



# Native Women's Association of Canada

**Press Release – For Immediate Release**

## **Aboriginal women not forgotten**

**Ottawa, ON (March 3, 2010)** – The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) is pleased with today's Speech from the Throne and the mention of the important work of the Sisters In Spirit (SIS) initiative regarding missing and murdered Aboriginal women. With the SIS initiative formally coming to an end as of March 31, 2010, it is reassuring that the government has recognized the importance of this work. With a pledge to justice and fairness for victims of crime, NWAC is eager to learn how this will be reflected in tomorrow's federal budget.

Since 2005, NWAC has received funding from Status of Women Canada to identify root causes, trends and circumstances of violence that have led to disappearance and death of Aboriginal women and girls. To date, NWAC has worked to provide evidence of more than 520 missing and murdered Aboriginal women in Canada, as well as find opportunities to support families, engage communities, work with service providers, as well as the police and justice systems and in collaboration with Aboriginal organizations, human rights organizations, and the federal government to raise awareness and address violence, which leads to disappearance and death. The support of Minister Guergis (Status of Women) has been an important part of this success to date.

President Jeannette Corbiere Lavell commented "With the success of the Sisters In Spirit initiative and the leadership demonstrated by NWAC, there is a need for continued commitment and action. Ongoing support by the federal government will enable NWAC to continue with plans for building community strength and responsibility, working with the police and justice system to address access to justice and gaps in services, working with service providers to understand the needs of families when they have encountered a traumatic loss of this nature, and continuing to collect information related to disappearance and death of Aboriginal women in a systematic and comprehensive way."

Today's Speech from the Throne also highlights the recognition by the federal government to endorse the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. "I'm pleased with this announcement. This is a positive step forward," notes President Corbiere Lavell. "NWAC is committed to working with the federal government to address the fundamental human rights of Aboriginal women through important legislation relating to matrimonial real property and citizenship."

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For more information contact:

Andrea Ruttan, Communications Officer

Native Women's Association of Canada

(613) 656-3012, mobile: (613) 295-2719

E-mail: [aruttan@nwac.ca](mailto:aruttan@nwac.ca)