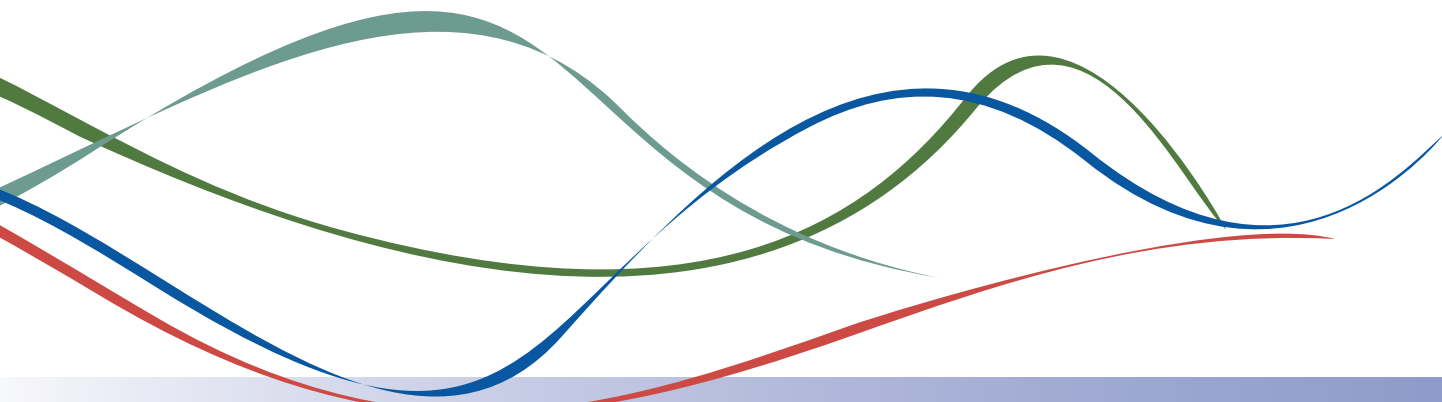




NATIVE WOMEN'S
ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

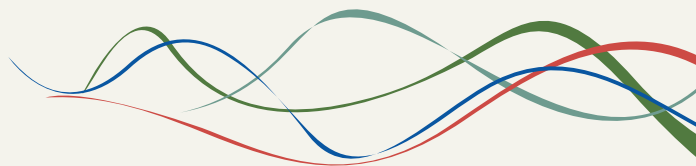
L'ASSOCIATION DES FEMMES
AUTOCHTONES DU CANADA



The national voice of Aboriginal women since 1974.

Community Resource Guide

What Can I Do to Help the Families of Missing and
Murdered Aboriginal Women and Girls?



Dear Friends and Supporters,

The Sisters In Spirit initiative proudly presents the new Community Resource Guide (CRG). Your organization has received this guide to accompany the great work that you or your organization does in the Aboriginal community to help prevent violence against Aboriginal women and girls.

In March, 2010 the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) released a report called "What Their Stories Tell Us". The report was a culmination of research from the past five years of the Sisters In Spirit initiative and has provided evidence of more than 582 Aboriginal women and girls who have gone missing or been murdered in Canada. Over the past five years, Sisters In Spirit has also held a series of family gatherings which included some of the family members and relations of the 582 missing and murdered Aboriginal women to hear their recommendations and requirements for support and safety.

One such gathering yielded the need for a CRG that would centralize most of the sources, programming and campaigns together for: friendships centres; community centres; teachers; educators; and, Aboriginal youth and women to use in violence prevention, advocacy, capacity building and promoting healthy relationships from an Aboriginal perspective.

We encourage you to utilize the information in the CRG as it echoes the voice of the many families that came together and consulted on the issues that affects the safety of Aboriginal women and girls directly. As a community development worker it is always important to incorporate the suggestions of the very group we wish to help- without them we would have no experts on the issues! We hope you find this CRG useful and welcome any feedback or success stories!

Yours in solidarity,

Native Women's Association Canada

2010 The Native Women's Association Canada

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1 Nicholas St., 9th Floor
Ottawa, ON K1N 7B7

Toll free: 1-800-461-4043
Fax: 613-722-7687
Email: sistersinspirit@nwac.ca

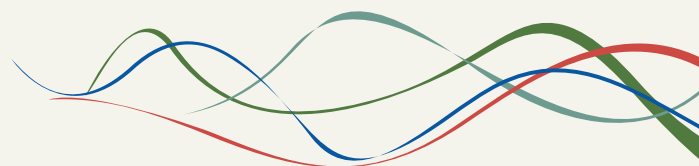
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Introduction

In the last 20 years, more than 500 Aboriginal women and girls have gone missing or been murdered in Canada.



Grandmother Moon Sisters In Spirit Logo featured.

without sisters, mothers, aunties and grandmothers. Parents see an empty chair at every holiday gathering. Aboriginal communities are deprived of the energy, knowledge, wisdom and spirit of these women and girls. Their absence leaves a space that can never be filled.

When the families and friends of a missing Aboriginal woman or girl search for help and for justice, they often face obstacles most other Canadians—even those who have lost a loved one—do not. Some police officers discourage them from filing missing persons reports until 24 or 48 hours after the disappearance. Desperate families resort to printing their own missing persons posters and conducting their own searches. If the missing person is murdered, her family may encounter prejudice from the police, judges, juries, the media and society at large.

All Canadians interested in justice, human rights and human dignity should be ashamed that this is so.

NWAC is addressing these vital issues. We work to enhance, promote and foster the social, economic, cultural and political well-being of Aboriginal women within Aboriginal and Canadian societies.

In March 2010, the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) released the report *What Their Stories Tell Us*, which provided evidence that 582 Aboriginal (First Nations, Inuit and Métis) women and girls have gone missing or been murdered in Canada over the last generation.

The fact that nearly 600 mothers, daughters, sisters, aunties and grandmothers have been lost to violence in this country makes this the most pervasive human rights crisis facing Canada today. Their loss is felt in every Aboriginal community from coast to coast to coast.

Those left behind spend a lifetime wondering what happened, and why. Children are left

Incorporated as a non-profit organization in 1974, NWAC is a network of native women's organizations from across Canada. Much like a "Grandmothers Lodge," we as aunties, mothers, sisters and relatives collectively recognize, respect, promote, defend and enhance our Native ancestral laws, spiritual beliefs, language and traditions given to us by the Creator.

Our Sisters In Spirit initiative, which you'll read more about in the "What You Need to Know" toolkit of this community resource guide, is an awareness, policy and education initiative that addresses violence against Aboriginal women. In particular, it focuses on violence that leads to the disappearance and death of Aboriginal women and girls in Canada.

Every day, people call NWAC asking what they can do to raise awareness of the alarmingly high rates of missing and murdered Aboriginal women in Canada, and to show their support for the families and communities affected. In response, we have prepared this guide to share knowledge, and to help communities respond and heal.

The information in this guide reflects our experiences working with volunteers from coast to coast to coast. We hope you will use this information to open a dialogue with your family, friends and community.



2008 Ottawa, Ontario, march to Parliament Hill

The impact of the Sisters In Spirit initiative is growing. Across Canada, loved ones, students, community groups, churches and others are working hard to raise awareness of the issue among politicians, police forces and the general public. The toolkits, templates and information in this resource guide will help you add your voice to the growing chorus asking for answers and demanding justice.

The guide is divided into three sections, aimed at advocates and campaigners, people assisting families, and teachers and educators. From organizing an event to dealing with the media, we have tips and suggestions for every step of the process. Working together, we can make a difference.

If you have questions or comments about this resource guide, please contact NWAC:

Head office:

155 International Road, Unit 4,
Akwasasne, Ontario K6H 5R7

Satellite office (correspondence to this address):

1 Nicholas Street, 9th floor
Ottawa ON K1N 7B7

Phone: 613-722-3033

Toll Free: 1-800-461-4043

Fax: 613-722-7687

www.nwac.ca

Chapter 1

Advocates and Campaigners

Whom do we mean when we talk about “advocates and campaigners”?

We’re talking about everyone who raises awareness of the issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls—whether they do so by holding an event, writing a letter to the editor or taking any other sort of action. Everyone can play a role. Be informed, get involved, and mobilize!

If you are interested in becoming an advocate or campaigner, how can you begin?

Your first steps don’t have to be big. In fact, it’s better to start slowly, by learning about the issues and finding out about existing local events and initiatives (see Toolkit 1B, “Getting Involved in Your Community”). Reading the toolkits and fact sheets in this guide is an excellent way to begin. Your next step could be talking about the issues with a friend, family member or neighbour. Remember the old saying: a journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step.



The power of visual imagery. The Sisters In Spirit Vigil in Ottawa asked volunteers to silently hold pictures of our missing and murdered Aboriginal sisters. The images truly reflected the fact that women of all ages are being targeted.

1 A) Toolkit: What You Need to Know

Informing yourself is your first step to raising awareness about the issue of violence against Aboriginal women.

The toolkits and fact sheets in this community resource guide will help you answer any questions you may have on the issue. You'll also find details on activities you can take part in, once you've informed yourself of the issues.



One stitch at a time! Quilter and advocate Alice Olsen Williams uses her creative talents to spread the word about Sisters In Spirit.

When you raise awareness, don't feel as though you have to "read from a script." Speak from the heart. It's important to feel connected to the messages and words you are sharing with others. Individuals like you—who believe, who understand and who deeply care—are our most valuable advocates.

What Is Sisters In Spirit?

Since 2005, the Native Women's Association of Canada's (NWAC) Sisters In Spirit (SIS) initiative has worked to identify root causes, trends and circumstances of violence that have led to the disappearance and death of Aboriginal women and girls. In March 2010, NWAC released the report *What*

Their Stories Tell Us, which provided evidence that 582 Aboriginal women and girls have gone missing or been murdered in Canada.

The fact that nearly 600 mothers, daughters, sisters, aunties and grandmothers have been lost to violence in this country makes this the most pervasive human rights crisis facing Canada today. The violence experienced by Aboriginal women and girls in Canada is a national tragedy, and their loss is felt in every Aboriginal community from coast-to-coast-to-coast.

What Are the Main Issues?

The safety of Aboriginal women in Canada is an urgent issue. Although they represent only 3% of the Canadian population, Aboriginal women are over-represented as victims of violence.

The current status of Aboriginal women is rooted in some unpleasant historical facts.

- ✦ Until 1985, a First Nations woman who married a non-First Nation person lost her status as an "Indian," as well as her right to live on reserve and to use some programs and services. Thousands of women were forced off reserves. Cut off from their communities, they were often isolated from their culture and traditions and vulnerable.
- ✦ For over 100 years, Aboriginal children were taken from their families and sent to residential schools. The resulting cycle of trauma and abuse has impacted multiple generations of Aboriginal women and men.

- ✦ Government policies from the 1960s to 1980s allowed Aboriginal children to be removed from their communities and placed in non-Aboriginal homes. This resulted in the break-up of families, loss of cultural identity and, in many cases, trauma and abuse.
- ✦ For more information on this, please read the factsheet in this guide entitled “Root Causes of Violence Against Aboriginal Women and the Impact of Colonization.”

What Are the Key Messages for Sisters In Spirit?

To address these above issues and restore the traditional roles of Aboriginal women, there is a focus on four key policy pillars:

- 1) Reduction of Violence
- 2) Economic Security
- 3) Access to Justice
- 4) Reduce the Impact of Children in Care

What Has Been Done to Raise Awareness So Far?

NWAC raised the issue of violence against Aboriginal women with the federal government in March 2004. Although the government has begun to listen to the concerns of Aboriginal women they have been slow to react to their concerns.

Amnesty International Canada echoed the voices of families and communities in October 2004 with the release of *Stolen Sisters: A Human Rights Response to Discrimination and Violence against Indigenous Women in Canada*. The report included stories about Canada’s missing and murdered Indigenous women. It also recognized that “[i]n every instance, Canadian authorities could and should have done more to ensure the safety of these women and girls.”



Urging government to listen. NWAC lobbied the federal government for an entire year before we received funding for Sisters In Spirit.

1 B) Toolkit: Getting Involved in Your Community

Prepare Yourself

Before you begin to raise awareness, you need to prepare yourself and your group. Learn about the history of colonization, residential schools, and the survival of Aboriginal culture and traditions, so that you can answer questions confidently. Organize information sessions and workshops to share what you've learned with the rest of the group. Then follow these steps.

Assess Your Skills and Strengths

- ✦ What do you like to do?
- ✦ What are you good at?
- ✦ How much time can you give?

Assess Your Organization or Group

- ✦ What is your mandate? What are your goals?
- ✦ What can your group do to support other events or organizations?
- ✦ Are you an established group that can commit to a long-term campaign, or is it best to focus on one event at a time?

Reach Out to the Community

When you and your group are ready, have one person contact an organization you wish to work with, such as a Friendship Centre or women's shelter. A phone call is best.

- ✦ Introduce yourself.
 - ✦ Show that you have researched the organization and the issues, and have thought about how you can work together.
 - ✦ Outline how you think you can support the organization's mandate or upcoming events.
 - ✦ Follow up the phone call with an e-mail.
 - ✦ Give your contact about two weeks to think about your suggestions.
 - ✦ Listen to your contact, and respect his or her wishes. Many organizations have limited capacity and staff. They may ask that you simply support their existing activities, instead of starting something new.
 - ✦ Remember: advertising an event, helping bring people to it (for instance, by hiring a bus) and attending yourself is action!
 - ✦ It's okay to start small. You can suggest other ideas and partnerships in the future.
- Establishing a respectful relationship is the most important first step.**

Work on Your Own

There are many things you can do to have an impact, and most of them cost nothing.

- ✦ Volunteer with a women's shelter or Friendship Centre.
- ✦ Call a women's shelter and ask what items you can collect in a donations drive. For example, shelters often need bus tickets, phone cards, socks and underwear, as well as toiletries and seasonal clothing.
- ✦ Start a letter-writing campaign to your local MP or the Prime Minister, and demand action.
- ✦ Write to the editor of your local newspaper if you want to read more about Aboriginal issues, are pleased with an article or disagree with something. Newspapers track interest.
- ✦ Contact other organizations to see if you can volunteer or offer financial support.
- ✦ Organize workshops, movie nights or book clubs to discuss the issues. Invite an Elder, organization or community members to speak to the issues, or ask permission to reflect their interests.
- ✦ Participate in a Sisters In Spirit Vigil on October 4. Ask others, "What are you doing on October 4?" (For more information on Sisters In Spirit Vigils, please see Toolkit 1D, "Sisters In Spirit Vigils: A Movement for Social Change.")
- ✦ **Educating yourself and others is the best support of all.**



Use your voice! Make a difference in raising awareness about missing and murdered Aboriginal women in Canada.

1 C) Toolkit: Organizing Events and Activities

Once you've developed a good understanding of the issues and done some work with other organizations in the community, you may want to organize your own events and activities. Here are some tips.



Embellishing the cause. Saskatchewan Youth Council member Tori-Lynn Wanotch designed a shawl as part of her work to raise awareness of Sisters In Spirit.

What Should I Do to Raise Awareness?

Organize Information Booths and Formal Presentations

Information booths and formal presentations are good ways to reach the public. All you need is a clear message, a strong voice and information to distribute. Try to make your booth as attractive as possible—make sure it isn't too cluttered or busy. Our powerful grandmother moon logo will draw attention.

Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) has factsheets, reports and handouts available for printing on our website at www.nwac.ca. We also have Strategic Policy Liaisons who can work with you to develop a Sisters In Spirit PowerPoint presentation that can easily be adapted for any audience.

We can help you organize a booth or plan a presentation. Just give us a call.

Be Creative!

Here are a few examples of how others have used their unique talents and skills to raise awareness.

NWAC's Youth Council has rallied around the Sisters In Spirit cause from the beginning.

- ✦ The Youth Council created the hugely successful Sisters In Spirit Ribbon Campaign. Ribbons are very visible symbols that also help raise funds so they can keep raising awareness.
- ✦ Tori-Lynn Wanotch, a former youth council member, embroidered a beautiful Sisters In Spirit shawl, which was displayed and then auctioned off at NWAC's 32nd Annual General Assembly.
- ✦ Other members have written songs and poetry capturing the message of Sisters In Spirit.

One of NWAC's earliest advocates for Sisters In Spirit was quilter Alice Olsen Williams, an Anishinaabe woman from Curve Lake First Nation, Ontario. Alice combines traditional teachings and designs with conventional North American quilting blocks. In her own words, Alice wanted to "provide an avenue" for Aboriginal peoples to express their reaction and emotional response to the "unfair treatment and abuses suffered by our People." She issued a call for Sisters In Spirit quilt squares, encouraging others to learn about Sisters In Spirit, design their own square and share its story. All the squares she collects will be joined to form a larger quilt. Alice's project shows how raising awareness can fulfill both our creative and our humanitarian desires.

Hold a Vigil

At vigils, the public comes together to honour a person, a specific cause or an important date. They are an excellent way to rally support and unite a community. They also provide safe, free opportunities for curious or interested individuals to get information. For details on organizing a vigil, please see Toolkit 1D, “Sisters In Spirit Vigils: A Movement for Social Change.”

Where and When Should I Hold My Event?

Time is of the essence if you want to rally support around a tragic event, or react to a recent announcement or judgment. The public’s attention comes and goes quickly. You may try to sustain interest in an issue by writing a letter to a newspaper, calling a radio station, or holding a meeting at a community centre or Friendship Centre.

Workplaces and Large Events

You may try to raise awareness as part of a larger event, such as an assembly, gathering or powwow. Joining forces with like-minded groups or associations could bring more people to your event than you could attract on your own. It may also help you build long-lasting partnerships.

Time of day and location will affect how many people attend an event. It’s best to set up in a well-known or well-trafficked area. For instance, you may be able to reach a large number of people at lunch hour in the lobby of your workplace.

Weather

Take weather into account when planning. Outdoor events provide freedom: you and your participants can invite speakers, gather round and cheer loudly. They may attract more attention from the media or curious passersby than indoor events do. Just watch the weather report, and bring extra umbrellas or gloves to share. Remember, there is no bad weather, just bad dressing for the weather.

Important Dates

Consider holding your event on a well-known date, such as an international day of action. Here are some important dates to remember:

- ✦ February 14: Annual Women’s Memorial March (Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside)
- ✦ March 8: International Women’s Day
- ✦ June 21: National Aboriginal Day
- ✦ June 28: Anniversary of Bill C-31
- ✦ **October 4: Annual Sisters In Spirit Vigil** (throughout Canada)
- ✦ November 25: International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women
- ✦ December 6: National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women
- ✦ December 10: International Human Rights Day



Neither rain, nor sleet, nor snow! Heavy rain forecasts did not discourage the organizers of a Sisters In Spirit Vigil held in Ottawa, Ontario. More than 100 citizens arrived in the rain with their umbrellas to show their support for the families of missing and murdered Aboriginal women.

Target Audiences

Try to reach as wide an audience as possible: the more people who know about Sisters In Spirit, the better. Even better, host several events and tailor each one to a different audience.

In particular, encourage men to attend and make them feel welcome. If you feel it's appropriate, invite men to participate under the direction of the women organizing the event. For instance, you could invite male drummers to contribute spiritually.



Recognize our Elders and cultural heritage. Invite a local or community Elder to attend your event and provide spiritual grounding.

Spiritual grounding should always be a part of any Sisters In Spirit event, although the spiritual level will vary, depending on your audience. Consult local Elders for guidance and ask whether they would be willing to do an opening prayer for your event. Respect the protocol of every traditional territory.

You should also encourage youth to attend and participate in your activities. When speaking to youth, please remember that discussions about missing and murdered Aboriginal women can be very intense and emotional. Adapt your presentation

and messages to your target audience. Anticipate their questions and the historical realities you may need to explain. It might be a good idea to have local counsellors on hand as volunteers, in addition to Elders.

Last, consider how the media can help you raise awareness. They can be your allies. Local newspapers, radio stations and television stations are always looking for human interest stories. Here are some tips on working with the media.

- ✦ Give them lots of advance notice of your event.
- ✦ Keep them updated, especially if dignitaries or local personalities are attending, or you are expecting a large crowd.
- ✦ Hold a rally or march to increase the media's interest your message.
- ✦ Identify good photo opportunities.
- ✦ Offer to do an interview or confirm that your speakers will be available for an interview, before or after your event.
- ✦ Include your contact information on posters, in e-mails and in phone messages.
- ✦ Be prepared for follow-up phone calls.

For more information on working with the media, see Toolkit 2A, "Unlocking the Mystery of Media Relations."

1 D) Toolkit: Sisters In Spirit Vigils— A Movement for Social Change

For years, communities have pointed to the high number of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in Canada. As part of our commitment to the issue and to the countless families who are still in need of justice, Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) is a lead organizer in Sisters In Spirit Vigils, a national movement that encourages concerned citizens and Aboriginal community members to gather on October 4. We gather to honour our lost sisters and their families. We gather to show we are a united front. We gather to shed light on a crisis that affects every Canadian. We gather to pressure all levels of government to **act now!**

Every October 4, Sisters In Spirit Vigils:

- ✦ honour the lives of missing murdered Aboriginal women and girls;
- ✦ support grieving families and provide opportunities for healing; and
- ✦ support a movement for social change.

United, we can demand action on a Canadian issue that affects us all!

How Did the Sisters In Spirit Vigils Begin?

The movement started with a daughter's vision.

Bridget Tolley was worried people were forgetting about her mother Gladys, who was killed in 2001 in Maniwaki, Quebec.

She asked that a vigil be held in 2006 on the steps of Parliament Hill to honour her mother, as well as the more than 500 missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls nationwide.



Make your vigil your own. Amnesty International Edmonton and the Advancement of Aboriginal Women in Edmonton decided to mark October 4 with a symbolic balloon launch. Each balloon was imprinted with the name of a missing or murdered Aboriginal woman and released into the air. It was a very touching tribute. Photo courtesy of Amnesty International Edmonton.

NWAC worked with Bridget to make sure the event always held true to her vision. In the end, more than 100 people gathered in the pouring rain in Ottawa on October 4, 2006, to support her cause.

Since that first Sisters In Spirit Vigil, cities have united on this issue from coast to coast to coast. Three years later, on October 4, 2009, a record 72 vigils were held nationwide, drawing large crowds and unprecedented media attention.



Powwows and festivals are great places to raise awareness. NWAC's community Strategic Policy Liaison secures booth space at strategic events, such as the Canada Aboriginal Festival, which draws thousands of visitors each year.

The annual Sisters In Spirit Vigil is a fantastic opportunity to raise awareness at both the local and national levels. Our goal is to have a nationwide day of remembrance for our missing and murdered Aboriginal sisters every October 4.

What Is a Vigil?

Vigils are gatherings where the public is asked to come together to honour a person, a specific cause or an important date. They are an excellent way to rally support and unite a community. They also provide opportunities for curious or interested individuals to freely and safely come to be informed.

Sisters In Spirit Vigils are held every October 4 and raise awareness of the alarmingly high rates of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in Canada.

There are many different types of vigils. Some are very solemn events where loss and remembrance are the focus. A vigil may also alert the public to a disturbing trend in your community that has previously been ignored or minimized.

How Do I Organize a Sisters In Spirit Vigil?

Start planning as early as you can.

Decide What Form Your Vigil Will Take

- ✦ Determine the messages you would like to convey.
- ✦ Consider how this event will unfold. Will it start with a march or rally? Or will it begin with an opening speaker or prayer? Do you want to include a balloon launch, community feast, moment of silence, candlelight vigil or gathering at a local park, or speeches from families? These decisions will set the tone for your event.

Establish Host Organizations

- ✦ Bring like-minded organizations and businesses together.
- ✦ If necessary, form a committee and meet regularly.

Find Partners

Contact groups such as the following:

- ✦ Friendship Centres;
- ✦ women's shelters or Aboriginal women's groups;
- ✦ Amnesty International chapters;
- ✦ student federations or student councils;
- ✦ churches and other religious organizations;
- ✦ women's leagues;
- ✦ unions, including the Public Service Alliance of Canada; and
- ✦ band offices or city halls.

Raise and Manage Funds

- ✦ Hosting a Sisters In Spirit Vigil doesn't need to cost anything.
- ✦ If there will be costs, create a budget.
- ✦ Raise funds with a bake sale or donation drive.
- ✦ Ask businesses to donate items and services you need, such as design and printing services, advertising, balloons, candles, snacks, beverages, A/V equipment rental fees, poster board and paint, gifts for speakers, or bus rentals.

Invite Dignitaries, Speakers and Families

- ✦ Invite a political leader, police chief or local celebrity to be the master of ceremonies.
- ✦ Invite other speakers, if necessary.
- ✦ Give families a chance to share their stories. Stand in solidarity with them.
- ✦ Brief dignitaries, speakers and families on the rough agenda. Let them know what issues they should focus on and what the other speakers will be discussing.
- ✦ Help presenters prepare a speech or talking points, if necessary.
- ✦ Make sure youth or grieving family members who are speaking receive guidance and support—from you, an Elder and a counsellor.
- ✦ You do not need to have families present to host a vigil. Instead, you may wish to read excerpts from the life stories of many of the families, which are available at www.nwac.ca/programs/sis-research.



Partnerships can pay off! RCMP Barbara McMorrow, for example, jumped at the opportunity to attend a SIS Vigil on Parliament Hill, Ottawa, Ontario.

Decide on a Location

- ✦ Pick a well-known location that is easy to get to by bus and car, such as a public park, monument or city hall.
- ✦ Consider renting a bus to bring people to your event from a gathering point such as a university or church.
- ✦ If you are holding your event in a public place, call your local city hall or police station and ask whether you need a permit.

Build a Volunteer Base

- ✦ Designate a volunteer coordinator who will be the go-to person and organize volunteers.
- ✦ Before calling for volunteers, make sure you have a list of tasks you need done. Volunteers will quickly lose their enthusiasm if they sense there is nothing for them to do. Possible tasks include holding pictures, handing out information or organizing a community feast.
- ✦ Call local schools, universities, churches and unions to see whether they have anyone who can help.
- ✦ Register volunteers and assign everyone at least one task.

Publicize Your Event

- ✦ Design a poster. Post it in busy places and near the event location. Make sure to include full details about the agenda, including the date, time and location.
- ✦ E-mail the event details to your contacts, post the details on online message boards and create a Facebook page.
- ✦ Contact community members, local media and schools. Try to reach as broad an audience as possible.
- ✦ Invite the media to the vigil and have a contact person available for interviews.

Make Signs and Banners

- ✦ You may ask for permission to use the Sisters In Spirit logo, but please remember that grandmother moon is a trademarked logo of NWAC and should be used in a respectful way.
- ✦ Consider some of the following wording for signs and placards.
 - “Aboriginal women are loved and valued”
 - “Where are our women?”
 - “We remember”
 - “Forever in our hearts”
 - “We will never stop looking”
 - “Aboriginal women deserve more”
 - “End violence against Aboriginal women”
 - “Justice for the families of missing and murdered women”
 - “Solidarity with Aboriginal women on Turtle Island”

Because we do not have permission from every family, NWAC cannot provide you with the names or photos of every missing or murdered Aboriginal woman or girl. The images that we do have permission to use are available on the NWAC website at www.nwac.ca.

Register Your Vigil with NWAC

- ✦ Complete the registration form, which you can get by visiting www.nwac.ca/programs/sis-vigils or calling 1-800-461-4043. After you register, you will receive updates from the National Sisters In Spirit Vigil Committee and be connected with other groups organizing vigils in your province or city. We will also help publicize your event through media advisories and a listserve for community events.

Hold the Event

- ✦ Assign responsibilities for the day. One person needs to be the main contact, but other people are needed for important tasks, as well.
- ✦ The Elder, speakers and families, for example, need to know who to ask for when they arrive at the event. One person should be in charge of making sure guests are comfortable. Be sure the Elder and guests have transportation to the event. Also ask if they have any activity limitations that would prevent them from walking long distances, standing for an extended period of time, or climbing stairs.
- ✦ The volunteer coordinator also needs to be identified.
- ✦ Have an information booth with handouts, factsheets and a sign-up sheet to register with NWAC.
- ✦ If you decide to raise funds for a local women's shelter or another cause, invite a representative to come and receive the funds.
- ✦ Set up audio-visual equipment ahead of time, as well as banners or a display.
- ✦ Try your best to begin on time and follow the agenda
- ✦ Remember to thank the guests, the Elder and speakers, the host facility, and the volunteers, as well as everyone in attendance.
- ✦ Take pictures and post them on your event webpage or on Facebook.
- ✦ Remember to have volunteers stay after the event to help clean up.
- ✦ Be sure to send SIS your success stories, photos, new clippings and any other feedback.

Create the Full Agenda

As a reference, here is the agenda for a Sisters In Spirit Vigil held in Ottawa.

- ✦ 10:00 a.m. Rally on Parliament Hill*
- ✦ Opening prayer by an Elder
- ✦ Welcoming remarks, President of Quebec Native Women's Association of Canada
- ✦ Hand drumming and drum group
- ✦ 10:30 a.m. Silent vigil (choreographed)
- ✦ Volunteers form line in centre of pathway
- ✦ Water drum begins and progresses into a stomp
- ✦ Participants are invited to join our volunteers and follow the stomp
- ✦ 10:45 a.m. National speakers
- ✦ NWAC President
- ✦ Amnesty International President
- ✦ Miss Algonquin 2006
- ✦ 11:15 a.m. Unity march to Victoria Island
- ✦ Closing prayer

* A news conference was held with the media before the event.

