

## What Can You Do?

### Amplify Indigenous Voices

Use your platform, whether it's social media, community events, or personal conversations, to amplify the voices of Indigenous activists and organizations. Share their stories, artwork, and initiatives to raise awareness and support their efforts.

### Support Grassroots Initiatives

Donate to or volunteer with grassroots organizations working to address the root causes of violence against Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people. Look for initiatives focused on Indigenous sovereignty, community healing, and systemic change.

### Advocate for Policy Change

Write to your elected representatives at municipal, provincial, and federal levels, urging them to prioritize Indigenous rights and take concrete actions to address violence and discrimination. Support policies and legislation that align with the recommendations of the National Inquiry, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action, and uphold the rights of Indigenous peoples.

### Engage in Reconciliation

Take meaningful steps towards reconciliation by acknowledging and challenging stereotypes, biases, and systemic injustices. Educate others in your community and advocate for inclusive and respectful relationships with Indigenous peoples.

### Educate Yourself

Learn more about the history and ongoing issues facing Indigenous communities in Canada.

## Read:

- **"Highway of Tears: A True Story of Racism, Indifference, and the Pursuit of Justice for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls"** by **Jessica McDiarmid** exposes the systemic injustices and racism fueling the epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous women along Canada's Highway 16.
- **"Keetsahnak: Our Missing and Murdered Indigenous Sisters"** by **Kim Anderson, Maria Campbell, and Christi Belcourt**, highlights the lives, stories, and cultural significance of Indigenous women and girls who have been lost to violence, calling for action and remembrance.
- **"The Break" (fiction)** by **Katherine Vermette** delves into the intertwined lives of Indigenous women grappling with trauma, family ties, and resilience in the aftermath of a violent crime, accompanied by a discussion guide for deeper exploration.
- **"Firekeeper's Daughter" (fiction)** by **Angeline Boulley** delves into the pervasive violence against Indigenous women and girls, as Daunis Fontaine confronts the harsh realities of systemic injustice and works to uncover the truth behind a series of tragic events plaguing her community.

## Watch:

- **The Slain Project YouTube Channel**, raises awareness for ongoing cases of MMWIG2S and illuminates personal stories
- **This River (2016)** offers an Indigenous perspective on the devastating experience of searching for a loved one who has disappeared
- **Shades of Our Sisters (2017)** is an Indigenous-student collaboration which aims to honour the lives of MMWIG2S by celebrating the love and memories which they have left with us.
- **On the Farm (2016)** is based on the book written by Stevie Cameron. The film is a powerful study of the dysfunction and disorder in the police and criminal justice systems that allowed a psychopath to murder nearly 50 marginalized women from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.

# May 5

# Red Dress Day

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



bow valley  
harmony  
project

## Land Acknowledgement

The Stoney Nakoda are the original “peoples of the mountains” known in their language as the Iyârhe Nakoda. The Iyârhe Nakoda were forcibly displaced from their ancestral lands within Banff National Park during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This expulsion was a result of the Canadian government’s colonial policies, which prioritized the interests of settlers and the expansion of the national park system over the rights and well-being of Indigenous peoples. The Iyârhe Nakoda, like other Indigenous communities across Canada, faced relentless pressure to abandon their traditional ways of life and were subjected to relocation, severing their deep-rooted connection to this land and disrupting their cultural practices.

Red Dress Day underscores the ongoing impacts of colonialism on Indigenous peoples and highlights the ongoing struggle for recognition, justice, and reconciliation.



### Red Dress Day

Red Dress Day is also known as the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit People. In 2010, Métis artist Jamie Black began The REDress Project, an art installation that hung hundreds of empty red dresses in public spaces to raise awareness about the thousands of missing and murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit people across Turtle Island (Canada).

### The Crisis

Traditionally, Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people are honored as equals and seen as sacred, holding positions of leadership and influence. Colonial notions which positioned women, girls and two-spirit people as ‘less than’ dramatically disrupted Indigenous social structures, the impacts of which persist to this day. No one knows exactly how many Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit people have experienced violence, gone missing, or been murdered, **because officials have not consistently kept count.**

According to a report released by the RCMP in May 2015—the first official federal effort to determine how many Indigenous women and

girls have gone missing or been murdered—1,017 Indigenous women and girls went missing or were murdered from 1980-2012. Due to policy and government reporting gaps, officials have acknowledged the actual number may be far higher. According to Indigenous activists, the number is closer to 4,000 (Amnesty International, 2021). Statistics specific to two-spirit people have not been collected.

Decades of government and law enforcement inaction to end the violence has deepened crisis. **For over three decades, grassroots Indigenous women activists have marched in the streets, walked across Canada, held vigils, and taken other actions to draw attention to the scope and scale of the violence and call on governments to take action.**

In 2019, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG), released a report: Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. This report was created through two years of public hearings and evidence gathering across the country and shares the truths of more than 2,380 family members, survivors, experts and Knowledge Keepers.

The report reveals that the root cause of Canada’s staggering rates of violence against Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people is caused by the persistent and deliberate violation and abuse of the rights of Indigenous peoples. The report calls for transformative legal and social changes to address and resolve the growing crisis across the country.

**Ending violence against Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit people is connected to Indigenous sovereignty, transforming the child welfare system, food and water security, adequate housing, over-policing, and many other issues.** The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples provides some insight into the interconnectedness of Indigenous lives, experiences, and human rights.