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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

COALITION CALLS ON CANADA TO DELIVER EQUALITY FOR INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS

Today, a coalition of civil society organizations is calling on all governments in Canada to end deeply embedded racism, sexism, and violence against Indigenous women and girls following the release of the National Inquiry's Final Report. The coalition, made up of the Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action (FAFIA), Canada Without Poverty (CWP) and Dr. Pamela Palmater, Chair in Indigenous Governance at Ryerson University, was granted standing at the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Women.

"To Canada's shame, the National Inquiry's Final Report has exposed the devastating effects of colonization, racism, and sexism on Indigenous women and girls" said Dr. Pamela Palmater. "Over time, colonizing governments have built a structure of laws, policies and practices that treat First Nations, Métis and Inuit women as lesser human beings – sexualized, racialized, and disposable – because of their sex and their Indigeneity. The result is high rates of violence, exploitation, rapes, disappearances, and murders."

"The job of governments now – all governments in Canada – is to dismantle this deeply embedded discrimination against Indigenous women. That can only be done through strategic, concerted, and coordinated action that is grounded in human rights. Actions must be planned, measured, and monitored," said FAFIA Human Rights Chair Shelagh Day.

"The first step," said Day "must be recognition that Indigenous women and girls have equal rights in Canada. As the National Inquiry found in its [first recommendation](#), released April 12, 2019, recognizing the human rights of Indigenous women requires the Government of Canada to immediately eliminate sex discrimination from the *Indian Act*."

"This 143-year-old sex discrimination in the Indian Act is identified by First Nations women leaders, and all experts, including the National Inquiry, as a root cause of the violence," said Dr. Palmater. "Canada cannot end the violence while it still maintains, in law, the sex discrimination that causes it. As the National Inquiry has said: Indigenous women are independent rights holders. Canada must uphold their rights."

The coalition welcomed the National Inquiry's recommendation of a coordinated National Action Plan to address the causes and effects of the violence. As key components of the National Action Plan, governments must address:

- the social and economic disadvantage of Indigenous women and girls;
- the damage caused to Indigenous women and girls by the child welfare system;

- police violence, and failures to protect Indigenous women and girls;
- bias in the justice system;
- overcriminalization and incarceration of Indigenous women and girls; and
- supports for families of murdered and disappeared Indigenous women and girls.

“This week at the Women Deliver Conference, Canada is presenting itself as ‘a leader on gender equality’, but the fact is that Canada is **not** a leader on equality for Indigenous women and girls,” said CWP’s Policy Director, Michèle Biss. “Canada can only become a leader if all governments, together, take on the broad project of strategically addressing the inequality, marginalization and violence that constrain and threaten the lives of Indigenous women and girls.”

The coalition’s final submission to the Inquiry can be found here: <http://fafia-afai.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/MMIW-Inquiry-Report-FINALFeb52019.pdf>

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Dr. Pamela Palmater holds the **Chair in Indigenous Governance at Ryerson University** and is one of Canada’s leading authors and commentators on current laws and policies that impact First Nations. As well as teaching and writing, Dr. Palmater provides advice directly to First Nations and serves as an expert, appearing before various domestic and international investigatory bodies on government laws, policies, and practices that affect Indigenous peoples.

The **Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action (FAFIA)** is an alliance of more than sixty women’s organizations, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, with specialized expertise on women’s human rights. FAFIA is dedicated to advancing the equality of all women, and to ensuring that Canadian governments respect, protect, and fulfill the commitments to women that they have made under international human rights law.

Canada Without Poverty (CWP) is a non-partisan, not-for-profit, and charitable organization dedicated to ending poverty in Canada. For nearly 50 years, CWP has been championing the rights of individuals experiencing poverty and marginalization through research, awareness-building campaigns, public policy development, and educational programming. See more at: www.cwp-csp.ca.

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