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National Chief Perry Bellegarde Says Clear Communication with Family Members is Essential in Ensuring the Success of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

(Ottawa, ON) – Assembly of First Nations (AFN) National Chief Perry Bellegarde supports the many families of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls who have expressed their growing frustration with the National Inquiry.

Family members and the AFN have continually made strong, clear calls for action and justice for missing and murdered Indigenous women and their families. National Chief Bellegarde expressed concerns in an open letter last October regarding the lack of communication with families and First Nations in general. The letter then urged the Commissioners to immediately reach out to clearly communicate the plans and timing for the national inquiry to First Nations, Indigenous peoples and organizations, and, most of all, the families. National Chief Bellegarde invited Commissioners on three occasions to meet with First Nations leaders, women, youth and Elders, many of whom have been directly affected by this tragedy. Those invitations have all been declined.

“Clear communication and outreach to family members are essential to rebuild trust and ensure the National Inquiry is a success,” National Chief Bellegarde said. “Survivors, family members and members of the public rightfully expect transparency on the part of Inquiry Commissioner’s regarding their plans and timelines. We look forward to increased communication as promised in the Open Letter released by Commissioner Buller on May 19.”

When the launch of the National Inquiry was announced, many family members were hopeful that the Inquiry process would result in justice for the victims and an opportunity for family members to be heard and to heal.

In recent weeks, family members, First Nations and First Nation leadership have expressed serious concerns about the on-going delays and lack of transparency on the part of the National Inquiry. National Chief Bellegarde maintains that the Inquiry must take a “families first” approach in all its work, based on respect for survivors and family members, and the values of communication and openness. The AFN is guided by the

voices of the family members who fought long and hard for the National Inquiry to become a reality.

“Survivors, family members, and all Indigenous women and girls have the right to expect better in the protection of their basic human rights to safety and security,” said National Chief Bellegarde

The AFN is the national organization representing First Nations citizens in Canada. Follow AFN on Twitter @AFN_Updates.

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