



Highway of Tears Symposium Recommendations Report

A collective voice for the victims who have been silenced





HIGHWAY OF TEARS SYMPOSIUM RECOMMENDATION REPORT

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED ON JUNE 16, 2006 BY:



Lheidli T'enneh First Nation



CARRIER SEKANI
FAMILY SERVICES



Carrier Sekani Tribal Council



Prince George Native Friendship Centre



Prince George Nechako Aboriginal Employment & Training Association



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DEDICATIONS

The Lheidli T'enneh First Nation, Carrier Sekani Family Services, Carrier Sekani Tribal Council, Prince George Nchako Aboriginal Employment and Training Association, and the Prince George Native Friendship Center would like to dedicate this report in memory of all the young women who have gone missing or were found murdered along Highway 16; The Highway of Tears.



Aielah Saric-Auger (age 14)

Status: Murdered and Unsolved

Aielah was a student at D.P. Todd Secondary School in Prince George, BC. She was last seen by her family on February 2, 2006. Her body was found on February 10, 2006 in a ditch along Highway 16, approximately 15 kilometres east of Prince George.



Tamara Chipman (age 22)

Status: Missing and Unsolved

Tamara disappeared on September 21, 2005. She was last seen hitchhiking on Highway 16 near the Prince Rupert, BC industrial park.



Nicole Hoar (age 25)

Status: Missing and Unsolved

From Alberta, Nicole was working in the Prince George area as a tree planter. She was last seen on June 21, 2002, hitchhiking from Prince George to Smithers on Highway 16 West.



Lana Derrick (age 19)

Status: Missing and Unsolved

Lana disappeared on October 7, 1995. She was last seen at a gas station near Terrace, BC (Thornhill), traveling east on Highway 16 to her home in the Hazelton area. She was enrolled in studies at Northwest Community College in Terrace.

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Alishia Germaine (age 15)

Status: Murdered and Unsolved

Alishia lived in Prince George. Her body was found on December 9, 1994.



Roxanne Thiara (age 15)

Status: Murdered and Unsolved

Roxanne disappeared from Prince George in November of 1994. Her body was found just off of Highway 16, near Burns Lake.



Ramona Wilson (age 16)

Status: Murdered and Unsolved

Ramona was hitchhiking to her friend's home in Smithers on June 11, 1994. Her remains were found near the Smithers Airport, along Highway 16, in April 1995.



Delphine Nikal (age 16)

Status: Missing and Unsolved

Delphine disappeared from Smithers on June 14, 1990. She was hitchhiking east on Highway 16 from Smithers to her home to her home in Telkwa.



Cecilia Anne Nikal

Status: Missing and Unsolved

Cecilia disappeared in 1989. She was last seen in Smithers near Highway 16.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Lheidli T'enneh First Nation, Carrier Sekani Family Services, Carrier Sekani Tribal Council, Prince George Nechako Aboriginal Employment and Training Association, and the Prince George Native Friendship Center (symposium sponsors) would like to acknowledge and extend their appreciation to the following individuals and organizations who participated in the Highway of Tears Symposium on March 30 and 31 in Prince George, B.C.

First and foremost, we would like to acknowledge and extend our deepest appreciation to all the victims' families for sharing your stories of loss, for sharing your grief and sorrow in such a public manner, and for providing direction and advice to the Highway of Tears Symposium. Your attendance and courage while participating in the symposium was critical to its success. Your words and emotions profoundly moved all the delegates who attended; you are the ones who provided true meaning and substance to the symposium.

We also acknowledge that there are indeed other missing women and persons whose families attended the Highway of Tears Symposium. Your contribution, as stated above, underlines the fact that there needs to be acknowledgement and recognition that the Highway of Tears victims go beyond the nine victims that appear on the dedication pages of this report.

We would also like to acknowledge and thank:

- **Symposium Presenters:** Bev Jacobs of the Native Women's' Association of Canada, Grand Chief Ed John from the First Nations Summit, Chief Stewart Phillip of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, Lillian George of the United Native Nations, Charlene Belleau from the Assembly of First Nations, Angela Steritt with Justice for Girls, and David Dennis of the United Native Nations . We recognize the efforts of these aboriginal leaders who assisted in raising political awareness and bringing public and media attention to the murdered and missing women.
- The Honourable John Les; BC Solicitor General, for his attendance, support, and presentation of \$25,000 to move the Highway of Tears Symposium recommendations forward.
- The RCMP "E" Division, Superintendent; Leon Van De Walle, Chief Superintendent; R.C. Bent, Superintendent Barry Clark, members of the Prince George and other community detachments for their attendance and participation at the symposium . We would particularly like to thank the RCMP delegates for their attentive understanding of the needs and wishes voiced by victims' families and of the concerns raised by the community at large.
- The Honourable Stan Hagan, Minister of Children and Family Development, for his attendance and participation at the symposium. We would like to acknowledge a \$25,000 funding commitment from his Ministry to be used towards supporting the coordination and development of strong partnerships and relationships based on aboriginal philosophies and



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perspectives in key areas of prevention, education and response; emergency crisis response; and media communications strategy.

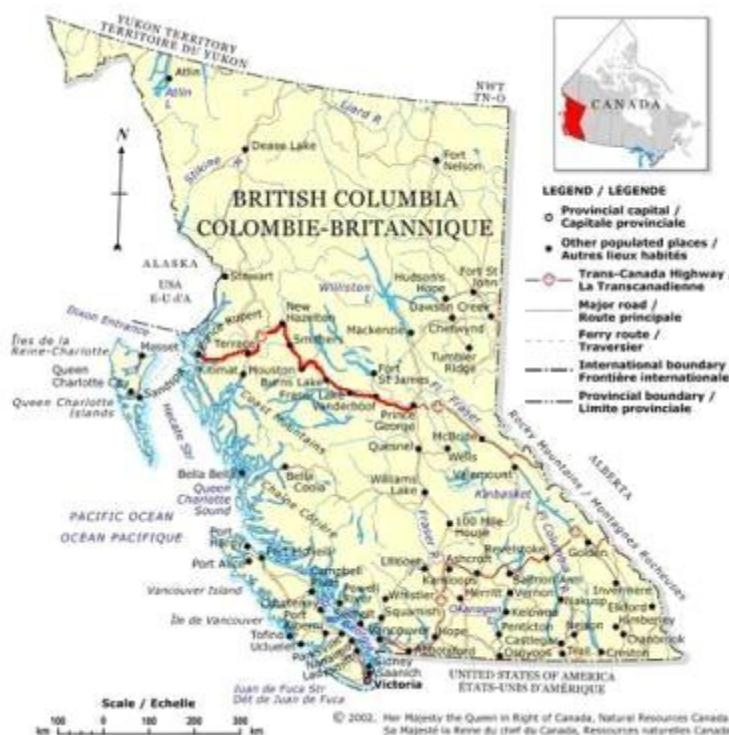
- Nathan Cullen, Member of Parliament, representing the Skeena-Bulkley Valley, an area along Highway 16 where a number of the victims disappeared or were found murdered. His attendance and participation at the symposium was welcomed as the communities in his riding, and other communities along the Highway of Tears, will play an important role towards the successful implementation of a number of recommendations contained in this report.
- The following members of the BC Legislative Assembly for their attendance, presentations, and expressed concerns for the victims and victims' families; Gary Coons, MLA - North Coast, for who the acknowledgements for Nathan Cullen also apply; Diane Thorne MLA - Coquitlam – Maillardville; Jagrup Brar MLA – Surrey – Panorama Ridge.
- The Highway of Tears Awareness Walkers, whose efforts and tireless dedication towards building community awareness of the Highway of Tears victims is truly appreciated by the symposium sponsors, delegates and community at large.

