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Indigenous Women and Girls: Researchers at UQAM join Quebec Native Women in calling for increased collaboration with the **SPVM** Version française

January 27th 2021 - Cases of missing and murdered

Indigenous women and girls (MMIWG) in Canada are not

a recent phenomenon, but they have become a public

crisis that can no longer be ignored, notably since the launch of the National Inquiry into Missing and

Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls by the federal government in 2015, as well as the Viens Commission in Quebec (2019). A team of researchers from the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM) have collaborated with Quebec Native Women to examine this situation in the context of the city of Montreal, which has the greatest Indigenous population of all major cities of the province of Quebec. How has the Service de police de la Ville de Montréal (SPVM) responded to the crisis of MMIWG in Montreal? **Observations** In 2015, the Montreal Urban Aboriginal Community Strategy NETWORK and the SPVM signed a collaborative agreement seeking to improve the relations and interactions between the police force and Indigenous

people in Montreal. The researchers and participants

who were contacted within the context of the study

agree that while some progress has been made to this effect, there ia a lack of an efficient framework of

implementation.

being taken seriously.

MMIWG in Montreal.

need to collaborate, but very little action has been taken by authorities. In order to achieve real results, the SPVM must act immediately on its promise to the Indigenous community", affirm co-researchers Dominique Bernier, Doris Farget and Mirja Trilsch, professors at the Faculty of Political Science and Law of the Université du Québec à Montréal. They confirm that, despite the best intentions of some, primarily the Aboriginal Liaison Officer who was

appointed following the signature of the Agreement, the

women is widespread across the SPVM. Racist attitudes

and discriminatory police interventions with Indigenous

women have largely resulted in cases of MMIWG not

lack of attention and sensitivity towards Indigenous

"The report highlights a distinct absence of cooperation

on behalf of the SPVM. There has been consensus on the

According to Vivian Michel, the president of Quebec Native Women, "systemic racism kills." The research demonstrates that, as of now, a successful intervention depends on individual goodwill and sensitivity. However, there appears to be a lack of common vision and institutional engagement on behalf of the SPVM with regard to the fight against the crisis of

"One requirement to establish an efficient and

participants have allowed us to confirm that that

appropriate mode of collaboration is a relationship of

relationship is absent. The Viens Commission recently

highlighted the 'deep feeling of mistrust that Indigenous

trust between the interested parties. Our interviews with

peoples have towards police services", explain professors Dominique Bernier, Doris Farget and Mirja Trilsch of UQAM. One of the main objectives of the Ville de Montréal's 2020-2025 Strategy for Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples is articulated around improving the feeling of safety of Indigenous people in Montréal. According to the researchers, a sobering reality has

come to light: all Indigenous women and girls are at risk

of going missing or being murdered. To this extent, many

Indigenous women and girls are placed in situations that

make them vulnerable to violations of their rights to life,

"The lack of services offered that are adapted to the

needs of Indigenous communities and their members,

especially by public services such as the SPVM, exacerbates this crisis. This is an alarming observation that requires immediate in-depth reflection", they added. **Potential Solutions** This study has revealed that the phenomenon of MMIWG in Montreal is symptomatic of a profound gap between

the declared intentions of the directors of the SPVM to

According to the researchers, a human-rights based

approach, notably an approch based on the right to

remedy the situation and the breadth and efficacy of the

substantive equality, is the key to a healthy and respectful collaboration.

of the institution.

Indigenous people.

amongst several persons.

regarding racial profiling.

measures put in place to do so.

liberty and safety.

The researchers state that "the response of the SPVM (to MMIWG) must be based on non-discrimination, inclusion and the participation of Indigenous communities and their members. This requires the recognition of the needs and expertise of Indigenous communities and organisations."

Vivian Michel adds: "Our women must be guaranteed the

respect of their human rights, especially their rights to

life and safety, without discrimination. It is important to

these rights is not limited to finding a missing Indigenous

remember that the obligation of the SPVM to protect

woman. It also entails a commitment to prevention, to

diligence, and this can only be achieved through real

cooperation with Indigenous organisations." **Recommendations** From these potential solutions, several concrete actions have been identified and these must be undertaken by the SPVM in order to improve its response to MMIWG in Montreal: 1. The SPVM must put forth an approach that is clear, coherent, that recognizes the binding nature of the 2015 Agreement

and denotes a sincere and systematic engagement on behalf

2. The SPVM must implement a system that permits data

analysis and the development of follow-up indicators

cases of MMIWG and applicable to any and all interventions with Indigenous women and girls. 4. The SPVM must explore methods that are culturally safe and relevant in an effort to build cooperation, a culture of partnership and to establish a relationship of trust with

5. The concept of absolute equality and the different shapes

3. The SPVM must develop a model of protocols specific to all

that it can take when applied within the context of police intervention, must be mastered by all members of the SPVM. 6. The SPVM must develop an Indigenous liaison team, with adequate Aboriginal representation amongst its members, to effectively distribute the responsibilities and workload

7. A working task force that involves the SPVM as well as other

Indigenous organisations based in Montreal, such as Quebec

- Native Women, must be created without delay. 8. Continued financial support for Indigenous organisations in Tiohtiá:ke/Montreal must be committed and ensured. **About the project**
- the Looking Out for Each Other- Assisting Aboriginal Families and Communities when an Aboriginal Woman

This research was conducted within the framework of

Goes Missing (LOFEO) project, a research-action initiative developed through leadership of the *New* Brunswick Aboriginal Peoples Council (NBAPC) and Professor Jula Hughes when she was working with the Faculty of Law of the University of New Brunswick. She is now Dean of the Faculty of Law at Lakehead University. The Québecois component of the project was created and developed through the partnership of Quebec

Native Women (QNW) and professors Dominique Bernier, Doris Farget and Mirja Trilsch of the Faculty of Political Science and Law of the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), with the support of the Clinique internationale de défense des droits humains de l'UQAM (CIDDHU).

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The researchers as well as the president of Quebec Native Women are available for interviews.

Please consult the project synthesis

Source: Joanie Doucet Media Relations Advisor Media Relations and Special Events Division Communications Department, UQAM Cell.: 514 297-2771

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