has yet to do so.

***Issued by:***

- **Alicia Neville**, Labrador Friendship Centre
- **Beverly Thomson**, Nunatsiavut Government
- **Colleen Paul**, Qalipu First Nation
- **Kelly-Ann Blake**, Nunatsiavut Government
- **Dorothy George**, Newfoundland Native Women's Association
- **Jennifer Elson**, Labrador Friendship Centre
- **Kathleen Benuen**, Mushuau Innu First Nation, Natuashish
- **Kimberly Campbell-McLean**, AnanauKatiget Tumingit Regional Inuit Women's Association
- **Mary Pia Benuen**, Sheshatshiu Innu First Nation
- **Nona Matthews-Gosse**, Newfoundland Aboriginal Women's Network
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***About the PIWSC***

The Provincial Indigenous Women's Steering Committee is a group of nine Indigenous organizations and governments that meets regularly with the support of the provincial Office of Women and Gender Equality. Meeting since 2006, the PIWSC has organized 16 annual Provincial Indigenous Women's Gatherings. It has also serves as a forum for discussing policy issues facing Indigenous women in Newfoundland and Labrador.