



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

# **IMPLEMENTING A RED DRESS ALERT IN CANADA**

**Report of the Standing Committee on the Status  
of Women**

**Shelby Kramp-Neuman, Chair**

**SEPTEMBER 2024  
44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION**

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**Shelby Kramp-Neuman  
Chair**

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## **NOTICE TO READER**

### **Reports from committees presented to the House of Commons**

Presenting a report to the House is the way a committee makes public its findings and recommendations on a particular topic. Substantive reports on a subject-matter study usually contain a synopsis of the testimony heard, the recommendations made by the committee, as well as the reasons for those recommendations.

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# **THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

has the honour to present its

## **TWELFTH REPORT**

Pursuant to its mandate under Standing Order 108(2), the committee has studied Red Dress Alert and has agreed to report the following:





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## SUMMARY

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In May 2023, the House of Commons declared that the continued loss of Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit and gender diverse people is a Canada-wide emergency and called on the government to provide an “immediate and substantial investment, including in a Red Dress Alert System, to help alert the public when an Indigenous woman, girl or two-spirit person goes missing.” Shortly thereafter, the process to develop and implement a Red Dress Alert for missing Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit and gender diverse people was launched.

The House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women (the Committee) decided to conduct a study on the most effective and efficient manner to operate, administer, and control a Red Dress Alert system in Canada, to contribute to this important work. The Committee received testimony and written submissions from families and survivors, community-level and national organizations, as well as representatives from the federal government. In its report, the Committee describes existing federal initiatives, including ongoing consultations and work on implementing a Red Dress Alert, related to addressing the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous women, girls (MMIWG) and Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, Asexual and/or gender diverse or non-binary (2SLGBTQQIA+) people. In addition, some existing public alerting systems in Canada are described.

The report provides an overview of the key considerations identified for implementing a Red Dress Alert that meet the needs of Indigenous individuals, families and communities across Canada, including for those on and off-reserve and in urban and rural or remote settings. These considerations include: inclusivity in the development process; ensuring ongoing consultation and co-development with Indigenous partners; jurisdictional challenges; oversight and alert management, including the role of police in a Red Dress Alert; access to broadband and connectivity; privacy and safety for women fleeing violence; languages of Red Dress Alerts; and the provision of wraparound, culturally sensitive and trauma-informed support services.

The Committee provides 17 recommendations to the federal government, with the goal of ensuring that the implementation of a Red Dress Alert is effective, Indigenous-led, and meets the needs of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, their families and their communities across Canada.



# LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

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*As a result of their deliberations committees may make recommendations which they include in their reports for the consideration of the House of Commons or the Government. Recommendations related to this study are listed below.*

*The first 16 recommendations must be implemented in full compliance with all relevant rights instruments, as affirmed in Calls for Justice 1.2, which uphold the right of self-determination and self-governance of Indigenous Peoples, in collaboration and consultation with provinces and territories, and under the direction and leadership of Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit and gender diverse people.*

## **Recommendation 1**

**That the Government of Canada support the success and effectiveness of a Red Dress Alert in Canada by accelerating work in collaboration and consultation with provinces, territories and Indigenous Peoples. .... 44**

## **Recommendation 2**

**That the Government of Canada implement all the Calls for Justice contained in *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*, in particular the Calls for Justice that would support the implementation of a Red Dress Alert, including but not limited to: 3.3 and 3.5 (related to health and wellness services); 5.5 and 5.7 (related to justice, police and emergency services, including broadband access); and 7.1 (related to Indigenous-led health and wellness service provision)..... 44**

## **Recommendation 3**

**That the Government of Canada continue to invest in the ongoing co-development of a Red Dress Alert, through inclusive consultations with First Nations, Inuit and Métis led by Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit and gender diverse people living on and off reserve, in urban, rural and remote communities; and that these consultations examine key considerations for an effective Red Dress Alert, including but not limited to: alert oversight and management; criteria for issuing alerts; the role of police in the alert system; language of alerts; protection of privacy; and the provision of wraparound,**

**culturally appropriate, trauma-informed, community-based supports and services. .... 44**

**Recommendation 4**

**That the Government of Canada respect the calls from Indigenous governments, communities, organizations, families, survivors and other individuals, that the management, oversight and issuance of Red Dress Alerts be led by Indigenous women, girls, Two Spirit and gender diverse people, thereby ensuring respect for cultural heritage and community sensitivities, and be established, in collaboration and consultation with Indigenous Peoples who will guide how the police can support the alert system. .... 44**

