

Wear Red



Cara Olson

There is an epidemic that has been sweeping the nation for decades,



an epidemic that has been

going on mostly unnoticed by the majority of the nation. This epidemic is called MMIW,

which

stands for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women.

One of the most notable symbols of MMIW is the symbol of the Red Hand.

A red hand over the mouth has become the symbol of the MMIW movement.



It stands for all the missing sisters whose voices are not heard.

It stands for the silence of the media and law enforcement in the midst of this crisis.

It stands for the oppression and subjugation of Native women who are now rising up to say #NoMoreStolenSisters.



The epidemic of MMIW has been decades in the making, with its history starting back in the colonial era.

After his arrival in 1492, Christopher Columbus began to traffic Indigenous children

on the East Coast with the fur trade.

In the decades to follow, Native Americans in North

America decreased by 95% from when Columbus came to America in 1492 and the

establishment of the United States in 1776.

There began to be federal policies put into place to remove Indigenous peoples from their lands.

The Trail of Tears in the 1830s, the Indian Relocation Act of 1956, and the boarding schools

for Native children were just a few seeds that planted the growing epidemic of missing and

murdered women.

The forced removal of Native American children and placing them in

boarding schools can be seen as the reason for the high number of child abuse and domestic

violence incidents reported in Indigenous families, which has led to the disproportionate number

of women and children missing, abused,

There are numerous reasons why this issue exists outside of the historical context and ties to past

federal policies.

Because of the Indian Relocation Act, many Native Americans do not live on

the tribal lands or reservations (only 22%) and many frequent a lifestyle of transience between

tribal and state lands.

This presents a variety of crucial issues involving reporting policies,

jurisdictional complications, and communication and coordination problems between agencies.

Now, Native American women make up a significant portion of the missing and murdered cases.

Not only is the murder rate ten times higher than the national average for women living on reservations but murder is the third leading cause of death for Native women.

This is startling as

Native people only make up 2% of the US overall population.

The Urban Indian Health Institute (UIHI) conducted a study on record keeping for MMIW in the United States.

They requested all case data from 1900 to the present from 71 cities across the country with large urban Native American populations.

They received back 506 reports, two-thirds of which are from the last ten years. The Department of Justice's missing persons database

only included 117 of them. According to the National Crime Information Center, in 2017 alone,

5,712 indigenous women were reported as missing or murdered (and 2,758 in the first six months of 2018).

A similar study was completed in Canada with comparable reported results.

The Urban Indian Health Institute has reported that the youngest MMIW victim was a baby less than one year old and the oldest victim was an 83-year-old

A 2016 NIJ Research Report found that more than 84% of American Indian/Alaska Native women (1.5 million people) experience violence in their lifetimes, 67% were concerned for their own safety, and 41% had been physically injured from physical violence by intimate partners,

stalking, and sexual violence.

These crimes are overwhelmingly committed by individuals outside the Native American community.

These crimes are particularly likely in remote settings where transient workers - oil workers, for example - live in temporary housing units called "man camps" on and near Tribal lands.

Their crimes fall between jurisdictional cracks, leaving victims and their families without recourse.

With all of the negative scenarios that play into MMIW, there have been recent federal work and

policies that have been put in place to help end this crisis.

Within the first 100 days of the Biden-Harris administration, Secretary Haaland created a new

Missing and Murdered Unit within the Bureau of Indian Affairs Office of Justice Services (BIA-

OJS) to pursue justice for missing or murdered Indigenous Peoples:

The unit is providing leadership and direction for cross-departmental and interagency work involving missing and

murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives.

Secretary Haaland is also implementing the Not

Invisible Act.

Together with the Department of Justice, the Interior Department has established a

Joint Commission on reducing violent crime against American Indians and Alaska Natives and on Tribal lands.

The Commission will hold hearings, take testimony, and receive evidence in

order to develop recommendations for the federal government to combat violent crime against

Indians and within Tribal lands.

State legal actions have been imperfect, but they are a step towards a better future for Indigenous

women and communities.

In 2019 alone, Minnesota, Arizona, Wyoming, Montana and New

Mexico each launched a task force or study committee to address the issue; Idaho held a summit;

and Oregon and Nebraska directed their state police to study the problem.

Wisconsin and Utah established task forces in 2020.

In 2021, South Dakota and Oklahoma moved to create offices to address

missing Indigenous people, Kansas passed a law paving the way for relevant police training

and Washington state's attorney general announced he will lead a task force.

Many of the state

groups – including in Arizona, New Mexico, Wyoming and Minnesota – have already issued

reports.