Last but not least, the symposium sponsors would like to thank all of the approximately 500 delegates and more than 90 organizations who attended and participated in the Highway of Tears Symposium. All of these delegates presented the concerns of the community well. Much of their input, along with victims' families input, constitute the majority of the recommendations contained in this report.

For a list of the organizations that participated in the symposium, refer to page 32 in this report.

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SECTION A: HIGHWAY OF TEARS BACKGROUND



pages of this report does not include Monica Ignas, age 15 at the time she disappeared along the highway in 1974, and Alberta Williams, who was 27 when she disappeared in 1989 . There are indeed other missing women, whose families attended the Highway of Tears Symposium to reinforce the fact that there needs to be acknowledgement, and recognition that there are more Highway of Tears victims.

Nonetheless, each reported case of a young woman's disappearance, or confirmation of a recovered body, had a cumulating effect within First Nations communities along the highway; one of growing fear, frustration and sorrow. The term *Highway of Tears* was born out of this fear, frustration and sorrow.

With Nicole Hoar's disappearance on June 21, 2002, the term *Highway of Tears* became more widely known and widely used. Of most importance, the media and the general public became aware that Nicole Hoar's disappearance was not an isolated incident!

A seven hundred and twenty four kilometer length of the Yellowhead Highway 16 between Prince Rupert and Prince George, British Columbia is known to many of its local residents as *The Highway of Tears*. The name is in reference to the number of mostly aboriginal women who have gone missing or have been found murdered along this stretch of highway.

There is much community speculation and debate on the exact number of women that have disappeared along Highway 16 over a longer thirty-five year period; many are saying the number of missing women, combined with the number of confirmed murdered women, exceeds thirty.

While the exact number of missing women has yet to be determined, the nine young women on the dedication

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There was a two year period after Nicole Hoar's disappearance that the Highway of Tears appeared to fall silent, and no more cases of missing women were publicly reported; however, community awareness campaigns remained active for the murdered and missing women.

The largest of these campaigns, called *Take Back the Highway*, took place on September 17, 2005 at 2:00 p.m. This impressive awareness campaign involved coordinated public awareness demonstrations in each community along the full length of the Highway of Tears.

An excerpt from the report compiled following the Prince Rupert demonstration:

TAKE BACK THE HIGHWAY Community Summary

**September 17, 2005, 2 PM
Prince Rupert, BC**

"First of all, the weather in Prince Rupert held out, really that is something for those of you who are not familiar with this town!"

Just the number of people who showed up for the walk and those that joined in along the way, I would estimate about at least 100. Walking down Hwy 16 (which in Prince Rupert, is also Second Avenue and right through downtown) caused traffic chaos! We were sure noticed! The Nisga'a dancers led the way. Behind them in single file, we had 32 women wearing numbered posters to signify the number of women missing (one of them was Alberta William's sister). Behind them was the rest of the people and all those who joined in.

At the park there was at least 200 people.

The Nisga'a dancers, as always, performed magnificently. Every time I watch them, I am moved with their powerful presence. I am reminded once again the importance of community and family in our daily lives.

Marlene Swift spoke. She told of a personal story of herself along the highway where she could have herself become one of the missing. Martha Williams, the sister of Alberta Williams who went missing September 16, 1988, spoke briefly. Another women (V.Hill) got up and spoke of how her mother went missing when she was six months old (in the 1970's). These personal stories really hit their mark, as for many of us, it really smacked us in the face the reality of the situation . . ."

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Just four days after this *Take Back the Highway* public awareness campaign, Tamara Chipman age 22, disappeared while hitchhiking on Highway 16 at Prince Rupert's industrial park on September 21, 2005.

Four months later, at the exact opposite end of the Highway of Tears, Aielah Saric-Auger, the youngest of all the victims, disappeared from Prince George on February 2, 2006. Her body was discovered a week later, east of the city, along Highway 16. The First Nations community has become very concerned because all of the victims, with the exception of Nicole Hoar, are young aboriginal women.

With the BC First Nation Leadership Council calling for an inquiry into cases of the murdered and missing women, and First Nation communities calling for action, past individual victim family awareness initiatives and community awareness campaigns are being transformed into a general community and region-wide response to address the disappearances and murders of these young women.

Symbolic of this transition was the Highway of Tears Awareness Walk mobilized by some of the victims' families. Starting in Prince Rupert, this walk covered the full length of the Highway of Tears and ended at the CN Center in Prince George on March 30, 2006. The end of that walk officially commenced the Highway of Tears Symposium attended by the victims' families, and over five hundred delegates from many regions of British Columbia and representing most sectors of society. This recommendations report follows the March 30 and 31, 2006 Highway of Tears Symposium and it is a call for action!



LEFT: Highway of Tears awareness walkers, comprised of some of the victims' families, make their way towards CN Centre in Prince George to end their walk and start the Highway of Tears Symposium.

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SECTION B: PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The Highway of Tears Symposium sponsoring organizations recognizes the number of past efforts and initiatives undertaken by the victims' families to raise public awareness of their murdered and missing loved ones. We also recognize larger awareness initiatives such as, the impressive multi-community *Take Back The Highway* campaign held in September 2005. However, the Highway of Tears Symposium goes beyond raising public awareness of these murdered and missing women. The symposium is a community call for action.

RIGHT: Highway of Tears delegates listen intently to a presentation.



