

BC Association of Aboriginal
Friendship Centres

BCAAFC

Letter of Support for Preserving Evidence in the Pickton Case

December 7, 2023 — The BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres (BCAAFC) works collaboratively with its 25 member centres and partners to support urban Indigenous people as they realize their vision of health, wellness, and prosperity. Among many other initiatives, we work with Friendship Centres and our provincial partners to address gender-based violence and anti-Indigenous racism. As such, we enthusiastically support the preservation of evidence from the Pickton case and call upon the governments of Canada and British Columbia, as well as the RCMP, to immediately withdraw the applications to dispose of the exhibits obtained during the investigations into missing and murdered women.

As a result of racism, discrimination, and the ongoing effects of colonialism, Indigenous women and girls are among the most at risk of violence, human trafficking, and sexual exploitation. The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls was launched in 2016 to acknowledge, gather evidence, and examine the systemic causes of all forms of violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ individuals.

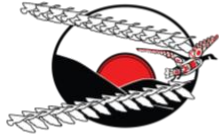
Such evidence is what the RCMP is seeking to dispose of. An estimated 14,000 exhibits were collected from various locations related to Robert Pickton during the investigations into over 50 women who were murdered or went missing from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. **The majority of these missing women are Indigenous and their cases remain unsolved.**

Multiple inquiries have highlighted systemic failures in the police investigations into violence against Indigenous women and girls, revealing a disturbing pattern of negligence and discrimination. The Pickton case is a tragedy that exemplifies this longstanding and deeply rooted discrimination against Indigenous and marginalized women that is held and enacted by the authorities that claim to serve and protect. Destroying this evidence would be another grievous failure.

Of those 50 missing women, 26 cases resulted in charges against serial killer Robert Pickton. Of those 26, he was only convicted of 6 murders. The remaining 20 charges were stayed by the BC Attorney General. Over two dozen cases remain unsolved. The families of all those women are still awaiting justice. They still deserve to know what happened to their loved ones. Disposal of the exhibits will quash any hope of truth or justice and will send a

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551 Chatham St | Victoria, BC | V8T 1E1 | www.bcaafc.com
(Office) 250-388-5522 or 1-800-990-2432 | (Fax) 250-388-5502



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message to Indigenous people across the country that shelf space is more important than the lives of Indigenous women and girls.

These are only some of the many reasons why we are opposed to the destruction of these exhibits. Preserving the integrity of this evidence is an important way that Canada and British Columbia can respect and honour the commitments they have made to reconciliation and human rights.

In friendship,

Leslie Varley, Executive Director
BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres