



Summary

“Study for Red Dress Alert”

Submitted by: Iskwewuk E-wichiwitochik (Women Walking Together) To FEWO Status of Women of Canada

The need for Study for the Red Dress Alert is coming to you in a time of severe crisis and state of genocide as was shared at the Final Report ceremony in June 2019 in Gatineau Quebec attended by many Families of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls 2S+.

The need for a National Alert delivery is at an all time high, as we have seen in the Human Rights Watch Reports for BC and SK on police abuse allegations stated in 2017 that something needs to be done and very quickly.

Not only do we need a Red Dress Alert mechanism and perhaps modeled after the Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq but we need federal, provincial, rural and First Nations Inuit and Metis core funding to care and deliver the Alert System that is badly needed in Canada.

Please accept our Brief from Iskwewuk E-wichiwitochik (Women Walking Together in the City of Saskatoon, in Treaty Six and Homeland of the Metis.



**Iskwewuk E-wichiwitochik (Women Walking Together), Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
“Study for Red Dress Alert 2024”**

**Key topics for the Study Related to Implementation of Red Dress Alert, 2024
Canadian Federal Standing Committee on the Status of Women**

<https://ourcommons.ca/Committees/en/FEWO>

Tuesday, March 19, 2024 Meeting 100

Thursday, March 21, 2024 Meeting 101

Tuesday, April 9, 2024 Meeting 102

Wednesday, April 9, 2024 Meeting 103

Brief from Iskwewuk E-wichiwitochik, Wednesday, April 10, 2024

During December 2020 and January 2021, we at Iskwewuk E-wichiwitochik, an advisory body to the City of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, invited the public to submit their interests from consultants to establish focus with the City of Saskatoon, the Advisory, and general citizens for this City on the Calls for Justice MMIWG2S 2 Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgendered, Queer, Questioning, Intersexed. From this preparation we distilled key priorities for the implementation of a Red Dress Alert.:

- culturally-competent and safe
- trauma-informed
- holistic in its approach to the missing and their families
- inclusive in relation to Indigenous identity and sexual identity and expression?
- community-driven

- citizen-centred
- flexible
- responsive
- empowering

Background

The present brief writers are Darlene R. Okemaysim-Sicotte (Beardy's and Okemasis First Nation, Non-Legal Advocate Party with Standing with the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG), and Co-Chair Iskwewuk E-wichiwitochik (IE), and Dr. Susan Gingell (Euro-Canadian ally and 10-year IE member, Professor Emerita, USask).

Iskwewuk E-wichiwitochik is a Saskatoon-based, concerned citizens group founded in 2006 to work on the issue of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG). During the National Inquiry into MMIWG, we expanded our focus to include Two Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgendered, Queer, Questioning, Intersexed, and Asexual+ people (2SLGBTQQA+). We concentrate primarily on supporting families of MMIWG2S+ and in this context make a priority of being a safe and supportive partner to 2SLGBTQQA+ people, an important national legal imperative for over 1,800 families of the MMIWG2S+. We serve as advisors on related issues to the City of Saskatoon and the Saskatoon Police Service. (For further information, see appendix A.

IE participated in the 9-city schedule of 2017 hearings of the National Inquiry (2016-2019) (, which included Saskatoon . Our work as Parties with Standing, along with Saskatchewan Community Leads members the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN) Women's Commission, Saskatchewan Aboriginal Women's Circle Corporation (SAWCC), Regina Treaty Status Indian Services (RTSIS), Family Liaison (SK Government), Prince Albert Grand Council Women's Commission, included spending many hours and meetings to reassure over 150 Saskatchewan families before their Family Hearings, held November, 2017 in our city. Saskatoon was selected as the site of one of nine Family Hearings in the country because of the solid history over 12 years of awareness, supports, memorials, and compassion given to the experience of MMIWG2S+ people and families.

To date over 100 CBOs and NGO’s have participated in the annual January to June Walks for Reconciliation Saskatoon to present day, this interconnectedness TRC and MMIWG 2SLGBTQQI

At the time of the Inquiry, the Saskatoon office was a challenge to engage and plan with, share process, and accept into the overall delivery of Inquiry needs and recommendations. The great opportunity for our City to contribute to efficaciously addressing the issue of MMIWG2S, process, our desire for a template or methodology to enable building on the Final Report and “Calls for Justice” was frustrated. That building continues to be a great opportunity stalled while we need a system like the Red Dress Alert to enable coping with the post-Inquiry and what families and this issue required and continue to require.

This process of advocacy and consulting is an extremely sensitive topic, and while the Inquiry provided many services, including family Health Care advocacy during the Inquiry and commemorations monies, having the right advocates and consultants is very important to the families, stakeholders, and the answering of the Calls for Justice in the City of Saskatoon. It requires stamina, trust, engagement, credibility, and follow-through at all stages of planning and instituting the Red Dress Alert system s as the City of Saskatoon and stakeholders will expect and can under the right circumstances achieve.