The Highway of Tears Symposium, a collective and unified voice of the victims' families and the community, advances and supports all of the recommendations contained in this report for:

1. **Victim Prevention**
2. **Emergency Planning and Team Response**
3. **Victim Family Counselling and Support**
4. **Community Development and Support**

The purpose of this report is to present all realistic and achievable Highway of Tears Symposium recommendations under each of the four topics of community response. Only the realistic and achievable recommendations are contained in this report, as each recommendation is transferred into direct action. Therefore, each symposium recommendation listed is a specific direction or call for action item, with supporting rationale included to support that recommendation.



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A MESSAGE TO REPORT READERS

To Our Political Representatives - this report is a community response to a deadly serious situation, shared by all First Nation and non-First Nation communities from, and located between, Prince Rupert and Prince George, British Columbia. Young women have been disappearing, or have been found murdered, along Highway 16 dating back to at least 1989, a period of time that spans nearly two decades. It is the sincere wish of the First Nation and Non-First Nation communities that at all levels of government, both the opposition parties and the sitting government, work collectively and collaboratively to support the recommendations contained in this report.

To All First Nation Communities, Municipalities, Cities, and Organizations Located Along The Highway of Tears – a multi-community and multi-organization effort will be required to implement many of the recommendations contained in this report. The task to coordinate and implement cohesive prevention, emergency response, and victim family counselling and support plans along the entire 724 km length of this highway will present logistical challenges. However, with the cooperation and support of all parties concerned, the symposium recommendations contained in this report are achievable. On behalf of all past Highway of Tears victims, and in the interest of preventing future victims, this multi-community initiative must not fail.

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SECTION C: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Highway of Tears Symposium advances the following short and long-term goals that relate to victim prevention; emergency planning and team response; victim family counselling and support; and community development and support.

Victim Prevention

Short-Term Goals:

Develop and implement a victim prevention plan that measurably reduces the number of young women who are placing themselves at risk hitchhiking on Highway 16 west of Prince George, British Columbia, by:

- Employing Highway of Tears Symposium report recommendations numbered 1 through 8, and other strategies, that provide hard and direct interventions to detect and protect women who are hitch-hiking on Highway 16 west of Prince George, BC
- Employing Highway of Tears Symposium recommendations numbered 9 through 15, and other strategies, that provide soft and direct measures to prevent women from hitch-hiking on Highway 16 west of Prince George, BC

Long-Term Goals:

Address the underpinning causes that place young women on the highway and at risk, by:

- Reducing First Nation intergenerational poverty and post-secondary student temporary poverty, as this is the common contributing factor that places both groups vulnerable to predation
- Increasing outreach services to First Nation communities along the highway specifically, and First Nations communities generally, to reduce their need for poverty-related travel (hitchhiking) to those services located in the nearest town or city
- Increasing aboriginal youth recreation and social activities in their communities along the highway specifically, and First Nation communities generally, to prevent these youth from traveling (hitchhiking) to recreational and social activities in the nearest town or city

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Emergency Readiness Planning & Team Response

Short-Term Goals:

Develop and implement a community emergency readiness plan, to contain:

- Highway of Tears Symposium recommendations numbered 16 through 21 to be incorporated into the Plan
- Identification of all community stakeholders who would be participants to the plan.
- Identification of all resources required of the plan, including but not limited to: infrastructure, equipment, communication systems, human resources, and financial resources
- Protocol procedures between the RCMP and community emergency readiness team(s), delineating circumstances under which the plan is enacted and all emergency procedures to be undertaken therein, all within strict timelines

Long-Term Goals:

The annual review and testing of the community emergency readiness plan as a permanent resource in each Highway 16 community by:

- Adjusting municipal and city charters to accommodate the emergency readiness plan, and its associated committee, as mandatory and permanent
- Receiving band council resolutions to accept the emergency readiness plan, and its associated committee, as mandatory and permanent in each First Nation community
- Providing annual emergency readiness team training and plan testing in each community

Victim Family Counselling & Support

Short-Term Goals:

Develop and implement a permanent regional First Nation crisis response plan that targets any First Nation community or aboriginal family experiencing a traumatic event by:

- Ensuring the plan contains definitions of traumatic event(s) under which it is to be enacted; communication protocols and procedures between First Nation communities

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or agencies authorized to represent the community and family; and the aboriginal agency (individuals) authorized to enact the plan; assembly and deployment procedures for a qualified First Nation crisis response team; other crisis response procedures to be undertaken, and crisis counselling and support services provided, within strict time-lines

Long-Term Goals:

- Increase locally based, and culturally sensitive, long-term counseling and support services to aboriginal families who have experienced a traumatic event by:
 - Making available qualified local or district aboriginal counselors that can readily provide on-going and long-term counseling and support to the families who have experienced a traumatic event. Should no qualified and culturally-sensitive counseling service exist within the family's area, then these services should be developed to avoid the use of fly-in experts.
- Breakdown the barriers that traditionally exists between the RCMP and the aboriginal community by:
 - Increasing RCMP communication and sensitivity with the victims' families and with First Nation communities located in their detachment jurisdictions
 - Using aboriginal victim and community advocate(s) to assist the RCMP, aboriginal victims, and communities in their efforts toward building a stronger relationship based on mutual trust and respect

Community Development & Support

Short-Term Goals:

- Development and implementation of a Highway of Tears communication plan that:
 - Identifies all stakeholder participants required to undertake victim prevention measure,; emergency readiness response, and victims' family counselling and support
 - Describes in detail methods of communication among all stakeholders towards achieving joint cooperation, support, and seamless integration of all measures to be enacted under a victim prevention plan, emergency readiness response plan, and victims' family counselling and support plan.
- Establish a Highway of Tears governance structure with assigned responsibilities to direct and guide planning, design, implementation, and operations review for victim prevention measures, emergency readiness response, and victim family counseling and support, which:



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- Incorporates Highway of Tears Symposium recommendations numbered 28 through 32 in Section H: Community Development & Support Strategy of this report.
- Ensures governance accountability with respect to reporting to the community, victims' families, and funding contributors on the state of mission operations and audited condition of the mission's finances.
- **Appoint an Ombudsman to solicit support and coordinate the resource requirements of this Highway of Tears community mission at provincial and federal levels.**

Long-Term Goals:

- Extend the communication plan, required for the Highway of Tears community mission, into a long-term commitment with First Nation communities:
 - It need not take shared tragic circumstances for various levels and forms of government (municipal, regional district, or community associations) to come together with First Nations in a joint effort toward mutual resolution. These efforts should be on-going

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SECTION D: VICTIM PROFILE & SITUATION ANALYSIS

While not included as an official topic of community response at the Highway of Tears Symposium, this section of the report is necessary as many recommendations contained in this report refer to services being delivered to a targeted section of the population that fits the victim profile. A situation analysis is also necessary to ensure readers of this report are briefed on the underlying causes that contribute to the reason that these young women end up hitchhiking on Highway 16.