**Recommendation 5**

**That the Government of Canada support and fund the creation of a central system led by Indigenous women, girls, Two Spirit and gender diverse people, to coordinate with police, emergency services, women’s shelters and translation services to report missing women, analyze data from applications, provide standardized search training and provide support to the community to immediately begin the search..... 45**

**Recommendation 6**

**That the Government of Canada ensure oversight of a Red Dress Alert system is facilitated by family members, advocates, and existing organizations who are already providing services to Indigenous families and women, girls, Two-Spirit and gender diverse individuals. .... 45**

**Recommendation 7**

**That the Government of Canada, in its implementation of an Red Dress Alert system to notify and ask the public for assistance in finding missing Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit and gender diverse people, ensure that efforts are coordinated across emergency services, police services, victim services, and anti-violence services. .... 45**

**Recommendation 8**

**That the Government of Canada ensure that the procurement process related to the Red Dress Alert system is open, transparent and competitive. .... 45**

### **Recommendation 9**

**That the Government of Canada, at the next Federal-Provincial-Territorial Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Justice and Public Safety, identify ways to improve police forces' understanding of the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit and gender diverse people, and pursuant to Calls for Justice 9.1 to 9.11, develop best practices for responding to Red Dress Alerts and implement concrete measures to improve the relationship between police and Indigenous Peoples across Canada, for example by co-developing with Indigenous Peoples and implementing:**

- **cultural sensitivity and unconscious-bias training, including education on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Two-Spirit and gender diverse people, for police forces and Crown prosecutors, with the goal of enhancing understanding the role of police and the justice system in colonization, as well as the ways in which inter-generational trauma continues to affect Indigenous Peoples, individuals and communities, including the adverse effects on Indigenous Peoples' relationships with police and the justice system today;**
- **Indigenous-led programs and culturally safe supports, to help Indigenous survivors and families navigate the justice system when reporting experiences of violence and/or missing persons, and to improve reporting and data collection for these crimes;**
- **supports for police forces across Canada to establish positions, such as an Indigenous liaison officer or a community response officer who would be responsible for regularly engaging and working with Indigenous communities and people to improve relationships and trust between police forces and the Indigenous communities and people in each police forces' jurisdiction;**
- **measures within the ongoing process of co-development of First Nations Police Services legislation, to ensure that First Nations police forces are recognized as essential services, and as such, are allocated sufficient funding to respond to the needs in their jurisdictions and communities; and**

- measures to address anti-Indigenous racism in the delivery of policing services across Canada and to prevent violence against, including the killing of, Indigenous people during mental health and wellness checks, as well as to ensure that police respond appropriately and promptly to reports of missing Indigenous loved ones. .... 45

**Recommendation 10**

That the Government of Canada support the implementation of a tiered and decentralized system for the Red Dress Alert to ensure that this alert is scalable from local to provincial and territorial and national levels, as needed, and that this alert system takes into consideration the importance of privacy for individuals who may not wish to be found for safety reasons. .... 46

**Recommendation 11**

That the Government of Canada ensure that the Red Dress Alert is effective and accessible in urban, rural, remote and Northern regions, by allocating additional resources to accelerate the development of necessary infrastructure to expand the reach of cellular networks, to support equitable access to communication technologies, including wireless Internet and cellular connectivity, in communities across Canada, and that the Minister of Rural Economic Development and the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry table regular progress reports in this area. .... 47

**Recommendation 12**

That the Government of Canada provide long term and sustainable funding for equitable access to wraparound, culturally appropriate, trauma-informed, and community-based services for survivors, individuals, families and communities affected by the ongoing crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit and gender diverse people. .... 47

**Recommendation 13**

That the Government of Canada develop and implement an awareness campaign on the Red Dress Alert system, which would deepen Canadian society’s understanding of the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit and gender diverse people, intergenerational trauma, and the ongoing effects of colonization on Indigenous Peoples in Canada. .... 47



**Recommendation 14**

**That the Government of Canada provide services to all Indigenous Peoples to support the development of a national missing Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit and gender diverse people database that can be shared throughout Canada..... 47**