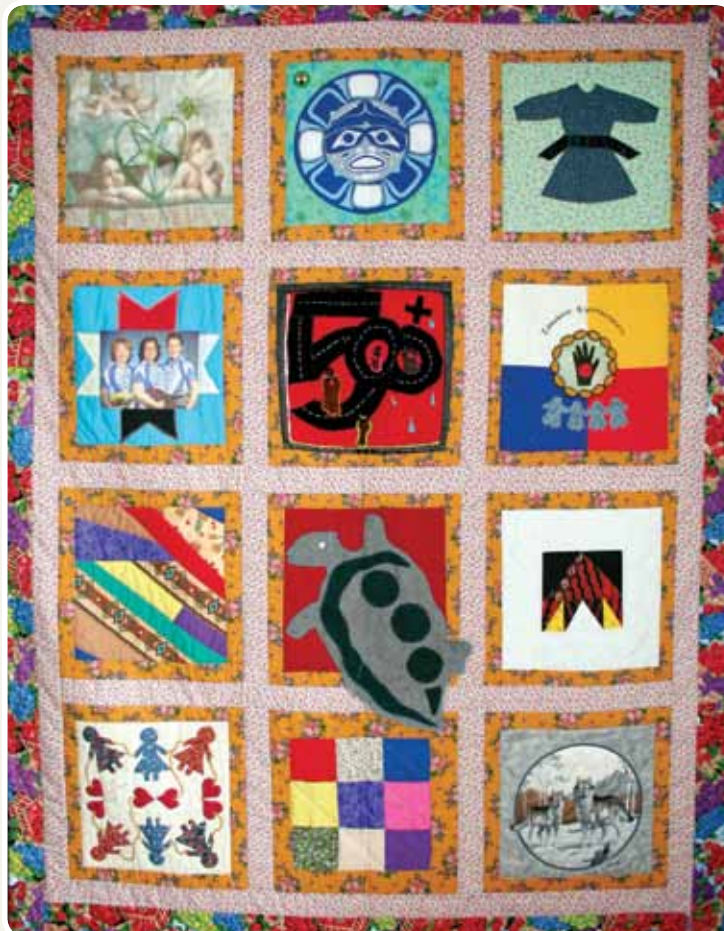
Educate Attendees

- ✦ Create an information booth or display using life stories available at www.nwac.ca/programs/sis-research, newspaper articles, or tributes from families available at www.nwac.ca/programs/we-remember.
- ✦ Print out factsheets from the NWAC website at www.nwac.ca/programs/sis-research.
- ✦ If you are giving an indoor presentation, work with NWAC's Strategic Policy Liaisons for a Sisters In Spirit PowerPoint presentation, which can be adapted for any audience.
- ✦ Distribute missing persons posters of women in your area. To get these posters, contact your local police station and visit www.nwac.ca/programs/missing-alerts.

Follow Up

- ✦ Send pictures from the event to families, volunteers and other people who were involved, as a thank you. Send them to NWAC as well. Our addresses are listed at the front and back of this guide.
- ✦ It is also thoughtful to give a small gift to the families.

Let NWAC know if you need any help. Together, our voices will be heard, for we are stronger in numbers!



SIS quilt.

1 E) Toolkit: Men as Effective Allies

Introduction

Many generations of violence have negatively impacted the Elders, seniors, women, children and men in our community. Although this is not part of our culture and is never acceptable, it does happen. These acts of violence are hurting our communities spiritually, physically, mentally and emotionally. Aboriginal boys and men are also hurting. Repairing these relationships and building healthy communities begins with listening to women. When we respect women, listen to what they are saying, and value their roles as grandmothers, mothers, sisters and daughters, we are protecting the Circle.

This toolkit provides advice to Aboriginal boys and men who wish to support the women in their community. By navigating through the four steps—Embrace Your Teachings, Personal Growth, Get Involved and Advocate—boys and men can learn to stand with girls and women in the community as allies. Learning how you can help the women in your community voice their own concerns by standing beside them, rather than before them as a defender or warrior, is very important. Women and girls in your community are thankful for the role men and boys play in the Circle. By sharing, caring and valuing each other as allies, we can prevent violence.

Men as Effective Allies



“It is imperative that we all stand together to protect all of our life givers on this earth, our women, because no matter who we are, without them none of us would even have a life to live.”

—Protecting the Circle: Aboriginal Men Ending Violence Against Women

Step One – Embrace Your Teachings

- ✦ Turn to traditional or spiritual teachings for guidance. Learn about First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultural and traditional beliefs on violence prevention from the I am a Kind Man website or the Inuit IQ guide, found on the Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada website.
- ✦ Listen to the women in your community and value their personal feelings, stories and beliefs.
- ✦ Incorporate the Seven Grandfather Teachings from the I am a Kind Man website into your support: honesty, respect, truth, love, bravery, wisdom and humility.
- ✦ Acknowledge the need to change how you support women in your community.
- ✦ Take the time to ask women for guidance and suggestions on how you can support them.
- ✦ Connect with Elders to see how traditional teachings may help you to educate your fellow brothers on violence issues, to support yourself, women and the community.
- ✦ Value your Mother's and Grandmothers' stories and experiences.

Step Two – Personal Growth

- ✦ Use the Grandfather Teaching of 'Respect' to learn how violence affects women in your community (refer to the I am a Kind Man website's section on the Seven Grandfather Teachings).
- ✦ Incorporate the I am a Kind Man (Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin) teaching from the Listening to Girls and Women section on their website into your personal life:

Who knows better about violence against Aboriginal women than women who experience it? Learn about violence by asking a woman who trusts you, how violence has affected her life. Then, if she feels comfortable to talk, sit back and listen. Your role isn't to challenge her on the details, nor to debate whether something really should have bothered her or not. It is to listen. Simply trust that if she tells you something hurt her, then it did hurt her.

A) As an Individual

- ✦ Learn about the different types of violence—physical, sexual, mental, financial, emotional/psychological and spiritual—from the NWAC Youth Council Violence Prevention Toolkit.
- ✦ Find out about the root causes of violence against Aboriginal women and girls by reading the Factsheet 3F in this guide, "Root Causes of Violence Against Aboriginal Women and the Impact of Colonization."
- ✦ Attend programs, watch films, and read articles and books.
- ✦ Look inward, question attitudes and challenge behaviours.
- ✦ Assess your own skills to see how they can benefit the cause.
- ✦ Strengthen your skills and learn about healthy self-expression.

B) In Your Relationships

- ✦ Protect women by supporting them as an ally.
- ✦ Find unity with the women and girls in your community by encouraging and collaborating with them.
- ✦ Build relationships through cooperation, humility and respect.

- ✦ Recognize the need for healthy boundaries in your relationships with women.
- ✦ Embrace the important role you play as an ally.

Step Three – Get Involved

- ✦ Remember that you and the women in your community make up the Circle.

A) As a Father, Brother, Uncle and Grandfather

- ✦ Role model—remember that children see, children do.
- ✦ Men and boys listen to their peers—encourage them and help them spread the message.
- ✦ Create opportunities for other males to get involved and become allies.

B) As a Member of a Community

- ✦ Attend or host a Sisters In Spirit Vigil on October 4 (see Toolkit 1D, “Sisters In Spirit Vigils: A Movement for Social Change”).
- ✦ Support and encourage the women in your community to use Kanawayhitowin: Taking Care of Each Other’s Spirit “Warning Signs,” “Safety Planning” and “Examples of Abuse,” found on the Kanawayhitowin website.
- ✦ Use the “I am a Kind Man (Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin)” campaign toolkit found on the I am a Kind Man website.
- ✦ Sign on to the White Ribbon campaign, a national campaign of men and boys working to end violence against women.
- ✦ Discuss violence prevention in community schools.
- ✦ Pass the knowledge of the Circle within your family, community and society.

Step Four – Advocate

- ✦ Work for equality between men and women in society.
- ✦ Understand that brothers and sisters working together can make a difference to create change.
- ✦ Lobby. This helps communities find real solutions, advances your cause and builds public trust. Policymakers need your expertise.
- ✦ Align yourself with women’s groups working to prevent acts of violence in your community by attending events, and participating in vigils, walks, petitions and protests to prevent violence against Aboriginal women.
- ✦ Join support groups for men in social justice, advocacy and violence prevention.
- ✦ Try to donate, support or volunteer in one of our community’s organizations, shelters or women’s centres that help prevent violence against women.
- ✦ Raise awareness by writing or calling your member of Parliament, member of the legislative assembly, city councillor, band council, school principal or local law enforcement, and find out what is being done about the issue in your community.
- ✦ Visit the websites of advocacy groups—to find out what they are doing to support violence prevention.

Suggested Websites and Resources

I am a Kind Man/Kizhaay Anishnaabe Niin

www.iamakindman.ca

A campaign created by Aboriginal men in Ontario that uses the Seven Grandfather Teachings to engage men and boys to speak out against violence towards Aboriginal women.

The Inuit Way: A guide to Inuit culture – Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada

www.pauktuutit.ca/pdf/publications/pauktuutit/InuitWay_e.pdf

A book useful for Inuit and non-Inuit people working with Inuit women experiencing violence. Provides cultural and historical information, including details of Inuit traditional teachings.

It Starts with You. It Stays with Him.

www.itstartswithyou.ca

A website that provides resources for male role models—fathers, teachers, coaches and family members—who are working to prevent violence in personal relationships.

Kanawayhitowin: Taking Care of Each Other's Spirit – Community Action Campaign to Prevent Woman Abuse in the Aboriginal Community

www.kanawayhitowin.ca/index.php

A campaign created to support Aboriginal women who are experiencing violence and abuse. Also has resources for front-line workers and communities.

National Aboriginal Circle Against Family Violence

<http://nacafv.ca>

Provides a list of national Aboriginal programs, resources, events and shelters working toward violence prevention in families and relationships. Also contains advocacy and lobbying information.

Native Women's Association of Canada

www.nwac.ca

Offers the NWAC Youth Council Violence Prevention Toolkit, as well as the toolkits available in this guide.

Protecting the Circle: Aboriginal Men Ending Violence Against Women – Ryerson Student Campus Centre, Toronto, January 11, 2010

<http://nativeyouthsexualhealth.com/AboriginalMenEndingViolenceAgainstWomen.pdf>
www.ryerson.ca/aboriginal/forms/Violence%20against%20Aboriginal%20Women.pdf

A written collection of works by Aboriginal men.

The White Ribbon Campaign: Men Working to End Men's Violence Against Women

www.whiteribbon.ca

Focused on educating men and boys to act and speak out against violence. Includes information on how to set up your own campaign in your school, workplace and community.

Chapter 2

People Assisting Families

This section is designed for families of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls, and for the people who help them: friends, community members, Elders and others.

Coping with the disappearance or death of a loved one is one of the most stressful experiences a family can undergo. The toolkits and factsheets in this section provide the information that families and their supporters need to work with the media, the police, victims' services and others to communicate their message, get action and advocate for justice.

Your first steps will depend on your situation. If the person disappeared in the last day or so, you will likely begin by contacting the police and putting up missing persons posters (see Toolkit 2B, "Navigating the Missing Persons Process" and Toolkit 2C, "Missing Persons Poster"). If you are seeking to keep the disappearance in the public eye, you might work with the media (see Toolkit 2A, "Unlocking the Mystery of Media Relations"). And if a murder has been committed, Toolkit 2D, "Navigating Victims' Services," may be most relevant.



Chief Whiteduck of Kitigan Zibi Quebec stands in solidarity with family members of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls.

2 A) Toolkit: Unlocking the Mystery of Media Relations

What Do I Need to Know?

Media relations can be a positive experience. Newspaper, radio, television and the Internet are excellent ways to communicate information. If the media covers your story, thousands of people will read, hear or see your message, which will help raise awareness about missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in Canada.

Preparation and poise are the two key attributes you need when working with the media. Be prepared for media attention at any time. If you're prepared, you are more likely to be relaxed and poised. You will be able to express your thoughts clearly and confidently.



Why not make the first move? Invite media to any public event you are hosting or attending, and offer to do an interview.

Wherever you are, please remember that **you have rights!** You have the right to say “yes” to an interview, for example, but you also have the right to say “no” or “this is not a good time for me.” This is especially true for those of us who have personal connections to missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in Canada. Each family or community deals with loss or grief in different ways, and it is unfair to assume that everyone is ready or willing to share their story. If you choose not to speak to the media, make your family and friends aware of your decision.

If you do agree to do an interview, remember that you are in control! You can decide when and where you meet or the best time for a reporter to call you. You can ask for the questions ahead of time to prepare or decline

if you don't like the questions. You can also stop an interview at any time—either to collect your thoughts or to end the interview.

Please remember that NWAC staff members are here to help you and your family prepare for any interview or speaking engagement. We can give you pointers and coach you. Let the media know that NWAC and Sisters In Spirit representatives are also available to answer questions, give quotes, and provide necessary context and background information.

Together, we can make sure the right messages are getting out there.

The Six Do's of Media Relations

Do ask questions. What is the purpose of the interview? What kind of questions does the reporter want to ask and how long will it take? You may also find it helpful to write the questions down. Remember, *you* are in control!

Do listen to what the reporter is asking. Keep your answers short and simple. Radio, for example, uses 5- to 10-second “sound bites,” and TV requires 15- to 20-second clips. Newspapers need detail, detail, detail.

Do take the time to answer a question again if you need to. If you make a mistake or flub an answer, don't be afraid to go back and clarify your point.

Do ask for clarification if you need it. If you don't understand a question, ask the reporter to explain what he or she means. If you don't have the answer or are not the right person to answer the question, say so. You can always get back to him or her with an answer in a timely fashion, or have someone else answer the question on your behalf.

Do keep calm and focused. Some reporters may be aggressive and rude, and may ask leading questions to spark an emotional response. Be careful to keep your emotions in check so as not say something you may later regret. If a reporter is being too aggressive, you have the right to end the interview immediately.

Do follow up. If a reporter is rude, misquotes you, or publishes or broadcasts incorrect information, call him or her for clarification, or file a complaint with the news assignment desk or news director. Follow up your complaint or concern with a letter demanding a response.

Addendum for Families

How can I protect the reputation and character of a loved one in the media?

This is the most common question people ask us regarding media relations in the context of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in Canada. Many families are hesitant to contact the media because they feel their message or story will be misused. We understand that this occurs and have prepared the following pointers to help you remain in control of your story, your message and the memory of your loved one. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any further questions or concerns.



Keep local media informed of your event, make yourself available for interviews and provide background information on the issues.

Discuss what type of relationship you want with any reporter. Will this be a one-time interview? Or is it important for you to be in regular contact with him or her? You may also feel more comfortable if you always meet in person, or if the reporter spends some time with you and your family so that you get to know one another.

Encourage the media to focus on the life and humanity of Aboriginal women and girls. Share childhood memories, for example, or the major accomplishments in your loved one's life. Remind reporters that your loved one is a daughter, sister, auntie, mother or grandmother. Focus on the fact that she is loved, will always be loved and is sorely missed. Suggest that reporters use the name of your loved one as often as possible.

