

אָראַלאָלי אָירדׂ⊳אָאָלי ע ⊂∩Lָסָרָּס (אָאָ אַיד') Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee) Grand Conseil des Cris (Eeyou Istchee)

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## PRESS RELEASE

## THE CREE NATION WELCOMES ESTABLISHMENT OF AN INDEPENDENT COMMISSION OF INQUIRY ON RELATIONS BETWEEN INDIGENOUS PEOPLE AND CERTAIN PUBLIC SERVICES

**NEMASKA, Eeyou Istchee (December 21, 2016) –** The Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee)/Cree Nation Government welcomes the announcement today by Premier Philippe Couillard of the establishment of an independent provincial commission of inquiry on relations between indigenous people and certain public services in Québec.

More than one year ago, Indigenous women in Val d'Or came forward with allegations of misconduct by certain police officers. Their courage led Indigenous persons elsewhere in Québec to share their own experience of discrimination and misconduct.

From the start, the Indigenous women, the Assembly of First Nations of Québec and Labrador and the Cree Nation of Eeyou Istchee have called for an independent provincial commission of inquiry to look into and remedy the systemic causes of discrimination against Indigenous persons.

Only such a provincial commission of inquiry will enable the Indigenous women of Québec to share their experience. Only such a commission will be able to identify the systemic issues underlying discrimination against Indigenous people specific to Québec with a view to proposing solutions.

Over the past year, an overwhelming consensus has emerged on the need for such a provincial inquiry. The independent observer of the Montreal Police investigation in Val d'Or, the recent report by the Observatoire sur les profilages on the criminalization of homelessness in Val d'Or, and the National Commission of Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls have all stressed the need to address the systemic issues.

Preliminary indications point to systemic factors such as overreliance on police officers as first responders and on the court system to address social problems, a lack of training for police officers in the reality of Indigenous people and a lack of health and social service resources to address the needs of Indigenous people.

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The commission of inquiry announced today is designed to shed light on these and other systemic issues underlying the discrimination experienced by Indigenous persons. It will examine ways to improve for Indigenous persons, not just police services, but related public services, such as health and social services and justice services. This integrated approach is intended to promote effective and durable solutions.

"I am very pleased that today the Government of Québec has heard the calls of the Indigenous women for a commission of inquiry. The inquiry will enable them to share their experience and help to find solutions. This exercise is not about blame. It is about all of us, Indigenous people, police officers and other stakeholders, working together to fix problems. Listening to the Indigenous women will help them begin to heal. I want to thank them for their courage and perseverance – without them, this inquiry would never have happened." – Grand Chief Dr. Matthew Coon Come.

The commission of inquiry will complement the work of the National MMIWG Inquiry. The Cree Nation of Eeyou Istchee intends to collaborate actively with both commissions to eliminate violence and discrimination against Indigenous women and all Indigenous persons and move toward real reconciliation.

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