	Necessities for Engaging the Saskatoon Community of MMIWG2S+ Families in Saskatoon
Community Driven	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all City Indigenous stakeholders meet to discuss study • wide-reaching impact across the process, support trauma of lived experience during discussion/implementation
Solutions and recommendation offered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • set out what the Advocacy and Consultants would want to see from partners as buy-in reduce failed SPS contacts and follow-up
	City Stakeholders’ Behaviour and Partner Relationships

Responsive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • law-informed/educated are often the hardest to shift in behaviour, hence the questioning, the trouble coping with implementation the “Calls for Justice” re: MMIWG2S+ • need for City Transit, Fire and Rescue, SPS, Shelters team to be accepted as responsible for role as Emergency Resilience Managers similar to the Union of Nova Scotia Mi’kmaq • wide-reaching positive impact on stakeholders, Advisory, City of Saskatoon, and over-all community of families of MMIWG 2S • essential services as human rights provided to all citizens regardless of walk of life
Solutions and recommendation offered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • preliminary practice of Everbridge platform (has its own tailoring system to fit needs of the territory or region) • ingrain with families the behaviours we wish to see with Stakeholders of Red Dress Alert System, reassure the commitment is there to give credibility to our plans for implementing Calls for Justice in the City of Saskatoon
Trauma-Informed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • diplomatic ownership requires trauma-informed glossaries, terminology, methodology, combined with Indigenous ways of tracking and sensitivity required when approached by Families of MMIWG/MMIP/2SLGBTQQI • avoid terms like high-risk lifestyle, run-aways, 60’s scoopers, homelessness, poverty-stricken
Solutions and recommendation offered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • avoiding red-tape • eliminate the need for say-so from authorities • target Saskatoon Tribal Council bands with alert • ability to add subscribers at any time • screen shot alerts and postings on social media • post to communities its is primarily meant for

ALERTS with Iskwewuk Ewichiwitochik community in Saskatoon since September 2005: have entailed sending hundreds of texts about a missing person, calls to community member cell phones, Indigenous clearing house email list, social media posts, postering/walks/vigils, contacts and interviews with journalists to notify wider audience. We also have been able to call some land-lines throughout the city. When the Saskatoon Police Service asked ed Saskatoon citizens for help on a Missing Persons news release (1-3 a week) there are immediate shares and dissemination of information about the missing person being looked for.

CRITERIA for Issuing a Red Dress Alert:

- 1) Alert applies to any Indigenous women, girl, 2S+ person, or child of any age reported missing to community stakeholders or authorities
- 2) Operating assumption that the Indigenous woman, girl, 2S+ person, or child has been abducted
- 3) Operating assumption that such an Indigenous person is in grave danger
- 4) Any available information that may help locate the missing Indigenous person and/or the abductor (with description of Indigenous woman or girl or child, the suspect, or the vehicle driven by the suspected abductor) provided
- 5) Alert be urgently issued as soon as possible after from the moment of the presumed abduction or reported disappearance
- 6) Alert distributed to all Emergency Preparedness Agencies

Information flow could be Nationwide → Province → Rural Municipality/Town /City → First Nation/Metis Local

Or

Metis Local/First Nation → Rural Municipality/Town/City → Province → Nationwide

Our aspirations for the alert system align with the National Public Radio report

“Washington is the first state to create an alert system for missing indigenous people”

(March 31, 2022) by the Associated Press. The report indicates “the alert system will help mitigate some problems surrounding investigations of missing Indigenous people by allowing better communications between tribal, local and state law enforcement and creating a way for law enforcement to flag such cases for other agencies. The law also expands the definition of missing endangered person” to include Indigenous people, as well as children and vulnerable adults with disabilities or memory or cognitive issues....

Efforts included funding for better resources for tribal police to the creation of new databases specifically targeting missing tribal members.”

Think we can leave out all the minutes, etc., below.

Appendix

Iskwewuk E-wichiwitochik (Women Walking Together)

Iskwewuk E-wichiwitochik (Women Walking Together) is a network of concerned citizens – activists, academics, grass roots people and organizations from the province of Saskatchewan—who first came together in 2005, out of concern for the lack of attention given to cases of missing Aboriginal women in Saskatchewan and Canada.

The group focuses its efforts on raising awareness of systemic violence against women through education and political action. They remain committed to the broader goal of social justice and peace, by providing moral and direct support to families of missing Indigenous women, girls, and Two Spirit LGBTQQIA+ people, collaborating with organizations in the prevention of violence against women, girls, and Two Spirit LGBTQQIA+ people, and paying tribute to missing individuals. Simultaneously, *Iskwewuk E-wichiwitochik* has continued to focus efforts on enhancing decision-making, safety skills for Indigenous women, girls, and Two Spirit LGBTQQIA+ people, and communities through anti-violence education and awareness.