Urge the media to steer clear of the usual negative stereotypes. Let reporters know whether certain terms or labels offend you and your family. The media can often portray Aboriginal women and girls as hopeless or troubled drifters. Conversely, the media pay little attention to the lack of culturally specific services in cities, or to the way Aboriginal women and girls are targeted because of their gender and Aboriginal identity. Remind reporters that NWAC staff members are available to provide historical background and context. If a reporter is unwilling to be mindful of the way he or she presents Aboriginal women and girls, you have the right to end the interview.

Ask the media to encourage discussion and reflection. Underscore the fact that Aboriginal women and girls in Canada should not be going missing or be murdered—that their human rights are being violated. Canadians and the Canadian government are often outraged about this type of violence if it occurs in other countries. They should apply the same principle when an Aboriginal woman is targeted in Canada. All these women are victims and did not deserve their fate. This is not just an Aboriginal issue; it is a Canadian issue. You may ask reporters to repeat these messages back to you to ensure they understand what you are talking about.

Last, hold the media accountable for their portrayal of Aboriginal women and girls in general and your loved one specifically.

Be honest with reporters when they contact you and let them know that you will follow up with them and their supervisors. If you are misquoted, follow up and write a formal letter demanding a timely response and public retraction. NWAC staff can give you advice on this process.

2 B) Toolkit: Navigating the Missing Persons Process

The very prospect of having a missing loved one is something we hope you and your family never have to experience. We can only imagine what parents, grandparents, other relatives and friends must feel when they realize someone close to them is missing. We have heard that this process can be very isolating and emotionally overwhelming, and we want you to know that NWAC and our Sisters In Spirit initiative are here for you.

Too many of our daughters, mothers, sisters, grandmothers and aunts are being targeted and victimized in Canada, especially in the public sphere, where many wrongfully turn a blind eye. Until this needless and preventable violence ends, we want you, family members and friends to know how to navigate the missing persons process and to know that you have rights.

This toolkit will introduce you to the missing persons process in Canada, should you ever need to contact the police regarding a loved one. It is based on information gathered through meetings between NWAC and the National Aboriginal Policing Services of the RCMP.

What Do I Need to Know?

Missing people are people whose location is unknown. In addition to being missing, they may also need help. They may need assistance to return to their families. They may have fallen victim to a crime or offence. Or they may need medical attention, be unable to care for themselves, or pose a danger to themselves or to the safety of others.

What Do I Do if a Loved One Goes Missing?

File a Missing Persons Report

You can do this in person or over the phone with the police (see “Know whom to contact” at the end of this toolkit). You can do this right away—you do not need to wait 24 hours. Anyone can file a missing persons report; you do not have to be a relative.

Conduct a Search

Call family, friends and relatives. Ask them to help you call or look around your neighbourhood. Remember to check favourite places and hangouts. Write down all the places you have checked. This information will be useful to the police.



Saskatoon Chief of Police Weighill attends the 2008 SIS Vigil.

Know Whom to Contact

Always begin by contacting your local police department. Depending on where you are in Canada, this could be the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP); a provincial police service, such as the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) or the Sûreté du Québec (SQ); a municipal police service; or a First Nations police service.

- ✦ Local detachment of the RCMP: Look in your phonebook or call your local operator.
- ✦ Ontario Provincial Police (OPP): 1-888-310-1122
- ✦ Sûreté du Québec (SQ): 1-800-771-1800
- ✦ If your child is missing or you see a missing child, call Child Find Canada at 1-800-387-7962 (24 hours a day) for additional services.

Prepare to Answer a Number of Questions

The more information you can provide the better. Where was your loved one last seen and whom was she with? What does she look like? Does she have any unique markings, like a tattoo or scar? Provide a picture to the police. Make sure the police officer asks about Aboriginal ancestry or race.

Let him or her know where you have already looked or called. If your loved one never goes anywhere without calling you and has always come home before, keep repeating this. Share other information, such as whether she has been on the computer a lot in chat rooms, has access to a car, has problems at work or at home, or has suffered a recent break-up or death in the family. Mention any unusual behaviour you've observed recently.

Ask Your Own Questions

Keep a record of the report/file number, who is assigned to the file and when someone will be visiting your residence to follow up on the missing persons report.

You may want to ask all the officers you speak with to repeat the information they already have on file, to ensure that you have their attention and that they are familiar with the report.

Ask whether similar cases have been reported in the last few weeks or months. Ask whether the police have informed the media (they always do so for children or Alzheimer's patients, for example). Perhaps a search party should be formed.

Sometimes missing persons files are not given to an officer directly, but rather remain in the system electronically. Ask what the policy is and insist that an officer be put in charge of the case immediately.

The police place missing persons cases into categories. Your loved one's category will determine which of these activities are carried out and how quickly they are acted on. Remember to stress whether it is unusual for your loved one to disappear without telling anyone where she is going, if you suspect your loved one is in danger, and similar information.

Get the Attention Your Loved One Deserves

Although there is no set time for following up on a missing persons report you have made, you have the right to ask, "What is being done to find my loved one?" or "Who have you been in contact with since we last spoke?" Perhaps there is something more you can do, such as making and distributing a missing persons poster with a recent photo.

Whatever questions you ask, remember that you have rights. If you feel more can be done, say so. If you would feel more comfortable discussing this case with a more senior police officer, ask to speak with a police detachment commander. There are also informal and formal complaint processes, which you have a right to learn about and use.

2 C) Template: Missing Persons Poster

MISSING

First Name Middle Name LAST NAME
 was last seen on **Month ##th 2010**
 in the **City, XX**



Age at Disappearance: XX

Background:

Height: X"X" (XXX cm)

Weight: XXXlbs (XX kgs)

Hair Colour: Colour

Eye Colour: Colour

Distinguishing Features: Tatoos or Piercings, Scars

Clothing Worn at time of disappearance: Clothing, Jewlery

File #: XXXX

Agency: XXXX Police Service

(Insert photo above)

Additional Information:

(INCLUDE FIRST AND LAST NAME), where she has last been seen, who she may have been with. List any activities she may have been doing, if she requires any medication or any other needs. Anyone with information on (First Name's) whereabouts is urged to contact the police.

(First Name) is very much missed by her family and friends.
If you have any information please contact any of the following agencies:

Police Service at (XXX) XXX-XXXX

[email](#) address

Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS (8477)

This Missing Persons template was created by the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) as part of their Sisters In Spirit (SIS) initiative. It is adapted from the Manitoba Chiefs of Police template. For more information on NWAC's SIS research or to review our toolkits, please visit www.nwac.ca.

2 D) Toolkit: Navigating Victim Services

Introduction

You are not alone and help is available. This toolkit is designed to make a complicated process easier. It explains what victim services are, where you can find them and how the process works. It also provides you with questions to ask and a checklist so you can assess the victim services you receive. All of the recommendations come directly from the experiences of families or from NWAC's own experiences as navigators of the system.

What is Victim Services?

Victims of crime and their families have rights. You have a right to be made aware of your role in the criminal justice system and to receive support services and assistance.

“Victim services” is a relatively new concept. The main focus of these programs is to address the needs or concerns of victims.

As you will learn from this toolkit, addressing the needs and concerns of victims is a shared responsibility. Unfortunately, this means you may need to do some research to find the service that best meets your needs and concerns.

What Families Have Told Us

Experiences vary from person to person, family to family, and province to province. Some people have had excellent experiences with victim services, others did not know these services existed or were available to them.

What Will Help Me the Most?

Look to family and community for support. We have learned that families find the most value and the most love from those who know them best. We have learned that service providers are available in most areas, but they rarely provide the comfort, time or sensitivity that families are looking for. Before you look for outside help, build a solid foundation of support and trust close to home.

- ✦ Have someone come to stay with you or help look after your children. This person can make sure that you eat well, sleep well and that you are taking care of yourself. He or she will also tell you honestly if you need more help. You shouldn't have to deal with this alone.
- ✦ Delegate a spokesperson that can relay updates and pass on information to the community. We have learned that many people want to help, but they may not know what to say or how to act. Your spokesperson can field phone calls and give helpful advice to your friends and extended family. For example, friends can show they care by preparing a meal or going grocery shopping for you.
- ✦ Ask a trusted friend or family member to be your advocate and accompany you when you meet with service providers. Your advocate can take notes and ask questions on your behalf. You have a right to bring someone with you when you meet with police officers, counsellors or court officials.

- ✦ If appropriate, seek out people with religious or spiritual beliefs similar to yours who will help you and your family through this difficult time. Elders may also accompany you to meet with police or other officials.
- ✦ If your community is looking for a way to show its support and solidarity, we recommend a prayer service, a candlelight vigil or a sacred fire. Websites and other social media are also a good way for others to show their support for you and your family.

What Kind of Help Do I Need?

Take some time to think about your needs. What do you need right now? What does your family need? It can be difficult to ask for help, but this list might help you feel more prepared to explain what you are looking for.

- ✦ Emotional support from
 - friends and family
 - Elders
 - grief counsellors
 - a support group
- ✦ Physical support, including
 - practical help
 - medical help
 - assistance with self-care



Family members and SIS staff stand in solidarity.

- ✦ Organizational support, such as
 - information
 - someone to go through each process with me
 - referrals
 - administrative help
 - assistance with gathering documents
 - protection from unwanted attention

- ✦ Assistance in working with the police and courts, including
 - information
 - court orientation
 - Court Accompaniment
 - financial and travel assistance
 - advice on completing a Victim Impact Statement

- ✦ Contacts and allies, including
 - contacts within victim services
 - members of the general public and the press
 - meet other families
 - organizers of awareness campaigns

Whom Will I Meet?

First Wave: First Responders and Front-Line Workers

These people are the ones that will have direct contact with you and your loved ones. They are the police, emergency services, social workers, hospital workers and others. Their time with you might be brief.

Second Wave: Support Workers, the Media and the Public

Support workers will be with you or checking in with you during the entire process. They will be your contacts within the agencies you will be working with. They also include social workers and staff members at victim service agencies. Members of the public and the media can also be valuable allies, but be sure to build trust with your allies.

All agencies, organizations and governments keep electronic and paper records. It is important that you do too. Make sure to keep a list of everyone you have been in contact with. It may not be your first thought, but the sooner you start keeping details like names, dates and reference numbers, the better people can help you.

Police and Emergency Contacts

Name _____

Title or organization _____

Contact info (phone, e-mail, address) _____

Notes: _____

Name, Title / Organization _____

Contact Info (phone, email, address) _____

Notes: _____

Social Workers

Name _____

Title or organization _____

Contact info (phone, e-mail, address) _____

Notes: _____

Name, Title / Organization _____

Contact Info (phone, email, address)

Notes:

Government Services

Name

Title or organization

Contact info (phone, e-mail, address)

Notes:

Name, Title / Organization

Contact Info (phone, email, address)

Notes:

Non-Profit Organizations

Name

Title or organization

Contact info (phone, e-mail, address)

Notes:

Name, Title / Organization

Contact Info (phone, email, address)

Notes:

Court Liaison

Name

Title or organization

Contact info (phone, e-mail, address)

Notes:

Name, Title / Organization

Contact Info (phone, email, address)

Notes:

What Questions Should I Ask Victim Services?

1. Can you tell me about your victim services? How do they work?
2. Whom are you responsible to? What is the organization responsible for?
3. Are there full-time or dedicated psychiatrists or counsellors on staff?
4. How can I access the services you offer (by phone, at your office or through a home visit)?
5. When can I access them and how often?
6. Can I book an appointment or set up a schedule?
7. Who else in my family can access these services? What services can my children or youth access?
8. Do you offer Aboriginal-specific victim services? Do you have any Aboriginal workers I can speak with or work with?
9. What other agencies do you suggest I contact? Can you contact them for me or should I call them myself?
10. If I call this number again, will I reach you? Do you have an extension number?
11. Are there any forms or deadlines I should be aware of?

What Should I Share with Victim Services Workers? How Should I Act?

Be honest. Victim Service workers are trained to help you.

Explain what type of relationship you are looking for. Do you want to talk face-to-face or do you prefer the phone? Are you looking for a friend, a counsellor, information or all of the above?

Explain how you are feeling. What is your mood? How are you coping with those around you? Tell workers if you are feeling angry and what is making you angry. These are all areas that service providers are trained to deal with.

If you feel uncomfortable or do not feel as though you are getting the help you need, express your concerns, and ask for a referral to a different agency or different type of service. You may also refuse certain services but want to participate in others. The choice is yours.



Membertou, Nova Scotia, holds a SIS Vigil.

What Types of Services Are Available to Me?

There are no nationwide victim services. Services are available by province or territory. You may find gaps in some services, while other services may overlap. Here is a brief explanation of the different types of victim services available.

- ✦ **Police-Based Victim Services.** These services are usually provided following your first contact with the police. They provide information, support, assistance, referral and court orientation to victims of crime. Many services have both volunteers from the community and a coordinator. *No matter how much time has passed, you can always go back to the original detachment or officers to find victim services or to figure out your next steps.*
- ✦ **Community-Based Victim Services.** These services are provided by agencies outside of the police and courts that serve specific clientele, such as victims of sexual violence and their families, or members of particular ethnic groups. Services may include emotional support, practical assistance, court orientation and referrals.
- ✦ **Court-Based Victim Services.** These services are designed to make the court process less intimidating. They include court orientation, preparation and accompaniment; updates on the progress of the case; and specific support for child victims and witnesses.
- ✦ **Government or System-Based Victim Services.** These services are designed to help victims and their families deal with the criminal justice system. They are independent of police, courts and Crown Attorneys. Services include referrals and directories.



Lethbridge, Alberta, holds a candlelight SIS Vigil.

How Do I Find Victim Services?

1. The first people you should ask about victim services are police officers and other first responders. Police and hospitals have staff to deal with trauma—both physical and emotional. They may be able to help you themselves or refer you to someone else. They cannot leave a scene if it is not safe. If you need help, please talk to the people on site.
2. Look for a directory of organizations that provide support. These directories will list the social workers or non-profit support organizations in your area. The government provides an excellent online directory at www.justice.gc.ca/eng/pi/pevi-cpev/vsd-rsv/sch-rch.asp
3. Friendship Centres with specialized staff are also excellent places to look for culturally relevant help. They have local knowledge and experience in your community.
4. Check community listings or newspapers for support groups related to healing, coping, depression or addictions.
5. If you are having difficulty accessing services or assistance call NWAC and ask to speak to a Strategic Policy Liaison, (1-800-461-4043), we have experience navigating victim services.

What Can I Do if I Don't Like Victim Services?

Some families choose not to use victim services. Using these services can be an overwhelming process and an ordeal. If you live in a rural community, it may be hard to travel to receive services. Many people find solace and comfort within their own families and healing from Elders, instead.