**Recommendation 15**

**That the Government of Canada support the creation of a downloadable application created and run by Indigenous Peoples which could be used to search for missing loved ones anywhere in Canada, report sightings and relay information about a missing person. .... 47**

**Recommendation 16**

**That the Government of Canada continue to fund alert systems that are currently in place such as the Unama’ki alert system while a national program is being developed. .... 47**

**Recommendation 17**

**That the Government of Canada provide support consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and other international conventions related to the human rights of Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit and gender diverse people. .... 48**





## IMPLEMENTING A RED DRESS ALERT IN CANADA

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**Warning:** The following report contains reference to experiences of violence against Indigenous Peoples, in particular, Missing and Murdered Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit and gender diverse people in Canada. If you are feeling distressed and in need of support, the following resources are available:

- The National Indian Residential School Crisis Line provides 24-hour crisis support to former Indian Residential School students and their families, at the toll-free number: 1-866-925-4419.
- Individuals impacted by the issue of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) are encouraged to contact the MMIWG Crisis Line at the toll-free number: 1-844-413-6649.
- First Nations, Inuit and Métis people seeking immediate emotional support can contact the Hope for Wellness Help Line at the toll-free number: 1-855-242-3310, or through the online chat at [hopeforwellness.ca](https://hopeforwellness.ca).

### INTRODUCTION

On 2 May 2023, the House of Commons unanimously consented to the motion proposed by Member of Parliament Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre) that provides:

That, given that,

- (i) on October 27, 2022, the House unanimously recognized that what happened in residential schools was genocide,
- (ii) decades of insufficient action from all levels of government have failed to address the effects of this genocide, including the crisis of violence against Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people with the urgency it deserves,
- (iii) families in Winnipeg and throughout the country continue to experience the tragic loss of a loved one to this crisis, the House call on the government to:



- (a) declare the continued loss of Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people a Canada-wide emergency; and
- (b) provide immediate and substantial investment, including in a red dress alert system, to help alert the public when an Indigenous woman, girl or two-spirit person goes missing.

In November 2023, the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women agreed to study the most effective and efficient manner to operate, administer, and control a Red Dress Alert system in Canada. Since then, the Committee has conducted six meetings with expert witnesses, including families and survivors of Missing and Murdered Indigenous women, girls (MMIWG) and Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, Asexual and/or gender diverse or non-binary (2SLGBTQQIA+) people, organizations working in communities affected by the crisis of MMIWG and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, police officers, as well as federal department representatives from Public Safety Canada, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, and the Honourable Gary Anandasangaree, Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations Canada (CIRNAC). The Committee also received 16 written submissions.

The following report presents an overview of the testimony and submissions received by the Committee during its study on implementing a Red Dress Alert in Canada. The report provides a brief overview of MMIWG and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people in Canada, the Calls for Justice of the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, as well as current federal initiatives related to a Red Dress Alert, such as the ongoing public consultations. The report also discusses the current national public alerting system in Canada and community initiatives to implement alerts for missing Indigenous people. It then outlines suggested approaches to implementing a national Red Dress Alert in Canada. The Committee's recommendations to the Government of Canada emphasize considerations and criteria that are central to the development and implementation of a Red Dress Alert in Canada.

## **AMPLIFYING THE VOICES OF FAMILIES AND SURVIVORS**

Families and survivors of MMIWG and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people have been—and continue to be—the backbone of advocacy, search, and support efforts on the ground in communities affected by MMIWG and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people in Canada. The Committee extends its sincere gratitude to families and survivors for taking the time to share their stories and experiences for this study.

Implementing a Red Dress Alert is integral to addressing the issue of MMIWG and 2SLGBTQQA+ people in Canada. The following quotations from families, survivors and community members illustrate the deeply painful and constant effects this crisis has on Indigenous Peoples and families. Indigenous people continue to be on the frontlines of this crisis in Canada. The Committee’s report aims to centre the voices of Indigenous people, as their lived experiences should guide the process of implementing a Red Dress Alert in Canada.

Regarding the significance of a Red Dress Alert, Melanie Omeniho, President, Women of the Métis Nation, explained:

[W]e believe the Red Dress Alert should signal to Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people four key messages.

If you were missing, we will look for you.

When we find you, we will help you.