Victim Profile

Readers need only to look at the dedication pages of this report to realize that commonalities exist among all the victims. All the victims were young women ranging in age from 14 to 25 years. The majority of these victims are young aboriginal women, and many of these young women disappeared while hitchhiking along Highway 16 between the spring and fall seasons (hitchhiking season).

Within the recommendations sections of this report, the term *victim profile* is used as a general term, and at this time, is not to be interpreted as meaning young women aged 14 to 25. Further community consultation with the RCMP or future events, may change the victim profile.

Situation Analysis

The following are contributing factors that place most of these young women at risk by hitchhiking on the highway between Prince George and Prince Rupert, British Columbia.

In order to accomplish this, the following questions had to be asked: Why are the Highway of Tears victims mainly young aboriginal women? More specifically, what are the contributing factors that placed the majority of these young aboriginal women on the highway in the first place? A situational analysis of all the Highway of Tears victims, including Nicole Hoar who was not aboriginal, reveals the following:

Poverty

The first and most significant contributing factor for many of the aboriginal women being on the highway is poverty. Young aboriginal women are placing themselves at risk by hitchhiking because they simply have no other transportation options. They have very little money, and vehicles are considered a luxury item that many families cannot afford. The percentage of families living at, or below, the poverty line in First Nations communities is disproportionately higher than any other population segment in Canadian society. Moreover, poverty in some aboriginal families is intergenerational and is present through many generations of the families.

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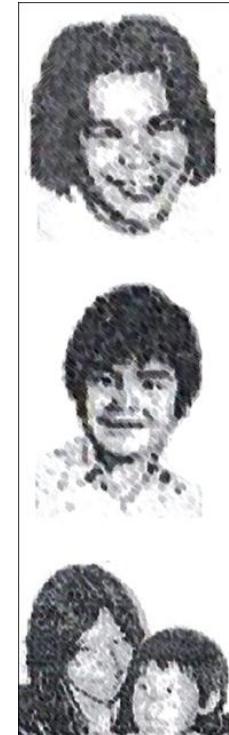
Some predators know that profound poverty exists within First Nation family units and they have actually used the offer of employment as a lure to position themselves for opportunity. This was the case with the Jack Family disappearance where an entire First Nations family of four disappeared from Prince George, BC on August 2, 1989.

Knowing that this family was impoverished, it is believed that the predator used the offer of employment at either a ranch or logging camp to lure them out of Prince George. The entire family packed some of their belongings for a trip to what they thought was a live-in logging camp or ranch. Ronald Jack, the father of this young family, was last heard from at 1:30 am August 2, 1989, when he called his mother saying he, his wife, and their two boys, nine year old Russell and four year old Ryan, would be gone for 10 days to two weeks.

They have not been seen or heard from since that phone call placed at a resort, located 50 kilometres west of Prince George, on the Highway of Tears. To this date, it is the only case of its kind in Canada, where an entire family disappeared.

While poverty is in fact a reality of life for a large number of aboriginal families, like it was for the Ronald Jack family, there is a segment of mainstream society that, however temporary, does live at or near the poverty line. Many college and university students are required to live on extremely tight budgets. The cost for tuition, textbooks and supplies, and rental accommodations is high. Their ability to generate income is limited by full-time course studies throughout the school year, and vehicles are also considered a luxury item that many of these students cannot afford.

Nicole Hoar was a recent graduate student, and she was one of the hundreds of college and university students who migrate each spring from all parts of Canada into the Highway 16 corridor for tree-planting work. Young female students and tree planters often place themselves at risk by hitchhiking along the highways of British Columbia, and more specifically along the Highway of Tears.



Highway Geography & Public Transportation

Many of the First Nation communities (Indian reserves) along Highway 16 are situated many miles from town and city centers. A majority of these First Nation communities do not have business, recreation, or other services that are available in the towns and cities. Poverty, coupled with the need to buy essential items such as food and clothing, requires travel from these communities to the nearest town or city.

There is a lack of recreational infrastructure and social activities for the youth who live in many of these First Nation communities. These youth have travelled, and will continue to travel by any



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means necessary, to the nearest town or city to access and participate in recreational and social activities.

Greyhound bus service is the only public transportation system that exists along the entire length of Highway 16 between Prince Rupert and Prince George, which primarily stops for passenger drop-off and pick-up at bus depots in the towns and cities along the highway.

All of the above factors contribute to young women placing themselves at risk by hitchhiking on the Highway of Tears. While there are other contributing factors specific to young aboriginal women, and young college and university women who plant trees in the area, most of these factors will be addressed within appropriate recommendation action items contained in this report.

All readers of this report should take note; the common contributing factor for both young Aboriginal women and young female students, disappearances along the Highway of Tears is poverty. This is not just an underpinning factor for young women placing themselves at risk along the Highway of Tears in British Columbia; it is an underpinning and contributing factor that leaves all of these women, across Canada, vulnerable to predation.

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SECTION E: VICTIM PREVENTION

The collective community wants an end to these disappearances and murders and the community seeks a serious response to a deadly serious situation. First and foremost, the community wants their young women off the highway, to prevent them from being the targets of the predator(s).

Recommendation #1: That a shuttle bus transportation system be established between each town and city located along the entire length of Highway 16, defined as the Highway of Tears.

Except for the Greyhound Bus Line that services the Highway 16 corridor from Prince George to Prince Rupert, (twice a day from Prince George to Prince Rupert, and a once per day return trip), no other public transportation system exists.

A shuttle bus transportation system would focus on the pickup and drop off of young female passengers at all First Nation communities, towns and cities located along the entire length of the highway between Prince George and Prince Rupert.

During the spring, summer, fall, and perhaps even winter months of operation, these shuttle buses must also stop and pick-up every young woman they encounter walking or hitchhiking between those First Nation communities, towns, and cities on this Highway . The number of shuttle buses required would be exactly seven (7) to cover the entire 724 kilometre length of the Highway of Tears.

Recommendation #2: That while the RCMP does a commendable job in patrolling the highway, these patrols can no longer drive past a hitchhiker who fits the victim profile.

Any RCMP highway patrol that encounters a hitchhiker, who falls within the victim profile, must stop, conduct a person check, provide the hitchhiker with a highway of tears information pamphlet and a schedule of the shuttle bus between the town and city they are located at . Furthermore, the RCMP patrol should encourage the hitchhiker to wait for the shuttle bus, or next mode of transportation listed under Recommendation #4.

Recommendation #3: That the RCMP be provided the resources to increase their highway patrols during the hitchhiking season, more specifically increase these patrols along the sections of Highway 16 near First Nation communities, towns and cities.

Predator(s) likely patrol these sections of highway, as they are the best sections for opportunity. Increased RCMP presence along these sections of Highway 16 will greatly reduce the number of potential targets (see Recommendation #2) and will visually discourage the predator (s).

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Recommendation #4: That the Greyhound Bus Company's free ride program be expanded, and target marketed to the population in the Highway 16 corridor who fit the victim profile.

The Greyhound Bus Line is the only publicly available highway transportation system that delivers service along the entire length of the Highway of Tears. This company has a free ride program for individuals that cannot afford to pay for their rides, and it is a program that is not widely known to the public. This free ride program can be expanded and marketed specifically to all young women who live along the Highway 16 corridor.

Moreover, Greyhound Bus drivers who drive the Prince George to Prince Rupert route must be instructed to stop and pickup any hitchhiker who falls within the victim profile.

Recommendation #5: That every public sector employee working between Prince George and Prince Rupert be contacted and used as a female hitchhiker detection network.

These public sector employees travel the Highway 16 corridor extensively and at all hours of the day and night. Coordination with these public sector employees, to detect and communicate the locations of women hitchhikers using their cell phones, would greatly assist the collective community in its victim prevention efforts.

Recommendation #6: That a number of safe homes similar to (and possibly including) MCFD and aboriginal social service safe homes be established at strategic locations along the entire length of Highway 16, between the cities of Prince Rupert and Prince George, British Columbia.

In the event that young women are walking or are picked up hitchhiking in the evening or late at night, a safe place to spend the night will be necessary. A network of at least twenty-two safe homes, preferably within visual range of the Highway, needs to be established between Prince Rupert and Prince George. These safe homes can also be used as hitchhiker check-in points.

There already are a number of safe homes and emergency shelters established by MCFD and aboriginal social service agencies; these can be used and expanded upon.

Recommendation #7: That the Rural Crime Watch Program be expanded to include a highway watch component along the full length of the Highway of Tears.

In partnership with regional districts, rural community associations and First Nation communities, residents of all houses located within visual range of Highway 16 between Prince George and Prince Rupert need to be canvassed for support, and provided with a 1-800 crisis line number in the event they see a young woman hitchhiking on the highway. Furthermore, that they be requested to watch the hitchhiker and note the description of any vehicle who would stop and pick her up.

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Recommendation #8: That a number of emergency phone booths be placed along the highway at strategic locations between the cities of Prince Rupert and Prince George, British Columbia.

The distance between the towns, cities, and First Nation communities exceed 100 km in some places along this highway. There are many stretches of the highway where cellular phones are out of transmission range. Should a potential victim's car breakdown, a hitchhiker be seen getting into a vehicle, or a car accident be witnessed, it is vital that motorists and hitchhikers have closer access to a form of emergency communication.

Telus Mobility should be approached to look into the feasibility of increasing cell phone coverage along the entire length of the highway thus minimizing or eliminating no signal areas.

Recommendation #9: That a number of billboards and many more posters be placed at strategic locations along the Highway 16 corridor between Prince George and Prince Rupert, British Columbia.

These carefully designed billboards will be used to generate traveling public awareness on the issue of the murdered and missing women, and also contain a 1-800 number for the public to call in tips, potential leads, or even the location of any female hitchhiker they encounter. These billboards will also be viewed by hitchhikers and young women, and thus should also be considered part of a victim prevention campaign.

The posters, distributed and posted at every gas station, restaurant, business, and community service center located along the entire length of the Highway of Tears, will accomplish the same objectives as the strategically placed billboards.

Recommendation #10: That an annual awareness and prevention campaign be delivered to every elementary school, high school, college, university, and silviculture company located in and between the cities of Prince Rupert and Prince George prior to the hitchhiking and tree-planting season.

The hitchhiking and tree-planting seasons coincide; both commence in the spring. Many of the young aboriginal women who disappeared were hitchhiking during the summer months, and at least three of them were younger than seventeen years old; this means they were of high school student age.

April is the month that denotes the end of college and university studies. There is always a mass spring migration, primarily of college and university students, from all areas of Canada to the Highway 16 corridor for employment as tree planters. Nicole Hoar was one such individual. Therefore all silviculture companies operating in central and north Coast British Columbia should be required to provide Highway of Tears awareness as part of W.C.B mandated health and safety training for their employees.

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Recommendation #11: That every First Nation community and First Nation family living in the towns and cities located on or near Highway of Tears be targeted in a more intensive awareness and prevention program.

All the Highway of Tears missing or murdered women were aboriginal, except for Nicole Hoar. It is apparent that young Aboriginal women are more likely to place themselves at risk by hitchhiking for reasons listed under the Victim Profile & Situation Analysis section of this report.

Furthermore, at least three of the victims were young urban aboriginal women, meaning they lived in a town or city. For these reasons a more intensive (customized) awareness and prevention program must be designed and delivered to these rural First Nation communities and to the urban Aboriginal population that live in the towns and cities located along Highway 16.

These ongoing and targeted First Nation rural and urban aboriginal awareness and prevention programs must include the education of parents on the need for travel plans and use of an estimated time of arrival and increased parenting skills workshops that focus on knowing your children. Both of these subjects are essential for a more rapid emergency response in the event a child or youth goes missing.

Recommendation #12: That aboriginal youth that live in rural First Nations communities and urban aboriginal youth who live in the towns and cities on the Highway of Tears be organized and listened to.

There is a growing disconnect between the aboriginal youth and their communities and families. While many of the recommendations listed under this section of the report are targeted at

protecting them (within the victim profile), there is absolutely no substitute for having these youth organize themselves so that they can provide voice and direction to any future victim prevention measures directed towards them.

Recommendation #13: That recreational and social activity programs for rural and urban aboriginal youth be increased in the First Nation communities, towns, and cities located along the Highway of Tears.

As stated in the Victim Profile & Situation Analysis section of this report, delivery of recreation and social activities will provide this targeted group of the highway population with opportunities to gather and socialize.

If these opportunities to gather and socialize are not provided, aboriginal youth will continue to hangout in high-risk locations in urban centers or hitchhike from rural First Nation communities to locations that provide the recreational and social activities they seek.

