

National Day of Awareness for Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit People

May 5, 2025



RESOURCE PACKAGE



The **National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit People** (also known as **Red Dress Day**) honours and remembers those whose lives have been lost, whose stories remain untold, or who have been deeply affected by violence. Recognized annually on **May 5**, this day serves as a call for justice and a reminder of the urgent need for systemic change to address the disproportionate racism, sexism, and discrimination faced by this community.

The Royal's Women's Mental Health Program has developed this resource package to help us better understand the significance of this important day, the alarming rates of violence against Indigenous women and girls, and how we as Canadians can support calls for justice. It also highlights how healthcare providers can deliver culturally sensitive, compassionate care that is responsive to the unique needs of Indigenous communities. Additionally, we've included extra resources, services, and support lines to further assist in these efforts.

ABOUT RED DRESS DAY



Image from jaimeblackartist.com

Red Dress Day originated with Canadian artist Jaime Black's [REDress Project](http://REDressProject), an art installation that highlights the epidemic of violence against Indigenous women and girls. The red dress has since become a powerful symbol of the disproportionately high rates of violence they face. On May 5, red dresses are displayed to raise awareness of this critical issue. The colour red is believed to transcend the physical realm, connecting with Indigenous ancestors in the spiritual world.

Many reports have explored the violence faced by Indigenous women and girls, with much of this work led by Indigenous communities. Until more recently, the violent impacts of colonization have been minimized

by non-Indigenous Canadians, and the issues affecting Indigenous peoples remain under-researched despite the significantly higher rates of violence and oppression experienced by Indigenous women and girls.

2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous people, especially Two-Spirit individuals, face even greater risks due to high rates of homelessness, discrimination in healthcare, and a lack of culturally appropriate services. Red Dress Day urges us to recognize how systemic colonialism drives racism, sexism, and discrimination, and calls for action to dismantle the structures that uphold this violence.

SOME EYE-OPENING FACTS

All of the quotations outlined below come directly from the **Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls** (<https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/>).

- “Indigenous women and girls are 12 times more likely to be murdered or missing than any other women in Canada, and 16 times more likely than Caucasian women.”



Scan to read
the report.

- “Indigenous women are also more likely to be killed by acquaintances than non-Indigenous women, and are seven times as likely to be targeted by serial killers. In the words of James Anaya, the rates of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls are an epidemic.”
- “Indigenous women are sexually assaulted three times more often than non-Indigenous women, and most of the women and children trafficked in Canada are Indigenous.”
- “One Ontario study of gender-diverse and Two-Spirit Indigenous people found that 73% had experienced some form of violence due to transphobia, with 43% having experienced physical and/or sexual violence.”

NATIONAL INQUIRY INTO MISSING & MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN & GIRLS

The **National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls** was created to help Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ people reclaim their power and place in society. Its path to healing followed three steps: finding the truth, honouring the truth, and giving life to the truth.

The inquiry aimed to uncover the deep-rooted, systemic causes of violence—many of which stem from colonization. It concluded that government-sanctioned violence, including the Sixties Scoop, residential schools, and ongoing systemic racism, amounts to genocide. These actions disrupted and devalued Indigenous families, cultures, and especially the roles of women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ people.

Systemic issues—such as racism, poverty, inadequate housing, limited access to healthcare and culturally safe services—create conditions that increase vulnerability. In many cases, authorities have also failed to properly investigate or respond to crimes, further worsening the crisis.

Launched in 2016 in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action, the inquiry gathered insight from survivors, families, knowledge keepers, and experts across the country. In June 2019, it released the Final Report with 231 Calls for Justice for all sectors to help end the violence. A complementary report from Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak added 62 additional Calls for Change – called *Miskotahâ* – to ensure Métis voices and experiences are also reflected. Review the **Final Report** to learn more: <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/>

HOW TO BE AN ALLY: SUPPORTING THE CALLS TO ACTION WITHIN THE FINAL REPORT

An excerpt from the **National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls**:



“Based on our guiding principle—that all Indigenous women and girls are sacred—our vision is to see Indigenous women and girls restored to their rightful power and place. We hope that all Canadians will share this vision and engage with each other to protect the rights of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ people...

“Listen to webcasts of our Community Hearings. Educate yourself about the issues. Find out what national and regional Indigenous organizations are doing. Talk to Indigenous neighbours in your own community. Learn how to work in partnership with Indigenous peoples. There is so much work to be done. As you join us on this journey, we hope you will gain a deep respect for the courage, strength, resilience, and knowledge of the people and voices at the heart of this Inquiry. Truly decolonizing and transforming our country will require nothing less.”

MEANINGFUL WAYS ALLIES CAN SUPPORT THE CALLS TO ACTION IN THE FINAL REPORT

- **Educate yourself** about colonization and its ongoing role in the violence and systemic inequalities faced by Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ people.

- **Read the Final Report** and reflect on immediate actions you can take to support change.
- **Stay informed** about efforts within your community and across governments to address these issues.
- **Build relationships** with Indigenous communities and help restore the value and visibility of Indigenous women.
- **Advocate** for equitable rights, recognition, and safety for Indigenous women and girls.
- **Use your voice** to challenge and speak out against the violence and injustice facing Indigenous women.