Iskwewuk E-wichiwitochik has maintained a visible presence in the community by organizing awareness walks, vigils, and various activities that pertain to social justice and peace. The group operates via a collective leadership, and numerous volunteer hours are contributed on a yearly basis to raise the awareness about missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and Two Spirit LGBTQQIA+ people, and to bring honour and remembrance to them and their family members. ***The group, which was formed in October 2005, has no office and receives no government funding.***

Core Events:

- National Vigil Annual “Sisters in Spirit” Oct 4th
- International Human Rights Day December 10th
- International Women’s Day March 8th
- MMIWG 2S+ National Action February 14th
- Red Dress Day May 5th

Presentations / participation throughout the years:

- Non-Legal-Advocate: Party With Standing, National Inquiry on MMIWG2S 2016-2019
- Japanese Canadians Human Rights 2024, MOMENTUM USask, 2024, INDST 398 FNUC 2024
- Red Dress USask 2023, Wanuskewin H Park 2023, Red Dress online 2023
- SARScene 2021, TRC & Reconciliation Zoom national conference
- Missing Persons Week Saskatchewan Sept/May (annual)
- Wicihitowin Conference Plenary Speaker, MMIWG2S Sept 2019
- Social Justice Forum, Feb. 14th March, Alex Neve Mar.10th, Think Indigenous Conf U of S, Voices (VOS), so far 2015 more to come conferences, walks, publication
- WWOS Exhibit S’toon (18 actions), RedDress Project, Anglican Women Conf - all 2014
- FSIN Youth Conference (November 2013)
- Sisters in Spirit & Families of Sisters in Spirit Vigils, Ottawa, 2013 (annual)
- North American Indigenous Studies Association conference 2013
- Knights of Columbus, Inner City Ministry, Anglican Church
- Our Way Conference University of Saskatchewan
- Oskayak Grade 12 Classroom(s)
- Amnesty International “Write for Rights” Chapter 33
- Awasis Conference
- Healing our Spirit Worldwide Conference, Hawaii, 2010
- International Conference on Missing Women, Regina, 2008

Walks/Vigils:

- Saskatoon Sisters in Spirit Vigils 2006-2023
- NWAC Sisters in Spirit Vigil, Ottawa 2013
- Families of Sisters in Spirit Vigil, Ottawa, 2013
- 2nd Annual Honouring our Sisters Run/Walk at Wanuskewin Powwow 2014-2015
- Tears for Justice, Saskatoon 2013
- Daleen Bosse-Muskego Memorial Runs
- Karina Bethann Wolfe Walks
- Walk for Justice, Saskatoon, 2008-2014
- Walk for Justice, Ottawa 2008
- PAGC WalksAnd many more

Awards:

- Queen Elizabeth II Platinum medals, Spring 2023
 - *Darlene R. Okemaysim-Sicotte and Myrna LaPlante*
- “Strength of Our Women Awards 2016” Leadership & Advocacy Award
Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations, Saskatoon, SK September, 2016
 - *Darlene R. Okemaysim-Sicotte and Myrna LaPlante*
- “Lady Justice” Award from Elizabeth Fry Society, SK, May 2015
 - *Darlene R. Okemaysim-Sicotte*
- SAPA Newsmaker of the Year, Saskatoon, IE June 2015
- Every Day Political Citizen national finalist, Fall 2013, juror Fall 2015
 - *Darlene R. Okemaysim-Sicotte*
- Joanna Miller Peace Award, Saskatoon, IE September 2013
- Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee medals, January 2013
 - *Myrna LaPlante and Darlene R. Okemaysim-Sicotte*
- Living in Harmony Award, Saskatoon, IE March 2008

Core Iskwewuk Group & Part-Time Membership:

Myrna LaPlante, *Keeper of the Circle/Family*

Darlene R. Okemaysim-Sicotte, *Keeper of the Circle/Family*

Faith Bosse, *Keeper of the Youth*

Helen Smith McIntyre, *IE Member*

Lorraine Pura, *IE Member*

Rachel Fiddler, *IE Member*

Susan Gingell, *IE Member*

Charlotte Jennings, *IE Member*

Marlee Ritchee, *IE Member*

Kathie Pruden Nansel, *IE Member*

Angie Bear, *IE Friend*

Dorthea Swiftwolfe, *IE Friend*

Carol Wolfe, *IE Family*

Brian Gallagher, *IE Family*

Kristin Clarke, *IE Family*

Sheila Ledoux, *IE Family*

Rita Bouvier, *IE Friend*

Lillian Dyck, *IE Friend*

Chris Sicotte, *IE Friend*

Regina & Carson Poitras, *IE Family*

Krista Fox, *IE Family*

Friends:

Women Walking Together would like to acknowledge past group members and current friends who have helped along the way: Patti Tait, Peggy Daniels, Andrea Ledding, Colleen Thomas, Dr. Rose Roberts, Dr. Priscilla Settee, Sue Delanoy, Glenda Abbott, Monica Goulet, former FSIN Vice Chief Heather Bear, Robert Doucette, Shannon Loutitt, Leah Bitternose, SAWCC, SIMFC, Oskayak High School, late Christine Smillie, the late Dr. Patricia Monture, late Mary Ann Assailly, late Carol Thomas, and many more.

Facebook:

Iskwewuk E-wichiwitochik (Women Walking Together) has a group page; people are free to join and continue raising awareness and provide supports and encouragement to the families of the missing and murdered.