You will not be abandoned or ignored;

And you are loved.<sup>1</sup>

Lori Campbell, Associate Vice-President, Indigenous Engagement, University of Regina, as an individual, reaffirmed that Indigenous people must rely on each other for safety and support. Lori Campbell spoke to her mother about testifying before the Committee about the Red Dress Alert. In response, her mother emphasized the importance of this alert, and Lori Campbell relayed her mother’s response to the Committee, stating that:

[T]his program is so important. There have been so many she has personally known who have gone missing or been murdered. People target us because we are [A]boriginal, she told me. She has had a gun pulled on her several times. I asked her if she ever told the police? “No,” she said, “there is no point because they wouldn't do anything.” We had to rely on each other to keep ourselves safe and it's no different today.<sup>2</sup>

Mitch Bourbonniere, Community Helper, spoke passionately about the message behind, and importance of, efforts in community to locate missing members:

We actually use a boat. We do land searches along the river but we actually drag the river, for two reasons; two messages. A message to those that are perpetrating this violence: we are out here; we are watching; we will not let you do this. The second

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1 Melanie Omeniho, President, Women of the Métis Nation, [Evidence](#), 9 April 2024.

2 Lori Campbell, Associate Vice-President, Indigenous Engagement, University of Regina, as an individual, [Evidence](#), 16 April 2024.



message is to the families: that we have not forgotten you; we will search for your loved ones and we will never quit.<sup>3</sup>

The effects of the crisis of MMIWG and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people are far-reaching; when an Indigenous person goes missing, individuals, families and communities all feel the loss. Families and communities are often tightknit; and as such, it is common for individuals, families and communities to be grieving multiple losses at once. Lorna Brown, Executive Director, Tears to Hope Society, said:

The Dawson Creek area [is] where so many girls and some men are going missing. I have a friend who has two family members missing, and they went missing less than a year apart. It's been an issue with [resource extraction projects], and it continues to happen.<sup>4</sup>

The families of MMIWG and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people must grieve, while they simultaneously endure the painful experience of tirelessly advocating for the search for their missing loved ones. Sheila North, Former Grand Chief, Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc., shared the story of Gail Nepinak who:

was looking for her sister .... It took 10 days for the police to respond to her. They didn't respond to her until I did a story on CBC saying she was looking for her. The worst part was when she did finally reach police to talk to her, they told her that she's an adult and she can go wherever she wants maybe she went on vacation. That was a big slap in the face for Gail because Tanya only had five dollars in her pocket. She said that our families can't afford to go on vacations.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, Sandra DeLaronde, Executive Director, Giganawenimaanaanig, told the Committee:

This morning I got up and thought, "Jeez, what would it be like to get up and not have to worry about one of our loved ones going missing or one of our loved ones being murdered?" That's the reality of Indigenous moms and grandmothers in this country. .... Winnipeg is known as ground zero. If I could wake up in the morning and know that this is a safe country and a safe city for my daughter and granddaughter, I would be the happiest woman alive.<sup>6</sup>

The Committee offers its deepest condolences to all individuals, families and communities who have lost loved ones to the crisis of MMIWG and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people in Canada.

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3 Mitch Bourbonniere, Community Helper, as an individual, [Evidence](#), 9 April 2024.

4 Lorna Brown, Executive Director, Tears to Hope Society, [Evidence](#), 16 April 2024.

5 Sheila North, Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc., [Evidence](#), 16 April 2024.

6 Sandra DeLaronde, Executive Director, Giganawenimaanaanig, [Evidence](#), 21 March 2024.

## TOWARDS A RED DRESS ALERT IN CANADA

Implementing a Red Dress Alert in Canada is an urgent and integral step towards addressing the crisis of MMIWG and 2SLGBTQIA+ people in Canada. The following sections provide an overview of violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ people in Canada, the Calls for Justice contained in the final report of the Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, as well as certain federal government efforts to address this crisis, such as consultations on the implementation of a Red Dress Alert in Canada.

