



# **NATIONAL FAMILY AND SURVIVORS CIRCLE**

*Nothing About Us, Without Us*

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**Submission to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women Study on Implementing a Red Dress Alert in Canada**

**April 11, 2024**

The systemic violence and disappearances of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals are grave issues that prevent justice and equity in Canada, demanding immediate, united action from governments and all Canadians to forge a future where every person is safe, respected, and valued. This national crisis not only highlights a stark indifference in our societal and governmental structures but also calls for urgent, transformative action. Among the proposed solutions, the Red Dress Alert stands out as a beacon of hope and action. This submission is to highlight the necessity of a national Red Dress Alert, propose strategies to avoid bureaucratic delays, and suggest changes for enhanced collaboration among policing agencies, all within the framework of action, safety, security, and human rights.

### **National Imperative for the Red Dress Alert**

The implementation of the Red Dress Alert on a national scale is paramount. The pervasiveness of violence against Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse individuals spans the entire country, making a nationwide Red Dress Alert system essential for a cohesive and effective response. A national framework ensures a standardized approach, facilitating swift action and mobilization of resources regardless of where individuals live. It underscores the collective responsibility of all Canadians to protect the most vulnerable, reinforcing Canadians values and commitments to human rights and legal obligations that the dignity and safety of Indigenous women, girls, and gender diverse people are of national concern. Moreover, a unified system enhances the efficiency of search and rescue operations, allowing for real-time information sharing and collaboration, crucial in the critical first hours following a disappearance.

### **Streamlining Processes to Overcome Bureaucracy**

The effectiveness of the Red Dress Alert hinges on its ability to navigate and overcome potential bureaucratic impediments. Streamlining processes through clear protocols, direct communication channels, and the integration of technology can significantly reduce response times. Automation of certain procedures and the establishment of a centralized information and resource hub can facilitate immediate action. By bringing Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people, along with frontline organizations and those families and survivors directly impacted, into leadership roles within the alert system, we ensure that decisions and actions are deeply informed by the expertise and real-life experiences of those who understand the crisis best. This approach underlines the critical importance of inclusion, recognizing their invaluable contributions to shaping a system that truly addresses their needs and perspectives.

### **Fostering Collaboration Among Policing Agencies**

To ensure the Red Dress Alert's success, it's vital to not only enhance collaboration among policing agencies but also to confront and address systemic and structural racism within these organizations. This requires a commitment to accountability and the active involvement of Indigenous women, girls, gender-diverse people, and impacted families and survivors, in co-developing solutions.

Establishing shared databases, communication platforms, and engaging in joint training programs that focus on cultural sensitivity and the unique challenges Indigenous women, girls, gender-diverse people, and impacted families and survivors face are critical. Additionally, creating inter-agency task forces that include Indigenous women, girls, gender-diverse people, and impacted families and survivors can facilitate ongoing dialogue, strategy development, and joint action. This approach aims to foster a partnership that respects and incorporates Indigenous perspectives, ensuring that responses to disappearances are both coordinated and culturally informed, thus addressing the root causes of these issues.

### **Action-Oriented Approach to Uphold Human Rights**

At the core of the Red Dress Alert initiative is a commitment to action and long-term sustainable funding, prioritizing the safety, security, and human rights of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals. This commitment transcends policy proposals, symbolizing a collective resolve to address and rectify historical injustices and systemic and structural failures. The Red Dress Alert, envisioned as a dynamic and responsive system, aims not only to react to crises but to prevent them through education, awareness, and the promotion of a culture of respect and equality.

The launch of the Red Dress Alert as a national endeavor is more than just a policy initiative; it's a critical lifeline for those at risk of being murdered or experiencing violence. This undertaking demands streamlined processes for rapid action, intensified cooperation among policing agencies, and a profound dedication to the human rights of the most at-risk members in Canadian society. It highlights the serious risks that Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse individuals navigate daily, putting their safety, dignity, and lives at stake. This moment calls for every tier of government, all law enforcement entities, and the entire fabric of Canadian society to respond with a rights-based approach, ensuring unwavering accountability. Our determination and unity are essential, as we commit to a course of action that ensures no one is left behind, transforming this initiative into a beacon of hope and safety for those who need it most.

In conclusion, the Red Dress Alert stands as an urgent imperative for immediate government action, symbolizing a commitment to confront and dismantle the systemic injustices facing Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse individuals. It demands not just policy change but accountability at all levels of government, calling for a united front to turn promises into a reality of safety and justice for Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse individuals now.

### **About the National Family and Survivors Circle Inc.**

The National Family and Survivors Circle Inc., a non-profit organization incorporated in April 2023, led by Indigenous women and gender-diverse individuals who are impacted family members of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two Spirit people (MMIWG2S+), and survivors of gender- and race-based violence.