



ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA CHIEFS

“The Standing Committee on the Status of Women Committee Invites the Public to Submit Written Briefs for Its Study on Implementing a Red Dress Alert in Canada”

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Standing Committee on the Status
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Canada

Submitted By:

Grand Chief Cathy Merrick
Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs

Introduction

In 1988, Manitoba First Nations established the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) to facilitate political action and technical work on common issues. Representing 62 of the 63 First Nation communities in Manitoba, the AMC serves as a platform for discussion, coordination, and consensus-building, integrating both political and technical institutions.

Under the guidance of the Grand Chief and the Executive Council of Chiefs, the AMC focuses on devising collective political strategies and mechanisms for coordinated action by First Nations and their organizations. Its mandate includes promoting, preserving, and projecting Aboriginal and Treaty rights, strengthening and restoring the foundations of First Nations cultures and societies, and affirming the rights of self-determination and self-government.

Throughout its history, the AMC has been a vocal advocate for missing or murdered Indigenous women and girls. Initiatives have ranged from resolutions calling for inquiries and advocacy for long-term funding for support services to community mobilization activities and the creation of the Manitoba coalition. Notably, the AMC played a pivotal role in advocating for the inclusion of child welfare issues in the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and calling for the development and implementation of a missing persons alert system.

Following the release of the National Inquiry's final report, the AMC continued its efforts by making recommendations and undertaking actions to address the Calls-to-Justice identified in the report. This includes coordinating regional summits and developing a long-term plan to support First Nations governments and self-determination over the next decade.

Through its ongoing advocacy and proactive measures, the AMC remains dedicated to advancing the rights and well-being of Indigenous women, girls, and communities in Manitoba, striving for justice, empowerment, and self-determination.

In practical terms, the implementation of a Red Dress Alert in Manitoba faces significant challenges rooted in infrastructure limitations, particularly in remote First Nations. Many of these First Nations lack reliable internet connectivity, hindering the dissemination of alerts and communication efforts. Additionally, geographical isolation compounds these issues, as some northern First Nations are situated in areas with limited access to transportation and resources.

Language barriers further exacerbate the challenges, with diverse populations in Manitoba requiring alerts and information to be communicated in multiple languages to ensure accessibility and comprehension. These barriers are not exclusive to northern First Nations

but are also present in southern First Nations in Manitoba, where there is a lack of adequate policing, security, and support systems tailored to address violence against First Nation women, girls, and two-spirit individuals.

To effectively address these challenges and ensure the success of a Red Dress Alert system in Manitoba, it is imperative that the initiative is driven and delivered by First Nation people, for First Nation people. This entails empowering First Nations leaders with legislative authority to oversee and execute alerts, administer necessary mechanisms such as policing and special operations units dedicated to searching for missing individuals, and, in extreme circumstances, granting power of attorney to extend search efforts beyond cold cases.

Furthermore, collaboration with federal and provincial governments is crucial to address infrastructure deficiencies, improve internet connectivity, and allocate resources to support the implementation and sustainability of the Red Dress Alert system. Culturally sensitive approaches must be integrated into all aspects of the alert system, from development to execution, to ensure that the unique needs and perspectives of First Nation are respected and prioritized.

By addressing these challenges and empowering First Nation leadership, a Red Dress Alert system in Manitoba can effectively respond to instances of missing persons within First Nation, uphold the safety and well-being of individuals, and work towards justice and accountability for victims and their families.

A First Nation Missing Persons Alert System

A First Nation approach to missing persons alerts in Manitoba, as advocated by the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs First Nation Women's Council, prioritizes the needs, values, and perspectives of First Nations. Here are key aspects of this approach:

1. **Community Involvement and Input:** Decision-making, policies, and initiatives regarding missing persons alerts are guided by the input and involvement of First Nation families and First Nation Chiefs. This ensures that programs and services align with the cultural and familial contexts as well as the governance of First Nations.
2. **Cultural Sensitivity:** Staff and policing involved in the alert system must demonstrate awareness, respect, and consideration for the cultural beliefs, traditions, and practices of First Nations. The alert system honors the diversity of the 62 First Nation in Manitoba.

3. **Trauma-Informed Approach:** Recognizing the widespread impact of trauma on individuals, the alert system creates a safe and supportive environment that understands and responds to the effects of trauma. It promotes healing and resilience among those impacted by missing persons cases.
4. **Inclusivity:** The alert system actively supports and embraces individuals of all gender identities, including those who identify as non-binary, ensuring inclusivity within its framework.
5. **Health and Wellness:** Prioritizing a comprehensive approach to health and wellness, the alert system addresses the holistic well-being of families impacted by missing loved ones. This includes providing support for physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health.
6. **Advocacy for Social Justice:** The alert system addresses social justice issues, upholds the rights of First Nation individuals, and promotes policies that benefit families impacted by missing persons cases. It advocates for systemic changes to address underlying issues contributing to violence and injustice.
7. **Education, Training, and Knowledge Transfer:** The alert system provides educational opportunities, training programs, and mechanisms for knowledge transfer within First Nations. This includes preserving and passing on traditional knowledge, skills, and cultural practices related to safety, awareness, and education.
8. **Sustainable Solutions:** The alert system aims to implement sustainable solutions that meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This includes environmentally sustainable practices and economically and socially viable solutions that contribute to long-term community well-being.

By incorporating these principles into the development and implementation of missing persons alerts, the First Nation approach in Manitoba seeks to empower Nations, promote healing, and ensure the safety and well-being of all individuals, especially First Nation women, girls, and two-spirit individuals.