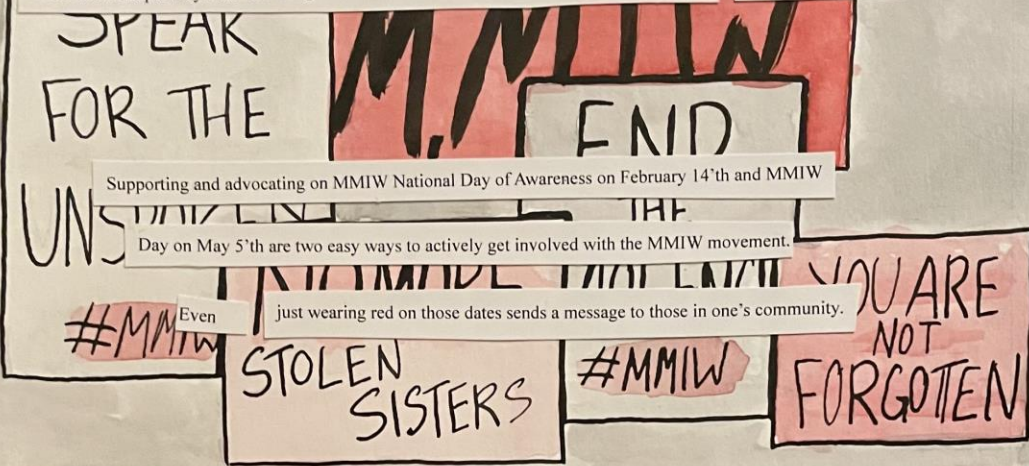
Their recommendations include actions such as increasing funding for services that

would help grieving family members and survivors, encouraging memorandums of

understanding between tribal law and non-tribal law enforcement, implementing cultural training

for police, and mandating data collection and reporting.

There are multiple ways one can bring awareness about MMIW to their community and help advocate for change.

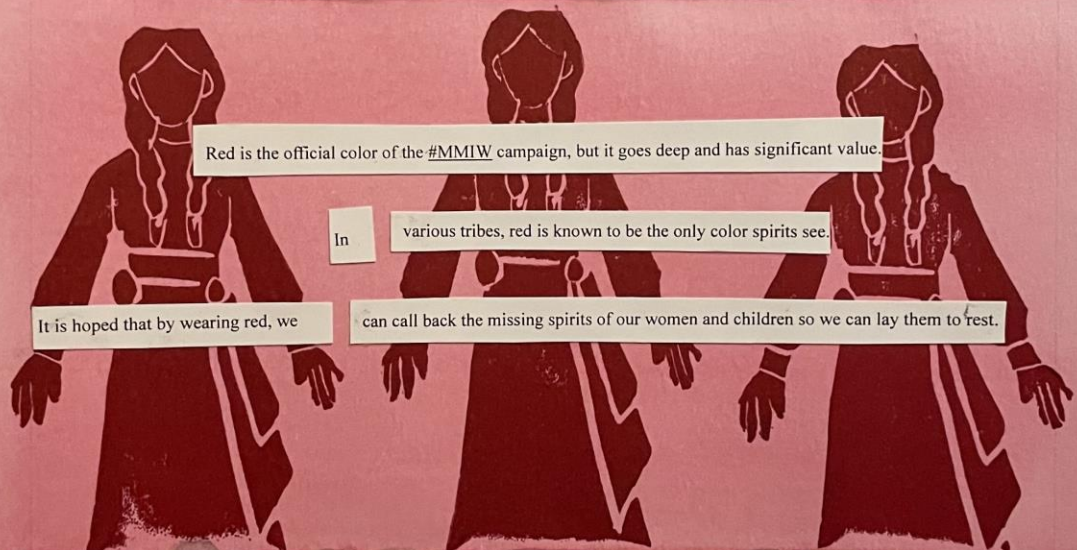


Red is the official color of the #MMIW campaign, but it goes deep and has significant value.

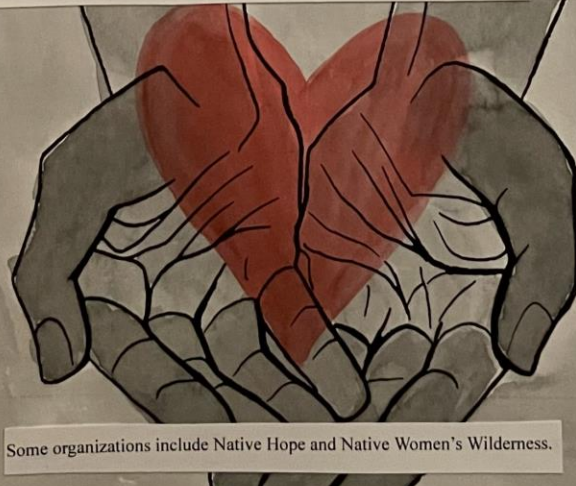
In various tribes, red is known to be the only color spirits see.

It is hoped that by wearing red, we

can call back the missing spirits of our women and children so we can lay them to rest.



Finally, another way one can support the MMIW movement is by donating to MMIW organizations.



Some organizations include Native Hope and Native Women's Wilderness.

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