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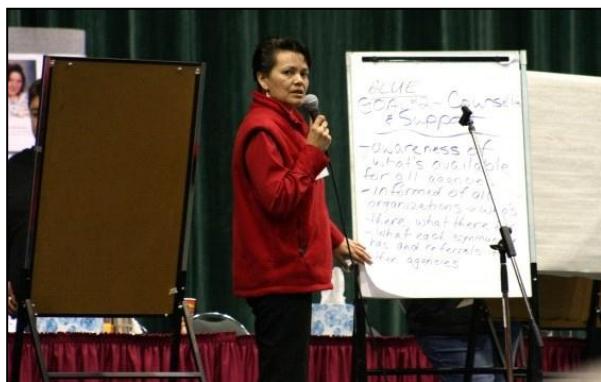
Recommendation #14: That media campaigns be launched on the subject of the murdered and missing women, and contain specific key victim prevention measures targeting young women viewers and readers along the Highway of Tears.

These media campaigns must be used at strategic times, with the full input and prior review of the RCMP, victims' families, and a Highway of Tears community governing body. Use of these media campaigns will greatly assist the community in its efforts to prevent future victims.

Recommendation #15: That the number, types, and frequency of essential health and social services be increased for direct delivery to the First Nation communities located along the Highway of Tears.

As stated in the Victim Profile & Situation Analysis section of this report, many First Nation families and potential victims must travel to the nearest town or city to receive services that they require. Many of these families live at or below the poverty line. To reduce the travel of potential victims, the depth, breadth, and frequency of outreach services to these communities must be increased. Bring these essential outreach services to their communities, rather than have community members travel to service providers in the nearest town or city.

A general First Nation community member definition is used, rather than the targeted victim profile definition. The reason for this is if an outreach service is being delivered to a targeted segment of the community that fits the victim profile, it makes practical sense to deliver the same services to other segments of the community while the service is there.



RIGHT: A symposium breakout session facilitator presents recommendations to the rest of the Highway of Tears symposium delegates.

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SECTION F: EMERGENCY PLANNING & TEAM RESPONSE

The Highway of Tears Symposium's victim prevention recommendations are extensive, and they will significantly reduce the number of predator(s) targets on the highway and in the towns, cities, and First Nation communities situated on or near the Highway of Tears. Reality dictates, however, that there is still the possibility another young female will go missing. Therefore, the Highway of Tears Symposium makes recommendations on emergency readiness planning and team response.

Recommendation # 16: That the Highway of Tears community governing body undertake the development of an emergency readiness plan.

First and foremost, an emergency readiness plan must be developed and the development of this emergency readiness plan must involve the Highway of Tears community governing body who represents the interest and concerns of all First Nation and other communities along the Highway of Tears. This emergency readiness plan must specifically delineate all actions to be undertaken and all services provided by a governing body and the RCMP for the victim's family and for the missing victim.

Recommendation #17: That the emergency readiness plan contain specific timelines for the actions of the community emergency readiness teams, commencing from the time a missing person's report is first received.

This emergency readiness plan must set out time lines for all RCMP and community emergency response actions when a potential victim is first reported missing by a parent or family member.

These timelines are to be defined in 12-hour increments, starting from the first hour the RCMP receives a report of the missing person victim profile, and are to extend to 72 hours.

Coordination and implementation of this emergency readiness plan amongst all First Nations, municipalities, and the RCMP lying between Prince Rupert and Prince George will be essential. In order to enact the emergency readiness plan, creation of local protocols on emergency action between the RCMP and the communities will need to be developed.

Recommendation #18: That this emergency readiness plan contain a missing person "alert and response" component in the form of community emergency readiness teams.

Prince George, Prince Rupert, and all the municipalities in between do not have an alert and response system for missing people. Emergency readiness teams must be created and trained as an essential component of this alert and response system.

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Recommendation #19: That this emergency readiness plan be communicated to an emergency readiness team(s) located in each city, town and First Nation community located along the entire length of the Highway of Tears.

Roxanne Thiara, age 15, disappeared in November 1994 from Prince George. Her body was later found just off Highway 16, near the town of Burns Lake. This means she was transported over a 250-kilometre length of Highway 16, through the towns of Vanderhoof, Fort Fraser, Fraser Lake, and past the First Nation communities of Nadleh Whut'en, and Stellat'en.

It is therefore essential, that this emergency readiness plan be communicated to all cities, towns and First Nation communities and there be capacity to enact the plan in a simultaneous and coordinated manner along the entire length of the Highway of Tears, regardless of the last known location of the victim who is reported missing.

Recommendation #20: That to the greatest extent possible, existing and established community resources like Search & Rescue or fire departments be utilized and expanded upon in building each emergency readiness team.

These organizations have emergency response procedures and emergency communication systems in place for their members. Wherever present, these emergency response organizations, with the RCMP, should be at the nucleus of every community emergency readiness team.

Recommendation #21: That there be two contact persons appointed: one acting as the primary contact and one as the backup / secondary contact who would be given authorization by the RCMP to enact the emergency readiness plan in each community, and coordinate predetermined emergency readiness team actions.

It is envisioned that the contacts would coordinate the actions of their respective emergency readiness teams with the RCMP in each city, town, and First Nation community located on the Highway of Tears.

Most First Nation communities have volunteer fire departments, of which the Fire Chief would be the designed contact person. Special emergency readiness plan enactment procedures may be required, such as a member of the RCMP being at the community prior to the emergency readiness plan being enacted by the primary contact person; however this would not prevent the appointed contact from assembling the community readiness team for action while the RCMP is on route to that community.

Any joint emergency response actions between the RCMP and community emergency response teams must be undertaken within local emergency action protocols established between the RCMP and the community.

HIGHWAY OF TEARS SYMPOSIUM RECOMMENDATION REPORT

SECTION G: VICTIM FAMILY COUNSELLING AND SUPPORT

Family members of the missing or murdered young women voiced concern over the lack of counselling and support they received after each tragic event occurred. For these families, there has been no closure for their missing or murdered women whose cases remain unsolved. The Highway of Tears Symposium listened to these grieving family members and it was apparent that their needs for healing and support would be long-term. Therefore the Highway of Tears Symposium presents the following victim's families counselling and support recommendations:

Recommendation #22: That a permanent regional First Nation crisis response plan be developed and implemented for First Nation communities and aboriginal families (both urban and rural) experiencing a traumatic event.

It is envisioned that this crisis response plan not only include direct and rapid delivery of counselling and support services to Highway of Tears victims' families specifically, but also include the provision of these services to First Nation families and their communities in general for other traumatic events such as murder, suicide, disappearance, tragic accidents involving permanent loss.

Readers of this report must understand that First Nation communities are closely knit, and when a tragic event occurs to a First Nation community member (murder, suicide or disappearance) the event's impact goes beyond the immediate family. Its effects are felt throughout that entire community. Therefore this plan must incorporate a crisis response team approach.