If you have sampled some victim services and find that they are not working for you, there are some options for you:

- ✦ Ask for a referral to another group or agency.
- ✦ File an official complaint with the service provider with which you had difficulty.
- ✦ File a complaint with the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime. Call 1-866-481-8429 (toll free) or go to www.victimsfirst.gc.ca/index.html.
- ✦ Write a letter to your MP and your MPP, MLA or MNA.

What Kinds of Help are Available?



- **Police and emergency services include**
 - ✦ on-reserve police, municipal police, provincial police, RCMP
 - ✦ ambulance, critical care and hospital workers
 - ✦ medical examiners and coroners

- **Social workers include**
 - ✦ community social workers
 - ✦ fly-in social workers
 - ✦ volunteer counsellors

- **Government programs include**
 - ✦ hotlines
 - ✦ victim services directories
 - ✦ information on different services

- **Non-profit organizations include**
 - ✦ shelters
 - ✦ sexual assault centres
 - ✦ Sisters In Spirit
 - ✦ Native Women's Association of Canada

- **Court and legal services include**
 - ✦ court orientation and accompaniment
 - ✦ help with writing Victim Impact Statement

Chapter 3

Teachers and Educators

Elementary and high school teachers, university and college instructors, and anyone who leads any type of class, course, or community education program can help raise awareness of the issues surrounding violence against Aboriginal women and girls. They are the people best able to reach specialized audiences with appropriate messages.

If you are a teacher or educator, begin by reading the toolkits and fact sheets in this section. Here, you'll find strategies for raising the issue with children (see Toolkit 3A, "Introducing the Issue of Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women and Girls into the Classroom"), statistics to support your presentations (see Fact Sheet 3D, "Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women and Girls") and information on Aboriginal history that will help you put the issues in a broader context (see Fact Sheet 3F, "Root Causes of Violence Against Aboriginal Women and the Impact of Colonization").



Elders, traditional teachers, educators and youth come together to raise awareness.

3 A) Toolkit: Introducing the Issue of Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women and Girls into the Classroom

Over the past five years, NWAC has been leading the way in research, education and awareness relating to the disturbingly high numbers of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in Canada. We have also been working with educators to respectfully and safely introduce this issue into the classroom.

While the issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls is a disheartening one, it is not too sombre and scary for students. The fact that our Aboriginal sisters are disappearing and that their families do not have access to justice cannot be ignored. Whether living on reserve or in the city, Aboriginal people have been shaken by the loss of too many talented and loving mothers, daughters, sisters, aunts and grandmothers.

In fact, some hopeful things are happening in relation to this issue. Families are finding their voices, and many are speaking out against injustice and sharing the stories of their cherished loved ones. Families are also uniting, finding strength in the experiences of others, and honouring their loved ones through memorial marches, concerts, runs and rallies.

The non-Aboriginal community is also starting to address the issue through a human rights lens and not as an “Aboriginal problem” or “women’s issue.” The number of media reports is increasing; websites have been launched to remember women and to post missing persons alerts; and Amnesty International Canada spearheaded the Stolen Sisters campaign from 2004 to 2009, which helped raise awareness nationwide. Society as a whole is starting to realize that we have all lost the strength, spirit and contribution of these Aboriginal women and girls.

We can all be part of the solution!

Now is the time to embrace the Seven Sacred Laws and introduce the issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls with **love, respect, courage, honesty, wisdom, humility and truth.**

“Learning about this had made me want to get involved in helping the families. I have brought the idea to our school’s Amnesty International Club and we are hoping to do a project with Sisters In Spirit.”

—Grade 11 student, Ottawa, Ontario

Below are several examples of ways teachers and students have successfully introduced the issue into the classroom.

1. **Share and discuss** the life stories of Amber, Beatrice, Claudette, Daleen, Danita, Debbie, Delores, Georgina, Gladys, Lisa, Nina and Terrie Ann. Teachers' prompts can include asking students, "What do you have in common with each woman?" "What can we learn from each story?" or "How has the family been affected by the loss of their loved one?" These touching stories can be found on the NWAC website at www.nwac.ca/programs/sis-research.
2. **Inform and educate** students by presenting NWAC's key findings. As of March 2010, 582 Aboriginal women and girls have gone missing or been murdered. Who are these women? Where are they from? Where did they go missing? Why is this occurring? Answers to these questions can be found in the report *What Their Stories Tell Us: Research findings from the Sisters In Spirit initiative* (March 2010). Fact sheets are also available on the NWAC website at www.nwac.ca/programs/sis-research.
3. **Use some of the books, videos and other resources** listed in Toolkit 3B, "NWAC Suggested Resources for Teachers and Educators."
4. **Mobilize and act** by incorporating a social action component into the lesson. Some of our most popular and successful activities are student-hosted Sisters In Spirit Vigils on October 4. For example, students can host an information booth; organize a letter-writing campaign to a local MP or the Prime Minister; create a song, poem or skit to perform during a school assembly; invite a family to share their story; or launch balloons to honour missing or murdered loved ones. Other toolkits in this community resource guide provide further ideas for action.



The Aboriginal community comes together in a Unity March to Parliament Hill.

We recommend you spend at least two days on the subject of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls: one day to share, discuss and inform, and a second day to discuss the ways each student, as well as a human rights club or the school, can mobilize and act.

3 B) NWAC Suggested Resources for Teachers and Educators

NWAC has compiled this resource list for teachers and educators who are looking for ways to introduce the issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls into the classroom. They may also want to discuss other issues that impact the lives of Aboriginal peoples and their families, such as the residential school system and colonization. While it is not an exhaustive list, we hope you find it useful. Please let us know about other useful items you have found, so we can add them to future lists.

Although we recognize the need for resources geared toward younger audiences, this list is specific to secondary and post-secondary studies.

By raising awareness, mobilizing people to act and reinforcing the fact that this is an issue that should concern all Canadians, we can all take ownership of the issue, help find a solution and create change.

NWAC believes that Sisters In Spirit is a movement for social change whose momentum depends on the personal or human connection individuals and communities make to the issue. As a teacher, it is important to personally reflect on how the issue has affected you and why you have connected to it. It is equally important to 'locate yourself' on the issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in terms of your own experiences. You do not need to be an "expert" on the issue to speak about it, but we recommend you be open and honest with your students when you begin this dialogue.

Please be advised that some of the resources provided here may be graphic. NWAC recommends that teachers and educators review materials beforehand and determine what is appropriate for their students.



Here Aboriginal women pass on the drum teaching.

Introductory Materials Related to Violence Against Aboriginal Women:

What can I use to introduce the issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls?

The fact sheets included later in this section provide a good introduction to the issue.

The following materials may also be helpful.

NWAC Storytelling (life stories of 11 women and girls lost to violence) – NWAC

www.nwac.ca/programs/sis-research

Helps identify and better understand the root causes of violence against Aboriginal women, identify measures to increase safety and well-being, and honour women and girls who are missing or who have been lost to violence. The package includes a blend of personal stories and statistical information.

Report: What Their Stories Tell Us, Research findings from the Sisters In Spirit initiative – NWAC

NWAC Fact Sheet: Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women and Girls in Canada

NWAC Fact Sheet: Violence Against Aboriginal Women

NWAC Fact Sheet: Roots Causes of Violence Against Aboriginal Women and the Impact of Colonization

www.nwac.ca/programs/sis-research

Site provides quick and organized reference documents that summarizes the statistics and facts surrounding the history and causes of violence against Aboriginal women.

Stolen Sisters – Amnesty International Canada

www.amnesty.ca/campaigns/resources/amr2000304.pdf

Outlines the objectification of Aboriginal women in Canada and introduces the public to Indigenous women's experience of violence in Canada, through narrative and statistical information.

Lesson Plans Related to Violence Against Aboriginal Women:

What lesson plans or teacher's guides are available to introduce the issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls?

Finding Dawn (National Film Board)

http://www.nfb.ca/film/finding_dawn

<http://www3.nfb.ca/sg/100567.pdf>

Documentary and lesson plan on Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women through the story of Native woman's experience and the Highway of Tears. Site examines the stereotypes, historical, economic and social factors leading up to violent outcomes.

The Life of Helen Betty Osborne: A Graphic Novel

http://www.pandmpress.com/book_detail.cfm?biD=253

The lesson plan is based on the graphic novel (comic book style) about a Native woman's experience with violence. It recounts the journey and murder of Helen Betty Osborne through a young man's eyes using art and personal reflection.

Additional Resources Related to Violence Against Aboriginal Women:

What additional resources does NWAC recommend to introduce other issues that impact the lives of Aboriginal peoples and their families?

Where are the Children? *Online Curriculum; also available in HTML format
<http://wherearethechildren.ca/flash/WATCSiteb.html>

Site provides online chapters, virtual tours and personal stories about the effect of residential schools on all generations of Aboriginal people. It includes lessons on government policy, implementation and revitalization.

Project of Heart—Residential Schools

<http://projectofheart.ca>

<http://poh-curriculum.wikispaces.com>

http://poh-curriculum.wikispaces.com/file/detail/Residential_Schoolshandout2.pdf

Artistic tools and projects used to connect non-Aboriginal students to the experiences of Canada's Indigenous people and the residential school system. This includes specific resources for teachers, including themes on art, math, science, history and social issues.

Dance Me Outside Lesson Plan

www.osstf.on.ca

www.osstf.on.ca/adx/asp/adxGetMedia.aspx?DocID=8206,7219,546,541,442,365,Documents&MediaID=2124

Lessons to be introduced after students view the groundbreaking film *Dance Me Outside* or read its companion anthology. Plan discusses values, political incorrectness, Native issues, and the power of language in regard to sexual and violent assaults and stereotyping.

PRIDE—Exploring Aboriginal Identity Through Art

www.osstf.on.ca

www.osstf.on.ca/Default.aspx?DN=7915,7218,491,355,365,Documents

This project teaches the value of collectiveness and unity through Aboriginal art projects. Through learning about Aboriginal culture, students can learn about current and historical political and social issues.

NWAC reminds readers that each number represents the story of a woman or girl who is loved and missed by her family.

For Angela (National Film Board)

http://www.nfb.ca/film/for_angela

<http://www.onf-nfb.gc.ca/eng/collection/film/?id=30183>

This film depicts the experiences of Rhonda and her daughter Angela in everyday life. The accompanied lesson plan also demonstrates the power of resiliency, courage and the Native women's encounters with ignorance and racism.

National Film Board: Aboriginal Perspectives

www3.nfb.ca/enclasse/doclens/visau/index.php?mode=home&language=english

The NFB has several resources for teachers on its Aboriginal Perspectives website. NWAC recommends that teachers look at three themes: "Colonialism and Racism," "Indigenous Knowledge" and "Youth."

The Aboriginal Angel Doll Project – The KETA Society

www.keta.ca/Angel_Doll_Project.html

Memorializes and unmaskes the experiences of missing and murdered Aboriginal women from Vancouver's Lower Eastside through an "Angel Doll." Helps to address issues of "blaming the victim" and Aboriginal women. (A lesson plan for this project is in development.)

Books

Most of these titles are available at www.amazon.ca and/or www.chapters.indigo.ca.

The Life of Helen Betty Osborne: A Graphic Novel

www.pandmpress.com/book_detail.cfm?biD=253

– By David Alexander Robertson and Madison Blackstone

Graphic novel (done in comic book style) about a Native woman's experience with violence.

Recounts the journey and murder of Helen Betty Osborne through a young man's eyes, using art and personal reflection.

In Search of April Raintree

– By Beatrice Culleton

Novel based on the experiences of two Manitoba Métis sisters living in the foster care system.

Helps students connect to the social injustices Aboriginal children experience in the child welfare system and the outcomes of this family disruption.

Just Another Indian: A Serial Killer and Canada's Indifference

– By Warren Goulding

Discusses racism and stereotyping among members of the media and police in relation to Canada's western Aboriginal women, particularly sex-trade workers. Specifically outlines the crimes of John Martin Crawford, a serial killer.

Stolen Life: The Journey of a Cree Woman

– By Rudy Wiebe and Yvonne Johnson

Novel looks at the overrepresentation of Aboriginal women in Canada's prisons. Discusses the social context of crime and violence against Aboriginal women. May be too graphic for some audiences.

Additional Books (listed alphabetically by title)

A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood by Kim Anderson

Black Eyes All of the Time: Intimate Violence, Aboriginal Women and the Justice System
by Brenda Comasky

Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide by Andrea Smith

Conspiracy of Silence (Helen Betty Osborne) by Lisa Priest

Dance Me Outside by W.P. Kinsella

Enough Is Enough: Aboriginal Women Speak Out by Janet Silman

Fearless Warriors by Drew Hayden Taylor

*Finding My Talk: How Fourteen Canadian Native Women Reclaimed Their Lives
After Residential School* by Agnes Grant

First Voices: An Aboriginal Women's Reader, edited by Patricia A. Monture and
Patricia D. McGuire

Judgement at Stoney Creek by Bridget Moran

*Maze of Injustice: The Failure to Protect Indigenous Women From Sexual Violence
in the USA* by Amnesty International

Obsession, with Intent by Lee Lakeman

Only Drunks and Children Tell the Truth by Drew Hayden Taylor

Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools by J.R. Miller

Someday: A Native American Drama by Drew Hayden Taylor

Through Black Spruce by Joseph Boyden

Walk Myself Home: An Anthology to End Violence Against Women by Andrea Routley
(forthcoming, September 2010)

Films and Video

Stolen Sisters (2007)

www.stolensisters.com

Television documentary inspired by the *Stolen Sisters* report by Amnesty International Canada.

Where the Spirit Lives (1989)

www.amazon.ca

A movie about the resiliency and strength of a young First Nations girl who overcomes her struggle in a residential school in the late 1930s.

On the Corner (2004)

www.amazon.ca

Follows the lives of a First Nations brother and sister living in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. Examines substance use, homelessness and violence against Aboriginal women.

Dance Me Outside (1995)

www.amazon.ca

Film about the murder of a young Aboriginal woman on reserve. Examines racism and stereotypes in the legal system, as well as violence against women.

Finding Dawn (2006) – National Film Board

www.nfb.ca/film/finding_dawn

www3.nfb.ca/sg/100567.pdf

A documentary about Dawn Crey, an Aboriginal woman who disappeared from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, whose remains were later found on the farm of serial killer Robert Pickton. Gives examples of Native activism and the rights of Aboriginal women in the legal system.

Looks at the Highway of Tears. Also looks at the stereotypes, and the historical, economic and social factors, that lead to violence.

For Angela (1993) – National Film Board

www.nfb.ca/film/for_angela

www.onf.ca/sg/100037.pdf - 2004-09-13

www.onf-nfb.gc.ca/eng/collection/film/?id=30183

This docudrama about the everyday life of Rhonda and her daughter, Angela, reveals the experiences of urban Aboriginal women. Deals with ignorance, racism and stereotypes, which often lead to violence against Aboriginal women. Demonstrates the power of resiliency and courage.

