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NATIONAL ABORIGINAL WOMEN AND VIOLENCE FORUM

WHITEHORSE - The Government of Yukon and representatives of the aboriginal women's community will take part in a national policy forum on Aboriginal Women and Violence "Building Safe and Healthy Families and Communities" in Ottawa, March 27 and 28.

Women from across the country will gather at the invitation of the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Aboriginal Women's Issues Working Group to identify issues that are creating barriers to Aboriginal women's equality. At the 2003 conference of the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women, ministers identified aboriginal women's issues as a priority and established the Aboriginal Women's Working Group to address family violence and economic inequality.

"The Government of Yukon is pleased to support this important initiative," Elaine Taylor, minister responsible for the Women's Directorate, said. "Women representing all parts of the country will take local successes as well as challenges to the table to help shape a national approach."

Representatives will share best practices and provide recommendations for policy improvement.

The Yukon delegation includes representation from the Liard Aboriginal Women's Society and the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle.

"Together with input from across the country, we can bring much needed awareness and education to the racialized/sexualized violence against aboriginal women," Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle member Norma Kassi said. "At this forum, we will be helping to influence responsive and pro-active policy. This has been a long time in coming and it's a great opportunity."

Recent initiatives undertaken by the Women's Directorate to address the high rates of violence against women in the North include: a public education campaign on preventing violence against women and children; the development of Safety Kits to aid women living with violence; and the Aboriginal Women and Violence Prevention initiative that supports women to address violence in community-specific ways.

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