

Missing and Murdered Native Women – Public Awareness Efforts

NATIONAL INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTER

NOVEMBER 30, 2016



Presenters

▶ **Terri Henry**

- ▶ Secretary of State, Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians
- ▶ Independent Expert, United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues for North America, 2017-2020.
- ▶ Co-chair, National Congress of American Indians Task Force on Violence Against Women

▶ **Dawn LaValle-Harvard**

- ▶ Director, First Peoples House of Learning at Trent University
- ▶ Former President, Native Women's Association of Canada

▶ **Jacqueline Agtuca**

- ▶ Consultant, National Indigenous Women's Resource Center

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Webinar is Focused on Public Awareness Efforts Concerning Missing and Murdered Native Women

Public Awareness



Social Justice Organizing to :

- ▶ Create public awareness to increase the response to the crisis
- ▶ Create policy reforms to encourage appropriate response such as increased training
- ▶ Create legal reforms to mandate appropriate response of criminal justice system



"To be born Indigenous and female in a country like Canada means that we are born political. We recognize that Canada has the resources and the infrastructure now to lead the way in ending violence against Indigenous women and girls both domestically and internationally. Though decades of systemic oppression and abuse cannot be reversed overnight, the power of our women can wear away the strongest opposition if we are all united. Together, alongside our international partners, we will end violence against Indigenous women and girls."

—Dawn Lavell-Harvard, President of the Native Women's Association of Canada



Sisters In Spirit



In 2005 NWAC began to raise awareness of violence against Aboriginal women. But the voices of families and communities needed were being ignored, and the justice system was failing our people.

From 2005-2010 NWAC began to document all the known cases of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in Canada. We discovered 582 beautiful women who've been lost.



- *In 2014, the RCMP released a report, documenting 1,181 Aboriginal women had gone missing or been murdered. There are likely more, but their ethnicity was not known or recorded when they went missing or were murdered.*
- *Police-recorded incidents of Aboriginal female homicides and unresolved missing Aboriginal females in this review total 1,181 - 164 missing and 1,017 homicide victims.*
- *There are 225 unsolved cases of either missing or murdered Aboriginal females: 105 missing for more than 30 days at the time of the report, whose cause of disappearance was categorized at the time as “unknown” or “foul play suspected,” and 120 unsolved homicides between 1980 and 2012.*



Experiences of Violence

- Aboriginal women are 8 times more likely to be killed than non-Aboriginal women.
- Rates of spousal assault are more than 3.5 times higher than non-Aboriginal women. (Spouse is not necessarily Aboriginal).
- More severe and potentially life-threatening forms of spousal violence (54% versus 37% of non-Aboriginal women).

Experiences of Aboriginal Women and Girls

- Disproportionate experiences of violence and abuse (including mental, physical, sexual, cultural/spiritual and financial),
- Impacts of poverty, lower educational attainment than non-Aboriginal women, poor housing, etc.
- Over-representation of Aboriginal children in the child welfare system – more than in Indian Residential schools – and we know the impacts from that



Aboriginal Women and Girls More Likely to be Killed by a Stranger or Acquaintance

Relationship	No.	%
Partner	45	17.2%
Ex-partner	14	5.4%
Family, including all types of family relationships	15	5.7%
'John' or other criminal relationship	4	1.5%
Acquaintance	45	17.2%
Stranger	43	16.5%
Unknown relationship	95	36.4%
Total	261	100.0%

Framework for Action to Prevent and Address Violence Against Indigenous Women and Girls

- Developed by representatives from NAOs, Provinces and Territories and the federal government to guide discussion at the National Roundtable on Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls
- Three Priority Areas for Action:
 - Prevention and Awareness
 - Community Safety
 - Justice Responses & Policing Measures



National Inquiry Update

- New Trudeau government announced intention to conduct national inquiry (vs federal) immediately after election
- Conducted planning roundtables with families across Canada
- Announced 5 commissioners on August 3, 2016...



Lessons from the Native Women's Association of Canada


- ▶ Education of Tribal Leadership
- ▶ National Rally and Actions
 - ▶ Sisters in Spirit Campaign
- ▶ Accountability of Parliament
- ▶ Call for Public Inquiry
- ▶ Community-Based Website
- ▶ International Advocacy



In the United States: An Alarming Pattern

- ▶ Native women are murdered or go missing at a higher rate than any other ethnic group.
- ▶ On some reservations women are murdered at a rate 10 times higher than the national average.
- ▶ Homicide is a leading cause of death of Native women (VAWA).
 - ▶ From 1979 to 1992, third leading cause of death, ages 15 to 34
 - ▶ 75% were killed by family members or acquaintances





Lack of Consequences for Violent Crimes Against Native Women

- ▶ Native women as a population are vulnerable to violent crimes.
- ▶ Vulnerability is due in part to the lack of legal consequences reflected in the minimal to zero number of federal prosecutions of domestic and sexual assault abusers.
- ▶ Federal Prosecution: Between 2004 and 2007, the United States declined to prosecute 62% of Indian Country criminal cases referred to federal prosecutors, including 72% of child sexual crimes, and 75% of adult rape cases.