### Overview: Violence against Indigenous Women, Girls, Two-Spirit and Gender Diverse People in Canada

The Committee heard that Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ people experience disproportionate and “shockingly high rates of sexual violence, human trafficking/sexual exploitation, and intimate partner violence.”<sup>7</sup> This violence is often gender-based, and is amplified by, and intersects with, anti-Indigenous racism and discrimination in Canada.<sup>8</sup> Hilda Anderson-Pyrz, Chair, National Family and Survivors Circle, emphasized this discrimination, stating: “[O]ur communities are confronted with the daily disappearance of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ people, a reflection not of choice but of a societal disregard for Indigenous lives, making us targets for violence.”<sup>9</sup>

Approximately six out of 10 Indigenous women experience physical or sexual assault in their lifetime; Indigenous women experience sexual assault at a rate three times higher than non-Indigenous women in Canada.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, several witnesses highlighted the disproportionate rates at which Indigenous women are murdered and go missing in Canada.<sup>11</sup> The Honourable Gary Anandasangaree stated that while Indigenous women and girls represent “4% of Canada’s population, [they] represent 28% of homicides perpetrated against women. An Indigenous woman is 12 times more likely to go missing

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7 Ontario Native Women’s Association, “[Improving Indigenous Women’s Safety through a Red Dress Alert System](#),” *Submitted Brief*, April 2024.

8 Ibid.

9 Hilda Anderson-Pyrz, Chair, National Family and Survivors Circle, [Evidence](#), 21 March 2024.

10 Ending Violence Association of Canada, “[Brief for the Study on Implementing a Red Dress Alert in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 11 April 2024.

11 Amnesty International Canada, “[RE: The Standing Committee on the Status of Women Invites the Public to Submit Written Briefs for its Study on Implementing a Red Dress Alert in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 18 April 2024.



or be murdered than a non-Indigenous woman.”<sup>12</sup> Lori Campbell further contextualized statistics related to Missing and Murdered Indigenous women and girls, explaining that:

[R]ecent national statistics reflect that 0.8 per 100,000 non-Indigenous women are murdered every year, but that 4.31 per 100,000 Indigenous women are murdered during the same timeframe. On a large scale like that, it may seem inconsequential, but let’s look at it in the context of my home province of Saskatchewan. We’re in a province of just over a million people, including approximately 500,000 women. In one year, those statistics translated to the murdering of five non-Indigenous women and 26 Indigenous women. If those numbers were reversed, something would have already been done about it, and I don’t mean further studies.<sup>13</sup>

Data on MMIWG and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people are often based on police-reported crimes; however, witnesses asserted that “official” data are not always up to date and generally underrepresent the number of missing Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people in Canada. For example, Sheila North explained that the “last official numbers I’ve ever heard from the RCMP was 1,182 missing and murdered in Canada, and that was quite a few years ago, probably 2013 or 2012;” she added that the “real” number is likely three to four times higher.<sup>14</sup> Lori Campbell echoed the lack of data, adding that Two-Spirit people may face added layers of discrimination and harm due to their intersecting identities, and their disappearances and murders often remain unreported.<sup>15</sup> Additional information related to Indigenous Peoples’ relationships with police, as well as police responses to MMIWG and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people in Canada are discussed in later sections of this report.

As outlined above, Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people experience elevated rates of physical and sexual violence and racism, are more vulnerable to human trafficking and are disproportionately at-risk of being murdered or going missing. Witnesses agreed that a Red Dress Alert is an essential tool in prioritizing the safety of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people and in addressing the crisis of MMIWG and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people in Canada. They asserted that this alert must be implemented without delay. Witnesses provided various justification for the urgency of implementing a Red Dress Alert. More specifically, they advocated that this alert would:

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12 Honourable Gary Anandasangaree, P.C., M.P., Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, [Evidence](#), 18 April 2024.

13 Lori Campbell, Associate Vice-President, Indigenous Engagement, University of Regina, as an individual, [Evidence](#), 16 April 2024.

14 Sheila North, Manitoba Keewatinowik Okimakanak Inc., [Evidence](#), 16 April 2024.

15 Lori Campbell, Associate Vice-President, Indigenous Engagement, University of Regina, as an individual, [Evidence](#), 16 April 2024.