Recommendation #23: That a roster of fully qualified aboriginal mental health therapists, grief counselors, critical incident stress counselors, and other counselors of relevant specialty be developed.

While it is acknowledged that the RCMP has a victim services unit, this unit is not sensitive to the traditional, cultural or spiritual needs of aboriginal people. First Nations individuals and aboriginal women specifically will seek support where they feel most comfortable. Therefore, this roster will be comprised of the best aboriginal counsellors and therapists who live and work within the Highway 16 corridor, or if necessary, reside and work in British Columbia.

Recommendation #24: That an exceptionally qualified First Nation crisis response team be assembled, receive training on their roles, and be ready for deployment to any rural First Nation communities or urban aboriginal families from which a victim disappears.

It is envisioned that members of this First Nation crisis response team be strategically assembled from the roster developed under Recommendation #2.

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One member of this First Nation crisis response team (with an on-site appointed local or district Aboriginal Child & Family Services counsellor) must provide counselling and support to the victim's family. The other crisis response team members must address impacts on the victim's friends, peers, and the general community. Healing must take place at individual, family unit, and community levels.

There is a real need for emergency and long-term counselling and support for the victims' families.



LEFT: Several family members of the Highway of Tears victims pray for resolution and closure.

Recommendation #25: That Aboriginal agencies or First Nation communities qualified to deliver such services, be assigned to provide long-term counselling and support to the families of aboriginal victims, upon their request and direction.

It is essential that the transition from short-term emergency counselling to longer-term counselling and support be seamless. At all times, the family's preferences for a particular long-term counsellor or support agency will be respected.

There are a number of established First Nation child and family service agencies located in some of the major towns and city centers along the Highway of Tears. These agencies do provide counselling and support outreach services to rural First Nation communities located along the Highway 16 corridor.

Some of the larger First Nation communities not affiliated with an aboriginal child and family service agency may have the capacity to deliver victim counselling and support services themselves. While further research is required on this subject, the above recommendation stands.

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Recommendation #26: That the RCMP re-establish and maintain communication with each of the victim's families.

The lack of RCMP communication and contact with the victim's families was evident before the Highway of Tears Symposium was held. Symposium organizers, wanting to invite each of the victim's families to the symposium, requested a contact list from the RCMP. This contact list was not current and symposium organizers found it difficult to locate and contact a majority of the victim's families.

The majority of the victim's families that attended the Highway of Tears Symposium, all of who are aboriginal, voiced concerns over the lack of communication from the RCMP.

Recommendation #27: That a First Nation advocate be provided to bridge the long-standing communications and awareness gap which exists between the RCMP and First Nation victim's families.

This First Nation advocate would not only work with the RCMP and the aboriginal victims' families, but would assist the RCMP in bridging the communication and awareness gap that historically exist between the RCMP and the First Nations communities along the highway.

This First Nation advocate would also be a constructive conduit for providing feedback awareness to the RCMP on aboriginal issues, sensitivity training, cross-cultural training, and be used as part of the RCMP orientation program for new members of detachments in all the cities and towns located on the Highway 16 corridor.

Within this recommendation it is acknowledged that the RCMP has established a number of tri-partied agreements with First Nations communities. A First Nation advocate could also be viewed as a resource towards supporting these tri-partied agreements; however the position's priority would always be with the victims' families.

HIGHWAY OF TEARS SYMPOSIUM RECOMMENDATION REPORT

SECTION H: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & SUPPORT STRATEGY

The Highway of Tears collective community is requesting resources and support to enact the recommendations in this report related to victim prevention, emergency response, and victim family counselling and support measures.

Recommendation #28 : That a Highway of Tears legacy fund be established as one source, among others, to develop and support multi-community, and multi-agency efforts in victim prevention, emergency readiness planning and team response, and victim family counselling and support.

This legacy fund would consist of government funding from federal, provincial, and municipal sources; donations from corporate businesses, individuals, and multi-community charity events; and other targeted sources.

Recommendation #29: That a board of directors (governing body) be established to provide direction and support in all four areas of this Highway of Tears community initiative and manage the legacy fund.

Strategically, this board of directors (Highway of Tears community governing body) should represent the interests and concerns of the RCMP, cities and municipalities along Highway 16, rural and urban aboriginal populations along Highway 16, and most importantly, the victims' families. These are the five major stakeholders of concern for the Highway of Tears missing and murdered women.

Other board members can and should be recruited based on interest, skills, and abilities to effect action and positive change. The Highway 16 cities and municipalities should meet and reach an agreement to appoint one representative to the board. District or local aboriginal child and family service organizations would best represent the needs and interests of rural Highway 16 First Nation communities. These agencies should receive consent for representation from their Highway 16 First Nation client communities. Upon receiving consent from the communities they serve, representatives of these aboriginal agencies should meet and reach an agreement to appoint one representative, on behalf of all Highway 16 First Nation community interests.

The Highway 16 urban aboriginal population would be best served and represented in this matter by the network of Native Friendship Centers located in Prince George, Houston, Smithers, Terrace,

and Prince Rupert . It is recommended that representatives from each of these five Native Friendship Centers meet and reach an agreement to appoint one representative on behalf of all the Highway 16 urban aboriginal population.

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All of the victims' families should meet and appoint one individual who will represent their wishes, interests and concerns at the board level. A victims' family representative would also be most welcome for ensuring ongoing accountability of the board in all its decisions and actions.

Recommendation #30: That the board of directors (Highway of Tears community governing body) establish working committees in each city and municipality along the Highway of Tears.

Wherever practical, community working committee members should be locally comprised of the five key stakeholders that embody the board of directors (governing body): a local RCMP member, a representative of that city or municipality, a representative of a local or regional aboriginal child and family service agency, a representative of a local Native Friendship Center, a representative of the victims' families.

Recommendation #31: That the board of directors hire two coordinators to provide development and support assistance to each Highway of Tears community working committee located along the highway.

Due to travel and logistical reasons, it is envisioned that the Highway of Tears be sectioned into two geographic zones. One geographic zone will contain all cities, municipalities, and First Nation communities from Prince George to Houston, BC; the other geographic zone will contain all cities, municipalities, and First Nation communities from Smithers to Prince Rupert, BC. Each coordinator would be assigned one zone.

Recommendation #32: That the board of directors (Highway of Tears community governing body) report out and be held accountable to the communities and funding bodies at annual Highway of Tears symposiums.

The progress on achieving the short and long-term goals contained in this report, and the status of all actions undertaken to achieve these goals, must be reported to each community. Annual audited financial statements of the Highway of Tears legacy fund must also be presented publicly. The annual Highway of Tears Symposium, attended by the victims' families and all Highway of Tears community stakeholders, is the best forum for ensuring board accountability.

