

Edmonton 2 Spirit Society (E2S)

Brief: Implementing A Red Dress Alert in Canada

Including the 2SLGBTQIA+ population

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4-11-2024

Introduction

This brief provides recommendations on implementing an effective Red Dress Alert System in Canada, based on engagement feedback from the Edmonton 2 Spirit Society (E2S) and their community members. The recommendations address the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.

Inclusivity

Inclusive language is crucial in addressing the MMIWG2S+ crisis. The Red Dress Alert System's effectiveness hinges on its capacity to represent all affected groups. Current terminology, such as "MMIWG Secretariat," fails to consistently recognize 2SLGBTQQIA+ individuals, reinforcing lateral violence, leading to feelings of exclusion. This subtle erasure through lack of acknowledgement perpetuates lateral violence. As one Two-Spirit advocate noted, "we are constantly told that we do not have value."

To foster inclusivity, "Red Dress Alert" needs re-evaluation. 'Red' signifies sacred Indigenous identity without gender assumptions. 'Dress' promotes bias by excluding those not identifying with feminine symbolism. The goal is terminology encompassing the full spectrum of MMIWG2S+ identities, resonating with all impacted families and communities. Full inclusivity requires embracing diversity in identity, culture, and community at all levels. Only through intentional, accurate language and engagement can solutions serve all affected.

Data Representation

To make the Alert System representative, it is essential to integrate data on violence against women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ populations. Presently, the focus is on cisgender women and girls, overlooking 2SLGBTQQIA+ experiences. The Ristock study¹ revealed 68% of Two-Spirit individuals face intimate partner violence – alarming data absent from engagement materials. Excluding this data hides the true scope of the crisis and symbolically excludes, exacerbating marginalization and lateral violence.

Accurate, detailed data on 2SLGBTQQIA+ experiences with violence are crucial for portraying the crisis authentically and devising effective solutions. Such data should guide policy and tailor support for the Indigenous 2SLGBTQQIA+ community, moving past tokenism to address their specific challenges and systemic violence.

Engagement

An inclusive, nuanced engagement strategy is vital for an effective Alert System, avoiding a pan-Indigenous approach that risks sidelining distinct groups. Capturing insights from reserves, rural and urban areas is essential to grasp the unique challenges Indigenous peoples face. True representation requires engagement that reflects this diversity.

¹ Ristock, J. (2019). *Impacts of colonization on Indigenous Two-Spirit/LGBTQ Canadians' experiences of migration, mobility, and relationship violence* - Janice Ristock, Art Zoccole, Lisa Passante, Jonathon Potskin, 2019. Sexualities.

Urgent engagement with Indigenous 2SLGBTQQIA+ individuals is crucial to ensure the Alert System is sensitive to sexuality and gender diversity. Effective service to all community members hinges on their meaningful involvement. Future progress requires active efforts to include those once marginalized, making room for 2SLGBTQQIA+ voices while shaping relevant solutions. By standing together to capture overlooked truths, we can address the crisis suitably.

System Design

The Alert System needs to be inherently inclusive, considering every group in its decisions and actions. It should allow quick, efficient, and effective signal alerts for a community's missing members. Criteria must be clear, inclusive, and culturally sensitive. Information sharing requires a delicate balance – engaging the public while respecting privacy and autonomy. The process must balance urgent action with consent and dignity.

The Alert System must proactively address funding shortages and coordination issues to remain resilient and sustainable. It should operate free from restrictive external protocols. The Alert System should prioritize inclusivity and autonomy, representing all missing individuals without exception. It needs to empower Indigenous groups to independently activate support, ensuring inclusivity and self-determination to give equal voice to every missing loved one.

Relationship Building

Effective collaboration between law enforcement and Indigenous communities is essential for success. Addressing systemic racism and internal issues is key to mending historical distrust. Frequent jurisdictional clashes hamper search efforts, due to poor communication. Indigenous missing Indigenous persons reports often face neglect or bias, resulting in inadequate responses and downplayed risks.

Rebuilding trust after intergenerational trauma is challenging. The Alert System offers Indigenous leadership to show accountability and responsible resource allocation in missing persons cases. Sustaining trust demands continuous, genuine collaboration focused on protecting the vulnerable.

Tackling discrimination and violence requires partnerships rooted in mutual respect and common goals. Collaborating with Indigenous leaders on culturally sensitive responses is crucial for systemic change. Trust-building depends on consistent, clear communication and collective action for change.

Conclusion

An Alert System that uses inclusive language, gathers data effectively, engages with, and designed alongside Indigenous communities can truly serve all missing Indigenous persons. It must incorporate consent, self-determination, and respect for the varied identities and experiences within these communities.

Edmonton 2 Spirit Society (E2S)

E2S supports Edmonton's Two-Spirit community with education, resources, and advocacy, fostering acceptance across Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups. It organizes events and workshops to raise awareness of Two-Spirit identities and collaborates with partners to tackle discrimination and promote health and social equality.

Recommendations

- **Recommendation 1:** That the government commit to utilizing fully inclusive language across all government communications, policies, programs, roles, names, and services in relation to Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit (MMIWG2S+) individuals.
- **Recommendation 2:** That the government include data on violence encompassing Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ populations to ensure complete understanding of the issues affecting MMIWG2S+ communities.
- **Recommendation 3:** That the government adopt a targeted engagement strategy from diverse Indigenous environments, regions, and jurisdictions, including 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples.
- **Recommendation 4:** That the government create an Alert System led by Indigenous communities that is inclusive, consensual, and self-determined, prioritizing community reporting and cultural sensitivities.
- **Recommendation 5:** That the government allocate funds to overcome coordination challenges in creating an inclusive, consent-based Alert System that empowers Indigenous-led responses and honors cultural nuances.
- **Recommendation 6:** That the government commit to rebuilding trusting relationships with Indigenous Peoples through accountable partnerships focused on culturally sensitive collaboration, communication, and trust-building.