Conspiracy of Silence (1991)

www.contentfilm.com

The story of 19-year-old Helen Betty Osborne and the racial inequalities of the Canadian legal system revealed during the investigation of her murder.

Music

Colours of My Life – The KETA Society

www.keta.ca/Colours_of_My_Life_CD.html

An 11-song CD created to promote the concept of love toward the missing and murdered Aboriginal women of Canada.

Voices: Women of Wabano

www.wabano.com

www.nationtalk.ca

Fourteen songs that promote the empowerment of Aboriginal women and their children. Aboriginal ancestral songs about the strength of grandmothers, mothers, sisters and daughters.

Our Prayers Are Our Songs

<http://minlodge.com>

Ancestral songs sung by 34 Aboriginal women to inspire healing and love.



Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, National Aboriginal Women's Summit II.

3 C) Toolkit: Safety Measures for Aboriginal Women

Why is it important for Aboriginal women to use safety measures?

According to Statistics Canada and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, an Aboriginal woman is more likely to experience violence in her lifetime than a non-Aboriginal woman. The evidence from Statistics Canada and Status of Women Canada show clearly that an Aboriginal woman is also more likely to die from an act of violence than a non-Aboriginal woman. That's why it's important for Aboriginal women to be aware of their safety and encourage and support the safety of family, friends, colleagues and the community.

While the Native Women's Association of Canada recognizes that there is no way to ensure absolute safety, this toolkit outlines a number of ways Aboriginal women and girls can make their world a safer place in which to live, work and raise a family. This toolkit provides important tips you can use at home, at work, at school, while driving, when travelling and when out in the community.

The role of the Aboriginal woman has changed since the beginning of European contact. Once held in high regard as leaders and givers of life, Aboriginal women have largely been marginalized and cast aside as a result of colonization's discriminatory policies and legislation. In fact, they have a harder time going to school, getting a job or getting access to social services than other groups in Canada. Aboriginal women and their children are more likely to live in poverty, with poor physical and mental health. Too often, violence plays a central role.

No matter how hard you try to avoid it, violence still happens. But there are resources and support people that are there to help. Women experiencing abuse or violence should not have to explain or justify their feelings. Remember to listen to women in your community and support their use of a safety plan.

Keys to understanding your relationships

Before discussing a safety plan, let's look at relationships in general.

- ✦ Feeling good about who you are as a person is the key to forming healthy relationships whether they are with men, women, family members or an intimate partner. As a woman, you should ask yourself how you feel about your relationships and what you need from your relationships. *Remember that you matter.* Visit www.metrac.org/programs/info/girls.tips.pdf to download *Tips for Girls: Building Healthy, Equal Relationships*.
- ✦ In healthy relationships, people listen to each other. Disagreements and arguments are part of any relationship but talking, listening, time and space can help work them out. In a healthy relationship, each person is allowed to have her or his own interests and beliefs. Each person should also expect to be taken seriously. Read more at www.thehealingjourney.ca.
- ✦ Many women who are experiencing unhealthy relationships sometimes blame themselves for their partner's actions. No matter what happens between two people, you are never responsible for your partner's actions. *Remember the Seven Sacred Teachings*, particularly *Respect*. We all deserve to be treated equally and with respect in a healthy relationship. Refer to the Kanawayhitowin's website at www.kanawayhitowin.ca for more details.

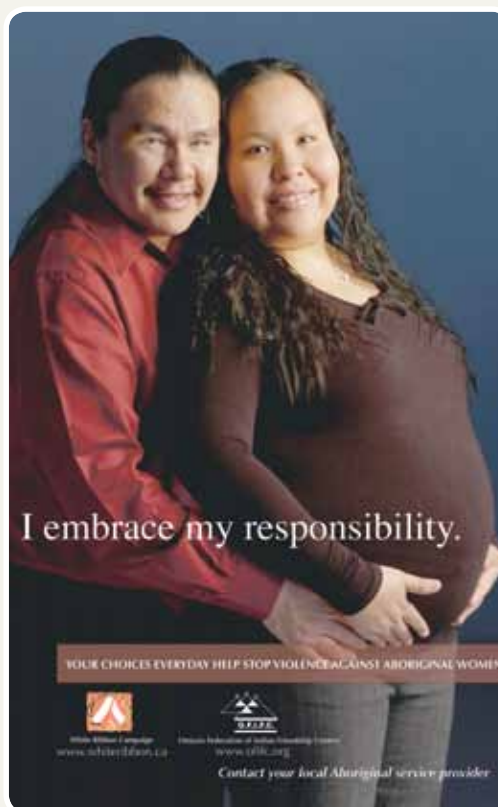
- ✦ Remember to trust your own instincts; if you feel unsafe in your relationship, try to leave. Talk with people you trust in your family, among your friends and in your community. Every person should feel comfortable enough to share their concerns, fears and opinions. There is nothing wrong in asking for help. You do not have to be loyal to anyone but yourself.
- ✦ If you have children, remember to teach them that all forms of abuse—physical, sexual, emotional, spiritual, cultural and financial—are wrong. All children deserve a safe home. Your abusive partner cannot threaten to take your children from you; you have a right to the custody of your children. Read Gignoo Transition House's *Creating Healthy Personal Relationships*, available online at www.thehealingjourney.ca/inside.asp?51.
- ✦ Your relationship should make you feel happy and safe, not scared and hurt. It is important that you take time for yourself in your relationship. Learn more about nurturing yourself at www.thehealingjourney.ca.

Remember that love should feel like love. It should *not* feel like shame, hurt, pain, guilt, anger, fear or abuse.

Here are nine questions based on Gignoo Transition House's booklet *Creating Healthy Personal Relationships* that will help you recognize an unhealthy relationship.

Does your partner:

- ✦ get jealous when you see other people, including those who are just friends and family?
- ✦ call you names and make fun of you in front of friends, family and the public?
- ✦ break and destroy things when they get angry?
- ✦ isolate you or ask you not to spend time with your friends and family?
- ✦ threaten to hurt or kill you?
- ✦ threaten to take your children away from you?
- ✦ blame you when things go wrong?
- ✦ push, hit, spit, slap, burn, bite, grab or pull your hair?
- ✦ take away or control all of the money in the relationship?



Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres (OFIFC) and the White Ribbon Campaign "Embrace Responsibility."

It is important to plan ahead when leaving an unhealthy relationship. Here are some safety tips to keep in mind.

- ✦ Find out where the emergency women's shelters are located in your community (see resources below). Remember to clear the Internet history on your computer if do not want anyone in your household to know you are going to be using these services. (See section on Internet Safety and Social Networking.)
- ✦ Research victim services and other important social services in your community that you may need to use during and after you leave. Also make sure your children know how to dial an emergency number, if needed.
- ✦ If you feel it is dangerous, do not inform your partner that you are leaving or moving from the household.
- ✦ In advance of leaving an abusive relationship, consider opening a separate bank account prior to your departure. Arrange for bank statements to be sent to the address of a trusted friend or family member.
- ✦ Make sure you have all identification for you and your children such as birth certificates, health cards, passports, Indian/Inuit/Métis Status cards, as well as cash, debit cards and credit cards.
- ✦ As a part of your safety plan, make a checklist of everything you will need when you leave. Keep the checklist in a safe place. Your checklist can include an extra set of house keys, change or a calling card for payphone calls, bus routes to a safe house and other important information and items.
- ✦ If you have to return home to gather belongings, ask the police to escort you to keep the peace.

Learn more at www.kanawayhitowin.ca and by reading Gignoo Transition House's booklet *Creating Healthy Personal Relationships*.

NWAC's research has found that the intergenerational impact and resulting vulnerabilities of colonization and state policies—such as residential schools, the 60s Scoop (see glossary), and the child welfare system—are underlying factors in the outcomes of violence experienced by Aboriginal women and girls.

It's easy to incorporate safety into your routine. Here are some general safety tips.

- ✦ When going out or travelling, tell friends or family where you are going and who will be there.
- ✦ Avoid hitchhiking.
- ✦ When getting into a car with someone you don't know, write down or text the license plate to someone you trust.
- ✦ Carry a mobile telephone and make sure it is charged.
- ✦ Carry an emergency whistle.
- ✦ Enroll in a self-defense course.
- ✦ Learn about programs and services in your community, at work and at school.
- ✦ Check our recommended resources as well as other safety resources available on the Internet.
- ✦ Get in the habit of using these safety tips at home, school and work, and when you are out in the community. Always be aware of your surroundings.
- ✦ Trust your instincts.



Aboriginal woman drums an honour song at a SIS Vigil.

1. Always have a safety plan!

A safety plan is a checklist of safety measures you can use to increase safety no matter where you are. In combination with various violence-prevention and safety resources, you can use this booklet to create your safety-plan checklist for travelling, for work, for school and for home. Your plan does not have to be written down, it can also be a simple mental checklist to help guide your decisions. See tips on creating safety plans on the Kanawayhitowin website at www.kanawayhitowin.ca.

A safety plan is an important tool for all women, but it is especially important for women and their children who have experienced violence or are living in an abusive home. Share your safety plan with your children so they know what to do in an emergency.

See what emergency services are available in your community so you can include them in your safety plan.

You can find online copies of sample personal safety plans from the National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life at www.ncall.us. Click on *Resources* then click on *NCALL/WCADV publications and resources*.

2. Safety on the road

Keep your car in good running order and always keep a good supply of gas in the tank. As well, always check the weather forecast for driving conditions and heed the warnings of all road signs.

Keep your employer, family and friends informed of your travel destination and expected arrival and departure times.

Bring a *charged* mobile telephone with a battery adapter for your vehicle and check with your mobile service provider to identify the areas where your mobile signal may not work.

Ensure your valuables are out of sight and locked in the trunk of your car.

Notify the police immediately if you see a woman hitchhiking alone and do not pick up an unknown hitchhiker when you are alone.

Learn the local emergency contact numbers along the route to your destination in advance of your trip.

If you are alerted by police to pull over to the side of the road, do so in a well lit area of the road or highway or, if you are in a populated area, at a gas station or a business. If you have a mobile telephone, call 911 to ensure you are being pulled over by a real police officer.

3. Safety at work and school

Workplace safety is regulated by provincial and territorial governments. It is your employer's responsibility to ensure your safety during working hours. If you are concerned about a potentially violent situation that may put you in danger when you are going to and coming from your place of employment, talk to your supervisor. You may also suggest that your employer remove personal employee information from the company's website.

- ✦ When travelling for your employer, make sure your supervisor and at least one colleague knows your travel and accommodation itinerary. Telephone your employer when you arrive and depart from your destination.
- ✦ If the situation permits, try to use well-lit parking areas, taxis or car-pooling when travelling for business purposes.
- ✦ Consider carrying an emergency whistle or personal alarm.
- ✦ Plan a safe exit route from your workstation.

Vehicle Emergency Kit

Always carry an emergency kit in your car. Include these items:

- ✦ food that won't spoil, such as energy bars
- ✦ water in plastic bottles so they won't break if frozen (change every six months)
- ✦ blanket
- ✦ extra clothing and shoes
- ✦ first-aid kit with seatbelt cutter
- ✦ small shovel, scraper and snowbrush
- ✦ candle in a deep can and matches
- ✦ wind-up flashlight
- ✦ whistle in case you need to attract attention
- ✦ roadmaps
- ✦ copies of your personal safety plan and personal documents

Also keep these inside your trunk:

- ✦ sand, salt or cat litter (non-clumping)
- ✦ antifreeze and windshield-washer fluid
- ✦ tow rope
- ✦ jumper cables
- ✦ fire extinguisher
- ✦ warning light or road flares

- ✦ Make yourself aware of your workplace's emergency exits, emergency alert buttons and other emergency features.
- ✦ If you are going to be working alone, inform colleagues, family, friends, or trusted nearby offices or merchants.
- ✦ Inform your supervisor and colleagues if you are meeting a new contact and arrange your meeting in a public place. Bring along a colleague, if possible.
- ✦ If you are moving from a small community to an urban community for work or to pursue your education, try to visit the community in advance with a friend or family member to become familiar with the community and its emergency and social services.
- ✦ Make yourself aware of the emergency services at your school such as campus security, crisis centres and hotlines, and program their telephone numbers into your mobile telephone.
- ✦ If you are studying, attending class or going out after dark, try to organize a buddy system with schoolmates so you are not alone.
- ✦ Inform family, friends and schoolmates of your class and study schedule, and always keep in touch.
- ✦ Do some research on date-rape drugs; try to avoid leaving your drink unattended. Become familiar with the symptoms of exposure to date-rape drugs such as rohypnol, ecstasy, GHB and others. Learn what you can do if you suspect you've been drugged.
- ✦ Be aware of the realities of acquaintance rape.
- ✦ Ask acquaintances about the person you plan to go out with and always trust your instincts about people and situations.
- ✦ Be aware of the surroundings at your school, classroom, dormitory and neighbourhood, and report any suspicious persons or activity.

4. Safety for your children

- ✦ Always keep the lines of communications open between you and your children, especially on issues of safety. Make sure your children know about emergency services and contact information.
- ✦ Teach your children to trust their instincts and to inform an adult if they do not feel safe. Inform your children about Kids Help Phone and keep the number (1-800-668-6868) visible by your telephone. If your kids don't feel comfortable talking to you, suggest they call Kids Help Phone.
- ✦ Talk to your children about the realities of safety in today's society. This will help them make informed decisions about their own personal safety.
- ✦ If your teenager is planning to join the workforce, make sure he or she is aware of the employer's safety policy. Plan for their safe transportation to and from the workplace. This might include dropping them off and picking them up, choosing well-traveled bus routes or coordinating car-pooling with workmates. Inform your children about harassment issues and their rights with respect to harassment policies at their school or work place.



Child stands beside the Grandmother Moon mask in Regina, Saskatchewan.

- ✦ Provide your children with a mobile telephone for use in emergencies and so they can keep in touch with you. Agree, in advance, with your children regarding their personal use of the telephone.
- ✦ If you and your children are living in an abusive situation, plan a safe exit route for your children or pick a safe place in the home for your children to go to if a violent situation occurs. Also, teach your children about Internet safety and monitor their Internet use. See the *Safety on the Internet and Social Networking* section.
- ✦ Make sure your children know and can recite their full name and home address in the event of an emergency. Make sure they know, as well, that this information should be given only to trusted emergency officials or a teacher.
- ✦ Finally, if you feel comfortable, talk to your child-welfare agency about resources available to you and your children.