- attract attention to the issue of MMIWG and 2SLGBTQIA+ people;<sup>16</sup>
- illustrate a commitment to resolving the Canada-wide emergency and ensuring a safe, secure and dignified future for Indigenous women, girls or 2SLGBTQIA+ people;<sup>17</sup>
- empower Indigenous families to advocate for their missing loved ones and engage with law enforcement in a more equitable way;<sup>18</sup>
- require a more immediate and efficient response from law enforcement when an Indigenous woman, girl or 2SLGBTQIA+ person goes missing;<sup>19</sup>
- send the message that Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ people are valued, and that people are going to search when they go missing;<sup>20</sup>
- facilitate safely locating missing Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ people through immediate action<sup>21</sup> in mobilizing information and coordinating efforts;<sup>22</sup> and
- prevent gender-based violence and femicide.<sup>23</sup>

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16 Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, "[MMIWG Red Dress Alert](#)," *Submitted Brief*, 11 April 2024; Sheila North, Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc., [Evidence](#), 16 April 2024.

17 Hilda Anderson-Pyrz, Chair, National Family and Survivors Circle, [Evidence](#), 21 March 2024; National Family and Survivors Circle, "[Submission to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women Study on Implementing a Red Dress Alert in Canada](#)," *Submitted Brief*, 11 April 2024; and Melanie Morrison, "[Need for a Red Dress Alert system in Canada](#)," *Submitted Brief*, 15 April 2024.

18 Melanie Morrison, "[Need for a Red Dress Alert system in Canada](#)," *Submitted Brief*, 15 April 2024.

19 Ibid.

20 Hilda Anderson-Pyrz, Chair, National Family and Survivors Circle, [Evidence](#), 21 March 2024.

21 Native Women's Resource Centre, "[Submission on Implementing a Red Dress Alert System in Canada](#)," *Submitted Brief*, April 2024.

22 Hilda Anderson-Pyrz, Chair, National Family and Survivors Circle, [Evidence](#), 21 March 2024.

23 Ending Violence Association of Canada, "[Brief for the Study on Implementing a Red Dress Alert in Canada](#)," *Submitted Brief*, 11 April 2024. UN Women [defines](#) "femicide" as an intentional killing with a gender-related motivation.



## Federal Initiatives related to Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ People

The federal government has implemented various initiatives related to MMIWG and 2SLGBTQIA+ people in Canada, some of these initiatives are highlighted below, beginning with the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

### National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls<sup>24</sup>

In 2016, the Government of Canada launched the independent National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls with a mandate for the commissioners to examine and “report on the systemic causes of all forms of violence against Indigenous women and girls, including sexual violence.” The inquiry was also mandated to “examine the underlying social, economic, cultural, institutional, and historical causes that contribute to the ongoing violence and particular vulnerabilities of Indigenous women and girls in Canada.”<sup>25</sup> The inquiry’s final report, entitled *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry Into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*, made 231 Calls for Justice, which are described by the National Inquiry as “legal imperatives” for Canada.<sup>26</sup> Minister Anandasangaree described the Calls for Justice as requiring “urgent, sustained action and commitment from all parties.” He added that actions in response to the Calls for Justice are “long-term, structural changes that help us undo the legacy of colonialism. This work is critical and will not happen overnight.”<sup>27</sup>

### The National Action Plan and The Federal Pathway

Responding to Call for Justice 1.1 (development and implementation of a National Action Plan), the *2021 Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ People National Action Plan* was co-developed by “a core working group in collaboration with the

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24 The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls indicates that MMIWG includes those Indigenous Peoples who are part of the 2SLGBTQIA communities.

25 National Inquiry Into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, *Our Mandate, Our Vision, Our Mission*; and Honourable Gary Anandasangaree, P.C., M.P., Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, *Evidence*, 18 April 2024.

26 National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*, 2019. Note: A supplementary report specific to Quebec included an additional 21 calls for justice.

27 Honourable Gary Anandasangaree, P.C., M.P., Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, *Evidence*, 18 April 2024.

National Family and Survivors Circle and contributing partners.” The *Federal Pathway to Address Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People* is the Government of Canada’s contribution to the 2021 National Action Plan.<sup>28</sup> Valerie Gideon, Deputy Minister, Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, added that through this National Action Plan, investments and progress have been made towards reconciliation and the Calls for Justice, which will contribute to supporting victims and their families and will reinforce prevention efforts.<sup>29</sup> However, the Committee heard that implementing a Red Dress Alert system that is effective for all Indigenous people in Canada must be accompanied by accelerated progress towards all the Calls for Justice, as many of these Calls have not yet been fully or equitably implemented for all Indigenous Peoples in Canada. The Committee heard that the pace at which the Calls for Justice are being implemented is frustrating; for example, Lorna Brown, Executive Director, Tears to Hope Society, said:

where is the accountability? We hear it from the family members. They say that there are 231 recommendations. Can we bite off, like, six or seven of those, and just implement them? It's just an extreme frustration that very little has been done.<sup>30</sup>

