

# Red Dress Day a symbol of remembrance for MMIWG

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A simple red dress can be a powerful symbol of hope.

Today is Red Dress Day, an annual event held to raise awareness for the untold numbers of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls across Canada. Members of the public are asked to wear a red dress or to display a red dress in a public place as a symbol of hope and an acknowledgement that missing and murdered women have not been forgotten.

According to data published by the Native Women's Association of Canada, Indigenous women made up three per cent of the country's female population in 2008, but suffered roughly 10 per cent of all female homicides that year. More than half of the cases occurred in the western provinces, with British Columbia and Alberta home to the highest numbers.



This year Red Dress Day takes on additional meaning, as the hearings at the national inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women are scheduled to open later this month. After years of pushing for a public inquiry, Indigenous leaders said the issue will finally be receiving much-needed national attention.

“As the hearings begin this month in the MMIW inquiry, the whole world will come to know their names and their stories,” FSIN Vice-Chief Heather Bear said in a statement.

“On May 5 we wear red to show that we have not forgotten our sisters, mothers and daughters who have been taken from us.”

The issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls is not simply a women's issue, FSIN Chief Bobby Cameron said, as the resulting waves of trauma and loss do long-term damage to Indigenous communities.

“When someone suffers a violent death or goes missing it hurts the integrity of our families and communities,” Cameron said. “When we wear the red we acknowledge that they are still here in spirit; in our hearts.”

Shirley Henderson, Chair of the Prince Albert Grand Council's Women's Commission, said the commission has been waiting patiently to share the stories of Prince Albert women when the inquest finally visits Saskatchewan.

“We'll definitely attend the meetings they're going to have with the families of the missing and murdered women,” she said. “We have lots of local stories in our archives.”

Henderson said missing and murdered Indigenous women are also remembered with an annual walk in Prince Albert, which has been ongoing for the past 13 years. This year's event will be held June 29. The walks are always well-attended, Henderson said, which shows that the issue is gaining ground in public awareness.

“We've had as many as 300 people show up at our walks,” Henderson said. “That shows that there is an interest out there and people do care.”

Source: <https://panow.com/2017/05/05/red-dress-day-a-symbol-of-remembrance-for-mmiwg/>