These annual symposiums should also provide constructive feedback to the board of directors from the community, thus assisting them to better govern and manage the Highway of Tears initiative.

An annual Highway of Tears symposium will accomplish more than ensuring governing body accountability; it was the expressed wish of all the victims' families that this be an annual event for



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them to meet and comfort each other in expression of common loss and mutually support each other in their journey toward healing and closure.

Recommendation #33: That the RCMP continue its official investigation or inquiry into the aboriginal community's assertions on the actual number of missing women.

As mentioned in the background section of this report, no one really knows the exact number of missing women. The *Take Back the Highway* awareness demonstration in Prince Rupert commemorated thirty-two missing women.

This ongoing official RCMP investigation should determine the number of missing women and verify their identities. More importantly, this investigation needs to acknowledge the fact that each individual number from nine to possibly thirty-two missing victims is in fact a valued family member's life that deserves the same respect and attention presented at the Highway of Tears symposium. Whatever the eventual number of missing victims, all remain unsolved, and all of these victims' families have yet to receive full closure.



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HIGHWAY OF TEARS SYMPOSIUM DELEGATE ORGANIZATIONS

- 1.** Aboriginal Mother Center Society, Vancouver, BC
- 2.** A.C.E.S (Arcane Communities Education Services / Support)
- 3.** Adah Dene Cultural Healing Camp Society, Fort St . James, BC
- 4.** Assembly of First Nations (Indian Residential Schools Unit)
- 5.** Association for Women and Children (AWAC) Prince George, BC
- 6.** BC Association of Specialized Victim Assistance and Counselling Programs, Prince George, BC
- 7.** BC First Nations Leadership Council (Union of BC Indian Chiefs, First Nations Summit, BC Assembly of First Nations)
- 8.** BC Government and Employees Union
- 9.** BC Schizophrenia Society, Prince George, BC
- 10.** Burns Lake Band, Burns Lake, BC
- 11.** Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC -TV)
- 12.** Canadian Federation of University Women
- 13.** Canadian Press
- 14.** Canadian Red Cross Society, Prince George, BC
- 15.** Canim Lake Indian Band, 100 Mile House, BC
- 16.** Carrier Sekani Family Services, Prince George, BC
- 17.** Carrier Sekani Tribal Council, Prince George, BC
- 18.** Cedar Project, Prince George, BC
- 19.** Central Interior Native Health Society, Prince George, BC
- 20.** City of Prince Rupert
- 21.** CKPG TV, Prince George
- 22.** Cluculz Lake Community Association
- 23.** Communities Against Sexual Exploitation of Youth (CASEY) Prince George, BC
- 24.** Dakelh Elders of Prince George

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- 25.** Dawson Creek Aboriginal Family Services
- 26.** Downtown Eastside Women's Center (Elders Council), Vancouver, BC
- 27.** Dze L K'ant Friendship Center Society, Smithers, BC
- 28.** Elizabeth Fry Society, Prince George, BC
- 29.** First Nation Drum, Vancouver, BC
- 30.** First Nations Summit
- 31.** Friendship House Association of Prince Rupert
- 32.** Gingolx Village Government, Gingolx, BC
- 33.** Gitanyow Band, Kitwanga, BC
- 34.** Gitaumaax Band, Hazelton, BC
- 35.** Gitsegukla Band, South Hazelton, BC
- 36.** Gitwangtak Band Council, Kitwanga, BC
- 37.** Gitxsan Child and Family Services Society, Hazelton, BC
- 38.** Gitxsan Health Society, Hazelton, BC
- 39.** Gitxsan Treaty Office, Hazelton, BC
- 40.** Hagwilget Village Council
- 41.** Halfway River First Nation, Wonowon, BC
- 42.** Highway of Tears Website (Tony Romeyn)
- 43.** Intersect Youth and Family Services, Prince George, BC
- 44.** John Howard Society, Prince George, BC
- 45.** Kelly Lake Community Centre Society, Hythe, Alberta.
- 46.** Ksan House Society, Terrace, BC
- 47.** Labrador Inuit Association, Prince George, BC
- 48.** Lake Babine Nation, Burns Lake, BC
- 49.** Lheidli T'enneh Nation
- 50.** Living Water Ministries
- 51.** Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, Victoria, BC
- 52.** Ministry of Child and Family Development (Regional Office) Prince George, BC
- 53.** Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General (Victims Services & Community Programs Division), Vancouver, BC
- 54.** McLeod Lake Development Corporation, Prince George, BC

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55. McLeod Lake Indian Band, McLeod Lake, BC
 56. Moricetown Band Administration, Smithers, BC
 57. Nak'azdli Band, Fort St . James, BC
 58. Nak'azdli PEERS Vancouver, Vancouver, BC
 59. Native Courtworkers and Counselling Association of BC, Prince George, BC
 60. Native Women's Association of Canada
 61. North Coast Transition Society, Prince Rupert, BC
 62. Northern Aboriginal Authority for Families, Prince George, BC
 63. Northern Health Authority, Prince George, BC
 64. Office of the Wet'suwet'en
 65. Phoenix Transition Society, Prince George, BC
 66. Pilikut Lake Development Society, Burns Lake, BC
 67. Positive Living North, Prince George, BC
 68. Prince George Citizen (Newspaper)
 69. Prince George Metis Elders Association
 70. Prince George Native Friendship Center, Prince George, BC
 71. Prince George Native Penecostal Church, Prince George, BC
 72. Prince George Nechako Aboriginal Employment and Training Association, Prince George, BC
 73. Prince George Sexual Assault Centre, Prince George, BC
 74. Quesnel Native Friendship Centre, Quesnel, BC
 75. Red Bluff Indian Band, Quesnel, BC
 76. RESEAV – FEMMES COLOMBIE – BRITANNIQUE, Vancouver, BC
 77. Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Vancouver / Prince George, BC
 78. Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Victim Services, Prince George, B.C.
 79. Saulteau First Nation, Moberly Lake, BC
 80. School District #57, Prince George, BC
 81. Stellat'en First Nation, Fraser Lake, BC
 82. Takla Lake First Nation, Takla Landing, BC
 83. Tahltan Nation
 84. Tl'az'ten Nation, Fort St . James, BC
 85. Union of BC Indian Chiefs



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86. United Fishermen and Allied Workers Union, Prince Rupert, BC
87. United Native Nations, Vancouver, BC
88. University of Northern British Columbia (Northern Women's Centre), Prince George, BC
89. Urban Aboriginal Strategy (representative)
90. Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre, Vancouver, BC
91. West Moberly First Nation