

Indigenous People In the Sex Trade – Our Life, Our Bodies, Our Realities
Press release in support of the 21st annual February 14th Missing Women's Rally

- February 14th, 2012 - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE –

ABOUT THE PROJECT: The Aboriginal Sex Work Education and Outreach Project (ASWEOP) is a partnership between Maggie's: The Toronto Sex Workers Action Project and the Native Youth Sexual Health Network. It is run by and for Indigenous people in the sex trade. This project is for street based sex workers of all genders and of Indigenous descent.

As Indigenous community members we strongly support all those hosting memorial marches across the country for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. As we are participating locally in the Toronto Rally to Honor Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, we have chosen to make connections between the same colonial injustices that not only continue to allow for genocide but also oppress our right to self-determination over our bodies, our choices and our work.

On February 14th we remember and honor all Indigenous Women including Indigenous People in the sex trade who have gone missing or have been murdered. We remember all women including our Trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming sisters. Many of those who have been lost have been a part of our communities and families.

We support the demand by Vancouver and other national Aboriginal women's organizations for the United Nations to investigate the hundreds of missing and murdered Indigenous women. Vancouver's February 14th Women's Memorial March Committee and the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre, along with the Feminist Alliance for International Action (FAIFA) and the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) have recently made submissions to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), to investigate the lack of action on behalf of the government.

We support the need for a visit by CEDAW members with the direct and meaningful participation of Indigenous women advocates, people in the sex trade and family members of missing and murdered women as the discrimination from the police and judicial systems continue to increase.

Part of remembering and honoring this February 14th is the release of the ASWEOP statement "***Indigenous People In the Sex Trade – Our Life, Our Bodies, Our Realities***". This statement was created by Indigenous People in the sex trade to speak to the seeds that we continue to plant in our communities as resistance to violence:

"ASWEOP brings together Indigenous people in the sex trade community to recognize the Indigenous women who have gone missing or been murdered as a part of ongoing systemic oppression. It allows us to honor current Indigenous and Two-Spirit People in the sex trade while acknowledging those who have lost their lives due to ongoing colonial abuse."

We hope that this statement is shared widely among community, sex workers, and community-based organizations. It can be accessed at <http://maggiestoronto.ca/press-releases>

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