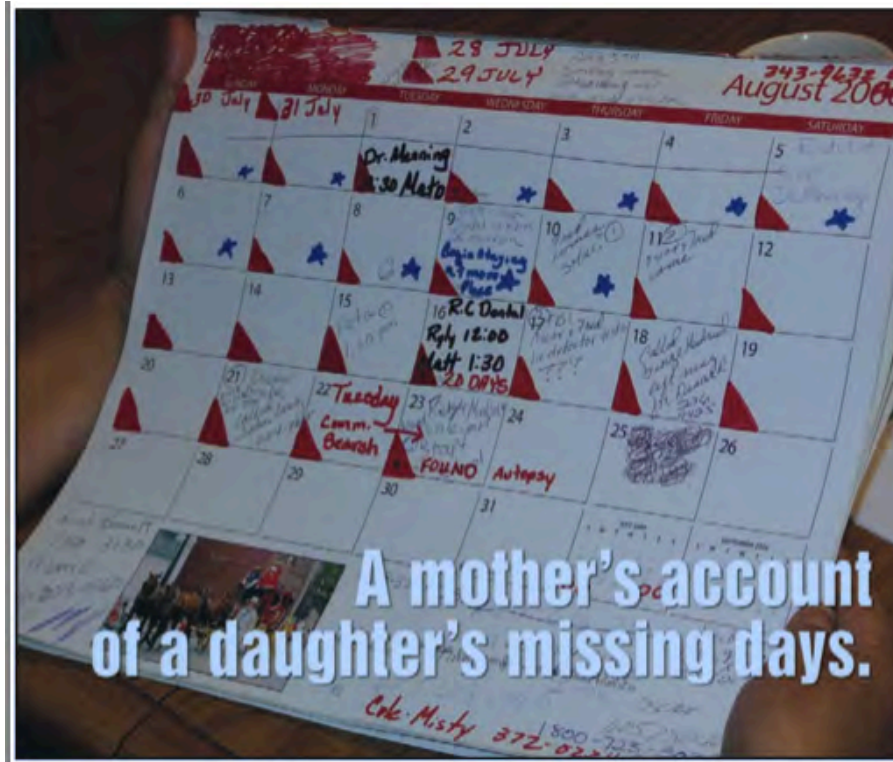
First National
Response by
NCAI Task Force
and
SD Coalition

Walk for Justice
Victoria Eagleman
October 6, 2006



A Pattern of Failed Response

- ❖ Native woman is missing
- ❖ Report is made
- ❖ Inadequate response by criminal system
- ❖ Community search
- ❖ Community justice walk





“

The system is broken. I lost my daughter and I know my granddaughters face the same danger. We all do.

”

—MOTHER OF A MISSING NATIVE WOMAN FOUND MURDERED

The Missing and Murdered Native Women Crisis



Missing and Murdered Native Women and Girls

Misty Upham

Abduction and murder

Ashlynnne Mike

Child abduction and murder

Loreal Tsingine

Death from police shooting

Misty Upham

Charles Upham insists his daughter didn't take her own life or fall by accident. He told *America Tonight* he was informed by a family friend that a witness – who is afraid to speak with police – says two men beat his daughter and threw her down a ravine.

Failed Response

- ▶ Missing
- ▶ Report
- ▶ No / Inadequate Response – did not meet the requirement of EMPA
- ▶ Family search found remains 5 days later



Walk for Justice RoyLynn Rides Horse

- ▶ RoyLynn Rides Horse was beaten, burned, and left for dead. RoyLynn walked several miles before collapsing. Concerned about the inadequate response of the justice system to investigate RoyLynn's case, the Crow Tribe also led a march for justice on June 16, 2016.



Walk for Justice Hannah Harris

Social Justice Organizing



Failed Pattern

- ▶ Missing
- ▶ Report
- ▶ Inadequate Response
- ▶ Community Walk / Search

“National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Native Women and Girls” supported by 125 national, tribal, state organizations

Senate Resolution

Steve Daines, Jon Tester

House Resolution

Mike Zinke, Don Young, Tom Cole

114TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. RES. _____

Designating May 5, 2017, as the “National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Native Women and Girls”.

Expressing support for designation of May 5, 2017, as “National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Native Women and Girls”.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 5, 2016

Mr. ZINKE (for himself, Mr. YOUNG of Alaska, Mrs. KIRKPATRICK, Mrs. LAWRENCE, Mr. CRAMER, Ms. BROWN of Florida, Ms. LEE, Mr. ADERHOLT, Mr. PEARCE, Ms. MCCOLLUM, and Mr. COLE) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources

National Congress of American Indians Efforts

- Discussed as concern at prior NCAI Task Force meetings
- Priority issue
- Research issue



National
Congress of
American
Indians

International Efforts

UN Commission
on the Status of
Women –

59th & 60th
Sessions





Thank you!
Feel Free to Contact Us

- Jacqueline Agtuca, Consultant, NIWRC
 - JAgtuca@NIWRC.org
- Rose Quilt, Director Policy and Research, NIWRC
 - RQuilt@NIWRC.org

National Indigenous Women's Resource Center
515 Lame Deer Ave. | PO Box 99 (mailing)
Lame Deer, MT 59043
(406) 477-3896 | Toll-Free: (855) 649-7299
NIWRC.org