5. Safety on the Internet and social-networking websites

- ✦ Never give your personal information such as your family name, address, workplace, city, age, school name or other personal information to a stranger on the Internet. Talk to your children about keeping their personal information private.
- ✦ If you are a member of an online community such as Facebook, MySpace, Twitter or others, remember that you do not have to use your real last name. Here, too, posting personal information, or even things such as travel plans, is a bad idea.
- ✦ If you plan to meet someone you have met on the Internet or through an online dating site, do it in a public place. Do not have them pick you up or invite them back to your home. If you can, bring someone with you or make it very clear that you have informed others of the meeting. There are no regulations about using your real identity on these sites so use caution when meeting others.
- ✦ If you are in an abusive relationship, your abuser may be monitoring your Internet activity. Take the time to review privacy settings on social-networking sites. And remember to clear your Internet history:

- *Internet Explorer*: Pull down the Tools menu, select Internet Options. Choose the General tab and, under Temporary Internet Files, click on Delete Files. Under History, click on Clear History. Then, click OK.
- *Firefox*: Pull down the Edit menu, select Preferences. Under Privacy, select History and click on the Clear Browsing History Now button. Then select Cache and click on Clear Cache Now.
- *AOL*: Pull down My AOL, select Preferences. Click on the WWW icon under Temporary Internet Files and click on Delete Files.
- *Safari*: Pull down the Safari menu, select Empty Cache and click on Empty. Pull down the History menu, select Clear History and click on Clear.

6. Safety in the community and when accessing social and health services

- ✦ Whenever possible, try to stick to well-traveled walking and bus routes.
- ✦ Try to have a mobile telephone with a charged and dependable battery with you at all times. Program local emergency telephone numbers into your contact list.
- ✦ Be aware of your surroundings and always walk with confidence.
- ✦ Carry an emergency whistle or personal alarm.
- ✦ When possible, travel with friends and try to use the buddy system.
- ✦ Make yourself aware of the emergency-support services available in your community in case you need them in the future.
- ✦ Do not hitchhike—ever. Even if it's to a medical or social-services appointment. Hitchhiking puts your personal safety at great risk.
- Northern Health Transporter—contact the office where you have an appointment to ask if transportation, accommodations, or travel vouchers are available to you, as you may have to stay overnight or come in a day early.



2008 SIS Vigil in Fredericton,
New Brunswick.



Winnipeg Police Services
new recruit training.

- Find out if funding or subsidies are available for travel associated with accessing health procedures or social services that are not available in your community. (Ask a community health representative or local family-services agency through your local government or band.)
- Ask a Native Court worker if there are subsidies available to you.

Contact a health or wellness centre, mental health centre, band office or family-services centre if you are seeking health services, counselling or other social services. Anything discussed with a professional will be kept confidential. You do not have to tell anyone that you wish to seek counselling or access social services, for example your partner.

Prepare a “travel card” and give it to family and friends before you leave your community. It should include your full name; date of birth; hair and eye colour; height; weight; description of tattoos, birthmarks and scars, a description of your clothing or any items you are wearing (including a purse or bag); destination; estimated date and time of departure and arrival; contact person from your community and at your destination; and instructions on what to do if you do not arrive at your destination or return home as expected.

Promote safety for your family, friends, and community!

- ✦ Find out about annual events in your community such as the Take Back the Night march and Sisters In Spirit vigils, and support community events for anti-violence.
- ✦ Get familiar with youth and teen safety through the NWAC Youth Council Violence Prevention Toolkit, and talk about youth safety in your community.
- ✦ If you know of someone living with violence, provide them with useful tools such as the Kanawayhitowin campaign. Consult The Healing Journey violence-prevention resource that can be found on the website at www.thehealingjourney.ca.
- ✦ Don't be afraid or intimidated to talk about the issue of violence with family or friends or in your community. Talking about the problem is one of the best ways to promote safety, healing and prevention.

Safety and violence-prevention resources

Assaulted Women's Helpline

Toll-free: 1.866.863.0511

Mobile telephone: #SAFE (#7233) (Rogers, Fido, Bell, Telus)

www.awhl.org

The Assaulted Women's Helpline offers a 24-hour telephone and TTY crisis line to all women who have experienced abuse. The Helpline provides counselling, emotional support, information and referrals and is dedicated to working toward equality for all women. Service is anonymous and confidential.

Kids Help Phone

1.800.668.6868

www.kidshelpphone.ca

On the telephone, Kids Help Phone provides immediate, bilingual, professional counselling to kids 24 hours a day. Kids Help Phone receives calls from young people between the ages of five and 20 who call from almost 3,000 Canadian communities every year. On the web, Kids Help Phone provides counselling to young people in the "Ask us Online" section.

National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life

www.ncall.us/docs/SafetyPlanExample10-06.pdf

This downloadable document offers samples of personalized safety plans.

Gignoo Transition House's booklet *Creating Healthy Personal Relationships*

For a Hard Copy Contact:

Public Legal Education and Information Service of New Brunswick (PLEIS-NB)

Phone: (506) 453-5369

Or for information on Gignoo Transition House Inc.

Gignoo Transition House Inc.

A Healing Haven

P.O. Box 3385, Station B

Fredericton, NB E3A 5H2

Business Line: (506) 458-1236

Crisis Line (N.B. Only): 1-800-565-6878

gignoo@nbnet.nb.ca

The Healing Journey

www.thehealingjourney.ca

This site offers a number of publications for people who are working in the area of family violence prevention for Aboriginal communities, both on- and off-reserve.

Kanawayhitowin, Taking Care of Each Others Spirit

www.kanawayhitowin.ca

This is a campaign created to support Aboriginal women who are experiencing violence and abuse. It has resources for frontline workers and communities, as well.

The Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children

(METRAC) is a not-for-profit, community-based organization that works to prevent and end violence against diverse women, youth, and children. METRAC has three main program areas: Community Safety, Community Justice, and Community Outreach and Education.

www.metrac.org/programs/info/girls.tips.pdf

www.metrac.org/programs/info/prevent.htm#healthy

Victim Assistance Online

www.vaonline.org

A reference, resource and networking centre for the international victim-assistance community.

**Grandmother Moon**

You know all women from birth to death
 We seek your knowledge
 We seek your strength
 Some are STARS up there with you
 Some are STARS on Mother Earth
 Grandmother, lighten our path in the dark
 Creator, keep our sisters safe from harm
 Maa duu? Mussi cho

—Kukdookaa

3 D) Fact Sheet: Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women and Girls

Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) has created a database of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls. NWAC has worked hard to research every case, yet we believe there are still many more cases to document. The statistics below are based on NWAC's database as of March 31, 2010.

NWAC has gathered information about 582 cases of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls. Of these:

- ✦ 67% are murder cases (death as the result of homicide or negligence);
- ✦ 20% are cases of missing women or girls;
- ✦ 4% are cases of suspicious death—deaths regarded as natural or accidental by police, but considered suspicious by family or community members; and
- ✦ 9% are cases where the nature of the case is unknown—it is unclear whether the woman was murdered, is missing or died in suspicious circumstances.



Woman holds a placard of a murdered Aboriginal woman.

This issue impacts all Aboriginal women and girls—First Nations, Métis and Inuit.

The number of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in Canada is disproportionately high. NWAC's research indicates that, between 2000 and 2008, Aboriginal women and girls represented approximately 10% of all female homicides in Canada. However, Aboriginal women make up only 3% of the female population.

There are no national data sources regarding missing persons in Canada. This makes it difficult to look at the issue of missing Aboriginal women and girls in comparison to other missing women. The Saskatchewan Association of Chiefs of Police (SACP) is perhaps the only policing body to publish statistics on missing persons. It reports that almost 59% of missing women and girls in Saskatchewan are of Aboriginal ancestry.

Most of the cases in the database are from the last 10 years, but there are likely older cases. The oldest case in NWAC's database occurred in 1944, but most are much more recent; 39% of the cases in NWAC's database occurred between 2000 and 2010, and 17% occurred in the 1990s. In contrast, only 2% of the cases in the database occurred before 1970. This gap strongly suggests that there are still many older cases to document.

Most of the cases involve young women and girls. Just over half of the cases (55%) involve women and girls under the age of 31, with 17% of women and girls 18 years of age or younger. Only 8% of cases involve women over 45.

Where are their children? There is an intergenerational impact to this issue.

Of the cases where this information is known, the vast majority of women in NWAC's database (88%) were mothers. NWAC estimates that more than 440 children have been impacted by the disappearance or murder of their mother. Very little is known about what happens to these children following the loss of their mother.

Most of the cases occurred in the Western provinces.

More than a quarter (28%) of all cases occurred in British Columbia, followed by Alberta with 16% of cases.

Overall, more than half (54%) of cases occurred in the West: 29% of cases occurred in the south (Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec), 6% took place in the North; and 2% took place in the Atlantic provinces. NWAC is still working to confirm where the violence occurred in 8% of cases.

The majority of cases occurred in urban areas, but resources are also needed in rural and on-reserve communities. Of the cases where this information is known, 70% of the women and girls disappeared from an urban area and 60% were found murdered in an urban area. Only a small number of cases occurred on-reserve (7% of missing cases and 13% of murder cases).

While the majority of cases occurred in urban areas, this violence often has a direct impact on rural or reserve communities. Most Aboriginal peoples living in urban areas maintain close ties to their home communities. The shock and grief of a missing or murdered community member impacts the entire community, no matter where the violence takes place.

Nearly half of murder cases in NWAC's database remain unsolved. NWAC has found that only 53% of murder cases involving Aboriginal women and girls have led to charges of homicide. This is dramatically different from the national clearance rate for homicides in Canada, which was last reported as 84% (Statistics Canada 2005, p.10). While a small number of cases in NWAC's database have been "cleared" by the suicide of the offender or charges other than homicide, 40% of murder cases remain unsolved.

Clearance rates are low but differ by province. NWAC has found that clearance rates range from a low of 42% in Alberta to a high of 93% in Nunavut. Higher clearance rates in the North may reflect the proportion of family violence cases in this region, and the fact that it is generally easier to lay charges when the offender is someone close to the woman (such as a partner or family member) than when the offender is an acquaintance or stranger.



Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres (OFIFC) and the White Ribbon Campaign "Admire her Strength."

Aboriginal women are almost three times more likely to be killed by a stranger than non-Aboriginal women are. Of the murder cases in NWAC's database where someone has been charged,

- ✦ 16.5% of offenders are strangers with no prior connection to the woman or girl (in contrast, Statistics Canada reports that, between 1997 and 2004, only 6% of murdered non-Aboriginal women were killed by strangers);
- ✦ 17% of offenders are acquaintances of the woman or girl (a friend, neighbour or someone else known to her); and
- ✦ 23% are a current or former partner of the woman or girl.

NWAC's research confirms that Aboriginal women experience violence by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders, and the vast majority are men.

Where this information is known, more than half (59%) of women and girls died in a residential dwelling. NWAC's research indicates that violence in the home is not limited to family violence. Of deaths involving a stranger or acquaintance, 37% occurred in a residential dwelling. There is a need to think critically about the idea of "safe space" or "safe situations." NWAC's research demonstrates that meeting or accompanying a stranger or acquaintance to a residential dwelling is not necessary "safer" than a public place or open area.

Women involved in prostitution are extremely vulnerable and experience high levels of violence. NWAC has gathered information about prostitution in only a small number of cases. Of these cases, about half involve women who were not involved in prostitution, and about half involve women who were or were suspected to be involved in this area. This finding may change as we collect more data.

The information gathered to date speaks to the urgency of missing reports involving women in prostitution, as well as the broader need for greater protections for women in this area. Prostitution is not a cause of violence; rather, many women experience prostitution in the context of limited options and after experiencing multiple forms of trauma and violence.

What Their Stories Tell Us

What Their Stories Tell Us presents demographic and statistical evidence from NWAC's Sisters In Spirit database, while situating the issue within the larger context of root causes and ways forward. It also draws on information gathered from the existing literature, and highlights some of the stories and experiences shared by families of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls.

3 E) Fact Sheet: Violence Against Aboriginal Women

Aboriginal women and girls are strong and beautiful. They are our mothers, our daughters, our sisters, our aunties and our grandmothers.

For years, communities have pointed to the high number of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in Canada. As of March 31, 2010, Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) has gathered information about 582 cases from across the country.

Aboriginal women face life-threatening, gender-based violence, and disproportionately experience violent crimes because of hatred and racism. This fact sheet places the issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in the broader context of violence against Aboriginal women. By understanding the severity of the issues, we can better work toward breaking the cycle of violence.

According to Statistics Canada's 2004 General Social Survey (GSS), Aboriginal women experience much higher rates of violence than non-Aboriginal women.

Statistics Canada also reported the following findings:

- ✦ Aboriginal women 15 years and older are 3.5 times more likely to experience violence than non-Aboriginal women.
- ✦ Rates of spousal assault against Aboriginal women are more than three times higher than those against non-Aboriginal women.
- ✦ Nearly one-quarter of Aboriginal women experienced some form of spousal violence in the five years preceding the 2004 GSS.

Statistics Canada reported that Aboriginal women are more likely to experience more severe and potentially life-threatening forms of family violence than non-Aboriginal women.

- ✦ 54% of Aboriginal women reported severe forms of family violence, such as being beaten, being choked, having had a gun or knife used against them, or being sexually assaulted, versus 37% of non-Aboriginal women
- ✦ 44% of Aboriginal women reported "fearing for their lives" when faced with severe forms of family violence, compared with 33% of non-Aboriginal women.
- ✦ 27% of Aboriginal women reported experiencing 10 or more assaults by the same offender, as opposed to 18% of non-Aboriginal women.
- ✦ While the number of non-Aboriginal women reporting the most severe forms of violence declined from 43% in 1999 to 37% in 2004, the number of similar attacks against Aboriginal women remained unchanged at 54% during the same time period.

Certainly, family violence represents one of the most urgent issues impacting Aboriginal women. However, **there is also a need for more research and awareness about other forms of violence—particularly violence perpetrated by strangers or acquaintances.**

- ✦ Most of the existing research focuses on family violence or abuse between parents and children. Apart from studies dealing with women involved in prostitution, little attention is paid to other forms of violence.
- ✦ Statistics Canada does not have enough data to produce reliable estimates of sexual assault against Aboriginal women.
- ✦ There are no national data sources regarding the number of missing persons reports filed each year, the number of cases resolved or the percentage that remain outstanding. This makes it virtually impossible to compare figures for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women.

Statistics Canada reports that Aboriginal women are significantly overrepresented as victims of homicide.

- ✦ Between 1997 and 2000, homicide rates of Aboriginal females were almost seven times higher than those of non-Aboriginal females.
- ✦ Often overlooked or ignored is the extreme vulnerability of women in the sex trade. Between 1991 and 2004, 171 women involved in prostitution were killed in Canada; 45% of these homicides remain unsolved (Statistics Canada 2006a, p. 37).
- ✦ Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) data published in Amnesty International Canada's report *Stolen Sisters: Discrimination and Violence Against Indigenous Women in Canada* indicate that Aboriginal women between the ages of 25 and 44 with Indian status are five times more likely than other women of the same age to die as the result of violence.
- ✦ NWAC's research indicates that homicides involving Aboriginal women are more likely to go unsolved. Only 53% of murder cases in NWAC's Sisters In Spirit database have been solved, compared to 84% of all murder cases across the country.