Image from the Canadian Museum for Human Rights

FURTHER READING TO REINFORCE LEARNING & AWARENESS

- **REDress Project** – <http://www.redressproject.org>
- **National Centre for Truth & Reconciliation** – <https://nctr.ca/>
- **Breaking the Silence** – <https://saturviit.ca/resource/breaking-the-silence/>
- **Native Youth Sexual Health Network** – <http://www.nativeyouthsexualhealth.com>
- **Native Women’s Association of Canada: MMIWG2S+ and Violence Prevention** – <https://www.nwac.ca/policy-areas/violence-prevention-and-safety/sisters-in-spirit>
- **National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls:**
 - *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report* of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Women and Girls – <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/>
 - *Their Voices Will Guide Us: Student and Youth Engagement Guide* – <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/NIMMIWG-THEIR-VOICES-WILL-GUIDE-US.pdf>
- **Transcripts, testimonies, and public statements offered during the Truth-Gathering Process** – www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/part-ii-and-part-iii-knowledge-keeper-expert-and-institutional-hearing-transcripts/
- **Amnesty International: 10 Ways to Be a Genuine Ally to Indigenous Communities** – <https://www.amnesty.org.au/10-ways-to-be-an-ally-to-indigenous-communities/>

SUPPORT LINES & INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY SERVICES

SUPPORT LINES

- **Direct support line** – If you are impacted by the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ people and need immediate support, call **1-844-413-6649**. This free, 24/7 support line is available to anyone in need, at any time.
- **Family Information Liaison Units (FILU)** – If you have questions about your missing or murdered loved ones, FILU members work directly with families to address outstanding questions. For more information about their services, visit the [FILU webpage](#).
- **Crisis Line** – Offered through Minwaashin Lodge and Oshki Kizis Lodge, this crisis line offers free, 24/7 support to the Indigenous community. Call **613-789-1141**.
- **Talk 4 Healing** – This is a culturally grounded, fully confidential helpline for Indigenous women available in 14 languages. Call **1-855-554-HEAL**.
- **Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region** – Offers free, 24/7 support for individuals in distress. Call **613-238-3311**.
- **Suicide Crisis Helpline** – Connect to a crisis responder to get help without judgement. Call **9-8-8**.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

- **Non-Insured Health Benefits for First Nations and Inuit (NIHB)**
 - Federally-funded access to health care for folks with Indigenous status (includes psychology and access to various providers). Learn more here: <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1572537161086/1572537234517>
- **Minwaashin Lodge**
 - Provides a range of programs and services to First Nations, Inuit and Métis women and children (regardless of status) who are survivors of domestic and other forms of violence, and who may also be suffering the effects of the residential school system. Services include the Oshki Kizis Lodge shelter. Learn more here: www.minlodge.com
- **Wabano**
 - An Indigenous health and cultural centre. Learn more here: www.wabano.com
- **Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA)**
 - A not-for-profit organization to empower and support Ontario Indigenous women and their families through research, advocacy, policy development, and programs focused on local, regional and provincial activities. Includes a centralized intake program Ontario services. Learn more here: www.onwa.ca
- **Tungasuvingat Inuit**
 - An Inuit-specific urban services provider that offers community supports for Inuit of all ages. Learn more here: <https://tiontario.ca/>
- **Odawa Native Friendship Centre**
 - Provides a range of programs and services for the Indigenous community in Ottawa. Learn more here: <https://odawa.ca/>
- **Tewegan Housing**
 - An Ottawa-based transitional home for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis women, ages 16 to 29. Learn more here: <https://www.teweganhousing.ca/>

CALLS FOR JUSTICE FROM THE FINAL REPORT

The Calls to Justice listed below were all taken directly from the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (<https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/>).

CALLS FOR JUSTICE – ALL CANADIANS

“As this report has shown, and within every encounter, each person has a role to play in order to combat violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people... We encourage and call on every Canadian to consider how they can give life to these Calls for Justice.” – **The Final Report**

- **15.1** – Denounce and speak out against violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people.
- **15.2** – Decolonize by learning the true history of Canada and Indigenous history in your local area. Learn about and celebrate Indigenous Peoples' history, cultures, pride, and diversity, acknowledging the land you live on and its importance to local Indigenous communities, both historically and today.
- **15.3** – Develop knowledge and read the Final Report. Listen to the truths shared, and acknowledge the burden of these human and Indigenous rights violations, and how they impact Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people today.
- **15.4** – Using what you have learned and some of the resources suggested, become a strong ally. Being a strong ally involves more than just tolerance; it means actively working to break down barriers and to support others in every relationship and encounter in which you participate.

- **15.5** – Confront and speak out against racism, sexism, ignorance, homophobia, and transphobia, and teach or encourage others to do the same, wherever it occurs: in your home, in your workplace, or in social settings.
- **15.6** – Protect, support, and promote the safety of women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people by acknowledging and respecting the value of every person and every community, as well as the right of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people to generate their own, self-determined solutions.
- **15.7** – Create time and space for relationships based on respect as human beings, supporting and embracing differences with kindness, love, and respect. Learn about Indigenous principles of relationship specific to those Nations or communities in your local area and work, and put them into practice in all of your relationships with Indigenous Peoples.
- **15.8** – Help hold all governments accountable to act on the Calls for Justice, and to implement them according to the important principles we set out.

