



To the Standing Committee on the Status of Women:

Re: Submission on Implementing a Red Dress Alert System in Canada

It is with great urgency that we call Canada to implement the Red Dress Alert – a distinct emergency alert system for missing Indigenous women, girls, trans, and two-spirit. This submission discusses **(1)** the importance of implementing the Red Dress Alert, and **(2)** the Native Women's Resource Centre of Toronto's specific recommendations for implementation.

Indigenous women continue to go missing at markedly disproportionate rates. An early alert system would provide a timely notification to the public. This would allow information, tips, and evidence to be collected in the critical period immediately following an Indigenous women's disappearance. The implementation of a timely alert system would allow more of our women to return home alive.

Status quo has failed to protect the safety and wellbeing of Indigenous women. Indigenous women's realities are frequently an afterthought, and all too often are ignored altogether. In response to the lack of attention that Indigenous women receive when they disappear, the Native Women's Resource Centre of Toronto launched "4,000 Cover Stories" – an initiative honouring the stories of 4,000 of our relatives who were taken from us – each of whom deserved a cover story in the paper, but did not receive the media reporting and public attention that their disappearance or death warranted. In 2022, the Native Women's Resource Centre delivered a copy of these 4,000 Cover Stories to Prime Minister Trudeau's personal residence in Ottawa.

The Red Dress Alert would address this critical failure in reporting and public attention. It is an overdue response to the ongoing crisis of targeted violence towards Indigenous women in Canada – which has, and continues to be, met with ignorance and complacency. This is a national emergency which warrants a tailored alert system to heighten public attention to these cases and improve the response to Indigenous women who continue to disappear.

Indigenous women carry sacred roles and responsibilities in our families, communities, and nations, including as mothers, aunties, sisters, daughters, and grandmothers. Indigenous women are matriarchs. They are the carriers of our cultures, water protectors, and land defenders. Each death or disappearance of an Indigenous women represents an unquantifiable loss to our families and communities that can never be replaced. Indigenous communities and nations



need Indigenous women to be safe and healthy to reach our full potential, and build our collective future.

The Native Women's Resource Centre calls on Canada to implement the following four recommendations:

1. Create a Red Dress Alert to notify the public when an Indigenous woman goes missing that is Indigenous led.
2. Implement a Red Dress Alert system which includes the same protocols as the Amber Alert system, including but not limited to:
 - a. sending text messages with unique sound alarms to the public when an Indigenous woman is missing – these messages should be sent to the region where the Indigenous woman is believed to be, and the region should extend across provincial borders.
 - b. announcing the alert on public radio and television networks.
3. Establish an advisory and oversight body of the Red Dress Alert, comprised of representatives from Indigenous women's agencies to create, implement and advise on its creation, execution and evaluation.
4. Invest in Indigenous women's agencies to:
 - a. address the systemic and targeted violence of Indigenous women; and
 - b. support Indigenous women and families to reach their individual and collective potential.
 - c. Create their own response to addressing MMIWG

The Native Women's Resource Centre would be pleased to work with Canada on advancing the Red Dress Alert.

Miigwetch,

Native Women Resource Centre of Toronto

Board of Directors

Executive Director

