



March 8, 2014

In celebration of International Women's Day

Dear colleagues:

Today, CNA joins with you to celebrate International Women's Day 2014. This year's theme, Inspiring Change, is highly relevant to women and especially well-suited to nurses. Inspiring and leading change is what nurses do as we engage in our practice across so many settings, sectors and roles. I am convinced that the leadership within each of us can be energized, expanded and enabled as we grow to understand leadership frameworks and act to inspire change.

As we mark International Women's Day, I want to highlight a particular issue where change is needed. It concerns the more than 600 missing and murdered aboriginal women in Canada and relates to CNA's policy and program work on aboriginal health and aboriginal health nursing.

Last fall I wrote to Health Minister Rona Ambrose, urging the government to undertake a national inquiry to help explain these murders and disappearances. A national inquiry would shed light on why these numbers are so disproportionately high and serve as an important step toward the creation of a national action plan on violence prevention and treatment for affected women, families and communities. The inquiry would also contribute meaningfully to the healing of those traumatized through this violence and unexplained loss. In our letter, CNA offered to work with the minister and her staff to identify solutions that address the root causes of violence.

As nurses, we are frequently the first point of contact for abused women and children, particularly in rural and isolated communities. We see firsthand the physical and psychological effects of gender violence as well as the enduring emotional scars. Aboriginal nurses tell CNA how, as aboriginal women, they have been personally touched by these murders and disappearances. They have lost friends and family members, and they are concerned for their own safety and the safety of their daughters.

A year-long parliamentary committee examining violence against aboriginal women in Canada will release its report this week. As I write this letter, I do not know what the report will say, but I expect it to contain concrete actions that will inspire lasting and positive change — nothing less is acceptable. CNA will closely monitor its release and create a link to the report on our website.

Please join me in celebrating International Women's Day and the role of nursing leadership in inspiring change for the achievement of a more just and equitable society for all.

With warm regards,

Barb Mildon, RN, PhD, CHE, CCHN(C)  
President