2008 SIS vigil.

Community-based research has found levels of violence against Aboriginal women to be even higher than those reported by government surveys. There are many limitations to government-collected statistics.

- ✦ Government statistics are based on police-collected data, but police numbers reflect only those incidents that are reported to police. Six out of 10 incidents of violent crime against Aboriginal people are thought to go unreported.
- ✦ There are no standard policies covering whether and/or how police track violence experienced by Aboriginal peoples. Some police agencies, including the RCMP, do not collect this information at all. This is significant, as the RCMP covers 75% of Canada's geography and serves more than 630 Aboriginal communities.

NWAC holds the only national database on the number and circumstances of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in Canada. For more information, please see Fact Sheet 3D, "Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women and Girls."

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3 F) Fact Sheet: Root Causes of Violence Against Aboriginal Women and the Impact of Colonization

The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) believes that knowledge of past and present issues is essential to building a better life for future generations. Aboriginal women in Canada have historically been devalued not only as Aboriginal people but also simply because they are women. It is important to acknowledge the impacts of colonization and recognize that they currently exist and affect Aboriginal women and girls. By understanding the intergenerational effects of colonization, we can begin to address current issues and create a better future for Aboriginal women and girls.

As explained by Guthrie Valaskakis (1999) early colonial writings described Aboriginal women as “Indian princesses”—fetching, proud and virtuous. Resistance to colonization led to the invention of Aboriginal women as “squaws”—dirty, lewd, uncivilized and sexually deviant.

- ✦ Both of these characterizations described Aboriginal women as “sexually available,” which served to remove responsibility from men who forced sex on Aboriginal women.
- ✦ To this day, many Aboriginal women and girls are forced into situations or coping strategies that increase their vulnerability to violence, such as hitchhiking, addictions, homelessness, prostitution and other sex work, gang involvement, or abusive relationships.

As discussed in the National Council of Welfare (2007) the history of colonization has burdened our nations with a continual “passing down of various loads or degrees of post-traumatic stress. Generation after generation, so that we wind up with this entire burden of our people as they exist today.”

- ✦ Alcohol has been cited as a risk factor for violence. Certainly, the connection between colonization, alcohol use and increased vulnerability can be seen in situations of family violence.
- ✦ The residential school experience had a direct impact on the next generations of Aboriginal children, resulting in what is often referred to as the intergenerational effects or intergenerational trauma of residential schools.

The residential school system and 60s Scoop were two strategies used to assimilate the Aboriginal population.

- ✦ The residential school system operated from the 1800s until 1996.
- ✦ Aboriginal (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) children were forcibly removed from their homes for the purpose of assimilation, often without the knowledge or consent of their families or communities.
- ✦ Aboriginal children were predominantly placed with white families in different communities, often resulting in lost connections to their home community and family.
- ✦ More than 11,000 status First Nations children with Indian status, along with many other Aboriginal children, were adopted between 1960 and 1990 (National Council of Welfare 2007, 84).
- ✦ Both initiatives are commonly characterized as cultural genocide because they served to eliminate Aboriginal culture and traditions.

The residential school system and the 60s Scoop disrupted the roles, values and traditions of the Aboriginal family. Many of the lasting effects of these government-mandated actions can still be observed through current trends and issues facing Aboriginal people today.

- ✦ According to the National Council of Welfare (2007) the number of status First Nations children entering the child welfare system rose to a staggering 71.5% between 1995 and 2001 (p.85).
- ✦ According to a study conducted in Australia by Cripps et al (2009), Indigenous women (with children) who had been removed from their natural family during childhood were at higher risk of experiencing violence as adults than those who had not been removed.
- ✦ Furthermore, research shows in one survey (Sikka, 2009) that two-thirds of women involved in street prostitution in Winnipeg had been taken into care as children.
- ✦ Girls who run away from their foster homes or care facilities are “particularly vulnerable to being preyed upon by older males seeking to exploit them.” (Sikka, 2009, p. 11)



Brothers and Sisters In Spirit stand in solidarity with the Silent Witness Initiative.

NWAC’s research recognizes that government passed legislation—such as the *Gradual Civilization Act in 1857, An Act for the Gradual Enfranchisement of Indians in 1869 and the Indian Act in 1876*— that entrenched sex-based discrimination against First Nations women.

- ✦ The *Indian Act* does not contain any laws that apply to matrimonial real property (MRP) on reserve land. This gap in legislation has had serious consequences, especially for women who live on reserves after their marriage.
- ✦ The lack of legal clarity and protection also means that women who are experiencing violence, or who have become widowed, may lose their homes on the reserve.
- ✦ It also leads to poor housing options and limited choices for Aboriginal women who want to leave violent relationships or escape unsafe situations.

According to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) (2010) a history strong in colonial thought and attacks on Aboriginal culture directly influences the socio-economic conditions Aboriginal people currently experience. Canada needs to acknowledge that the current system perpetuates racism toward and inequality for Aboriginal families and communities (p. 37).

- ✦ CCPA research also indicates that Aboriginal women are affected by higher levels of poverty, lower educational attainment, higher unemployment, poorer physical and mental health, and lack of housing than non-Aboriginal women.
- ✦ Low educational attainment and unemployment have been identified as risk factors associated with violence.

- ✦ NWAC research indicates that some women were “vulnerable” **only** insofar as they were Aboriginal and they were women.
- ✦ Women who work as prostitutes or in other areas of the sex industry frequently tell researchers that they experience violence perpetrated by strangers, clients, acquaintances, partners and the police.

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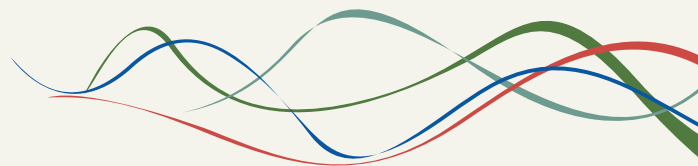
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Glossary

**60s Scoop**

The 60s Scoop refers to the adoption of First Nation and Métis children in Canada between 1960 and the mid-1980s. This period is so named because the highest numbers of adoptions took place in the 1960s and because, in many instances, children were literally scooped from their homes and communities without the knowledge or consent of families and bands.

Aboriginal

Aboriginal is the collective name for the original peoples of North America and their descendants. The Canadian constitution recognizes three groups of Aboriginal people: Indians (commonly referred to as First Nations), Métis and Inuit. These are three distinct peoples with unique histories, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs. More than one million people in Canada identify themselves as an Aboriginal person, according to the 2006 Census. Source: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.

advocate

An advocate is anyone who raises awareness of the issue of missing or murdered Aboriginal women and girls—whether they do so by holding an event, writing a letter to the editor or taking any other sort of action.

**Amnesty International
Canada**

Amnesty International is an international non-governmental organisation that coordinates worldwide events in the human rights movement. They include membership in more than 140 countries and over one million people.

band

A band is a group of Indians for whose collective use and benefit lands have been set apart, or for which money is held by the Crown, or that is declared to be a band for the purposes of the *Indian Act*.

campaigner

A campaigner is anyone who raises awareness of the issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls—whether they do so by holding an event, writing a letter to the editor or taking any other sort of action.

Circle	Is an all encompassing, holistic, powerful symbolic way of life. It is a common belief in various First Peoples' cultures that the power of the world always works in circles, as everything tries to be round; the earth, the moon, life cycles and the seasons are some examples.
Congress of Aboriginal Peoples	The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples is a nationally incorporated umbrella organization that represents the interests, nationally, of its provincial and territorial affiliate organizations across Canada for urban Non-Status First Nations peoples.
Crown attorney	A Crown attorney is a prosecutor and trained lawyer who appears on behalf of the Crown in Canada. In some provinces, they are called Crown prosecutors.
Elder	Elders are moral and spiritual leaders of our Aboriginal communities. They are also the teachers, who pass knowledge on to the next generation.
Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime	The Office of the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime is a resource for victims in Canada. The Office was created in 2007 to try to ensure the federal government meets its responsibilities to victims of crime.
First Peoples	First Peoples is a collective term used to describe the original peoples of Canada and their descendants. It is used less frequently than terms like "Aboriginal peoples" and "Native peoples."
first responder	Members of an emergency service, first responders are the first on the scene at an emergency.
Friendship Centre	Friendship Centres are not-for-profit corporations that are mandated to serve the needs of all off-reserve Aboriginal people, regardless of legal definition. This necessitates responding to thousands of Aboriginal people requiring culturally sensitive and culturally appropriate services in urban communities.

General Social Survey

In 2004, Statistics Canada conducted its fourth General Social Survey (GSS) on victimization. This survey asked Canadians aged 15 years and older about their experiences as a victim of crime (if any) and their fear and perceptions of crime and the criminal justice system.

Grandmother Moon logo

Grandmother Moon teaches us about our sacred role as the life-givers and the heart of our nations- for without women our nations cannot go on. Artist Dick Baker designed the Kwakwaka'wakw Moon for the Native Women's Association of Canada and his design is the official logo for our Sisters In Spirit initiative.

Grandmothers Lodge

A Grandmothers Lodge is a gathering of grandmothers, aunts, mothers, sisters, and relatives who recognize, respect, promote, defend and enhance their Native ancestral laws, spiritual beliefs, language and traditions given to them by the Creator.

Highway of Tears

An unsolved series of murders and disappearances of young women in the vicinity of Highway 16 in British Columbia has earned the route the nickname Highway of Tears.

I Am a Kind Man

I Am a Kind Man is a website that reminds us that violence has never been an acceptable part of Aboriginal culture. This website embraces the Seven Grandfather Teachings which show us how to live in harmony with Creation through wisdom, love, respect, bravery, honesty, humility and truth.

Indian status

There are three categories of Indians in Canada: **Status Indians** are people who are entitled to have their names included on the Indian Register, an official list maintained by the federal government, which includes specific rights and benefits excluding Non-Status Indians, Inuit and Métis. **Non-Status Indians** are people who are Indians or members of a First Nation but whom the Government of Canada does not recognize as Indians under the *Indian Act*, either because they are unable to prove their status or have lost their status rights. A **Treaty Indian** is a Status Indian who belongs to a First Nation that signed a treaty with the Crown.

Inuit	<i>Inuit</i> are the Aboriginal people of the Arctic Canada. Inuit communities are located primarily the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Nunavik (northern Quebec), Yukon and northern parts of Labrador.
Métis	People of mixed First Nation and European ancestry who identify themselves as Métis, as distinct from First Nations people, Inuit or non-Aboriginal people. The Canadian Constitution recognizes Métis people as one of the three Aboriginal peoples. The Métis people have a distinct culture, historical background and homeland.
National Aboriginal Policing Services (NAPS) of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)	The RCMP's National Aboriginal Policing Services is responsible for planning, developing and managing the RCMP's strategies and initiatives for working with Aboriginal communities.
Native	Native is a word similar in meaning to Aboriginal. "Native peoples" is a collective term to describe the descendants of the original peoples of North America.
Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC)	NWAC works to enhance, promote and foster the social, economic, cultural and political well-being of First Nations and Métis women. NWAC works with Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada on Inuit Women-specific issues.
Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada	Pauktuutit is the national non-profit association representing all Inuit women in Canada. Its mandate is to foster a greater awareness of the needs of Inuit women, and to encourage their participation in community, regional and national concerns in relation to social, cultural and economic development.
reservation	A reservation is land set apart by the United States government for the use and occupation of a group of Native Americans. The term is not often used in Canada.
reserve	In Canada a reserve is a tract of land, the legal title to which is held by the Crown, set apart for the use and benefit of an Indian band. Some bands have more than one reserve. Many First Nations now prefer the term "First Nation community," and no longer use "reserve."

Residential School system

Founded in the 19th century, the Canadian Indian residential school system was intended to force the assimilation of the Aboriginal peoples in Canada into European-Canadian society. The purpose of the schools, which separated children from their families, has been described as “killing the Indian in the child” as an attempt to instill a Euro-Canadian identity in Aboriginal children. It has been revealed that many students at residential schools were subjected to severe physical, spiritual, psychological and sexual abuse by teachers and school officials and many are known to have died from disease and malnutrition.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police is the Canadian national police service and an agency of the Ministry of Public Safety Canada.

Seven Grandfather Teachings

The Seven Grandfather Teachings are

1. to cherish knowledge is to know **wisdom**
2. to know **love** is to know peace
3. to honour all of creation is to have **respect**
4. **bravery** is to face the foe with integrity
5. **honesty** in facing a situation is to be brave
6. **humility** is to know your self as a sacred part of Creation
7. **truth** is to know all of these things

Seven Sacred Laws

The Seven Sacred Laws are important teachings in Aboriginal culture. These teachings honour spiritual law and bring us back to our connection to the land. The Seven Sacred Laws are represented by seven animals, (which corresponds to the Seven Grandfather Teachings), each of which offers a special gift and understanding of how we as people should live our lives.

Sisters In Spirit (SIS)

SIS is an initiative that has worked to identify root causes, trends and circumstances of violence that have led to the disappearance and death of Aboriginal women and girls.

Sisters In Spirit Ribbon Campaign

Ribbons are very visible symbols of the Sisters In Spirit campaign. The ribbons help council members raise funds so they can keep raising awareness.

Sisters In Spirit Vigil	Sisters In Spirit Vigil is a national movement for social change that encourages concerned citizens and Aboriginal community members to gather on October 4. We gather to honour our lost sisters and their families. We gather to show we are a united front, to shed light on a crisis that affects every Canadian and to pressure all levels of government to act now!
sound bite	A short audio quote (radio), audio and video quote (television), or print quote (print media) used to tell a very specific part of a larger story.
Stolen Sisters campaign	The Stolen Sisters campaign, which was created by Amnesty International, ran from 2004 to 2009 to raise awareness nationwide to remember missing women and to raise awareness of missing persons.
support worker	Generally, support workers include social workers and staff members at victims' services agencies.
victim impact statement	Intended to give crime victims a voice in the criminal justice process, a victim impact statement is a written account of the personal harm suffered by a victim of crime. The statement may include a description of the physical, financial and emotional effects of the crime.
Victim Services	"Victim Services" is a relatively new concept whose main focus is to address the needs or concerns of victims.
vigil	Vigils are gatherings where the public is asked to come together to honour a person, a specific cause or an important date. They are an excellent way to rally support and unite a community. They also provide opportunities for curious or interested individuals to freely and safely come to be informed.
White Ribbon Campaign	The White Ribbon Campaign is a national campaign of men and boys working to end violence against women.
women's centre	A women's centre is an organizational place where women can get access to women-specific services, programs and resources in a safe environment.



For further information about
Evidence to Action, please contact
the NWAC satellite office:

1 Nicholas Street, 9th floor
Ottawa ON K1N 7B7

Phone: 613-722-3033
Toll Free: 1-800-461-4043
Fax: 613-722-7687

www.nwac.ca

Head office:

155 International Road, Unit 4,
Akwesasne, Ontario K6H 5R7