The Minister told the Committee that the Calls for Justice require “investments in shelters, community safety, culture, housing and infrastructure” and that the government is “making progress in all these areas.” He stated that Budget 2024 includes investments to advance these efforts.<sup>31</sup> More precisely, funding announced by the Government of Canada in 2023 (\$2.5 million) and 2024 (\$1.3 million) will contribute to roundtables discussing the development and implementation of a Red Dress Alert in Canada.<sup>32</sup>

## Federal Consultations, Engagement and Roundtables

Minister Anandasangaree confirmed that work on this alert has been underway for “almost a year.” Two formal national roundtables with Indigenous partners the provinces

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28 Government of Canada, *Federal Pathway to Address Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People*; and National Action Plan, *2021 Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People National Action Plan: Ending Violence Against Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People*, 3 June 2021.

29 Valerie Gideon, Deputy Minister, Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, *Evidence*, 18 April 2024.

30 Lorna Brown, Executive Director, Tears to Hope Society, *Evidence*, 16 April 2024.

31 Honourable Gary Anandasangaree, P.C., M.P., Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, *Evidence*, 18 April 2024.

32 Government of Canada, *The federal pathway*; and Government of Canada, *Government of Canada and the Government of Manitoba announce partnership to develop a Red Dress Alert together with indigenous partners*.



and territories have been held, as well as “16 engagement sessions that took place in different regions where there have been distinction-based conversations.”<sup>33</sup> The minister confirmed that a general consensus on the need for a Red Dress Alert was established at the roundtables and engagement sessions, but the details of this alert and its implementation still need to be agreed through further engagement.<sup>34</sup>

Krista Apse, Director General, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Secretariat, Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, expanded on the roundtables, explaining that the most recent national roundtable with Indigenous partners, provinces and territories occurred in February 2024. At this roundtable, the “whole first day was dedicated to technical discussions around the red dress alert.” She confirmed that provinces and territories, as well as Indigenous partners, were “very active” in those discussions.<sup>35</sup> Valerie Gideon confirmed that CIRNAC has the funding to continue these roundtables.<sup>36</sup>

With regards to the engagement sessions, Krista Apse stated that current sessions discussed the co-development of the alert at a “high-level,” but there are further details that must be discussed through upcoming engagement, such as defining alert criteria. She confirmed, “[w]e can’t pretend to define the criteria as a government. That must be done with partners and with technical organizations.”<sup>37</sup> Other elements she identified as important to establish through engagement were oversight and “who actually oversees the alert;” law enforcement’s involvement; what information, how and by whom, is captured and what information is shared publicly; and the provision and coordination of wraparound services to support families and survivors, as well as any existing gaps in these existing services.<sup>38</sup> Valerie Gideon added that the formal roundtables and engagement sessions are not the only vehicle for engagement with Indigenous Peoples on this subject. She confirmed that there are working groups and other avenues that can be used to

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33 Honourable Gary Anandasangaree, P.C., M.P., Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, [Evidence](#), 18 April 2024.

34 Ibid.

35 Krista Apse, Director General, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Secretariat, Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, [Evidence](#), 18 April 2024.

36 Valerie Gideon, Deputy Minister, Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, [Evidence](#), 18 April 2024.

37 Krista Apse, Director General, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Secretariat, Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, [Evidence](#), 18 April 2024.

38 Ibid.

engage on more precise questions related to the implementation process, to work towards consensus.<sup>39</sup>

### Ensuring Inclusivity in Engagement and Consultation Processes

Witnesses agreed that consultations should focus on ensuring that the Red Dress Alert is Indigenous-led and co-developed. Decisions related to alert criteria, ownership and oversight, accessibility and connectivity, information collection and sharing, as well as police involvement, should be addressed through consultations and co-development.

The Committee heard about the importance of ensuring inclusivity for all Indigenous people in national Red Dress Alert implementation efforts. The concerns and needs of different groups must be heard. For example, in its submitted brief, the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) indicated that it had not been involved in the recent roundtable discussions on implementing a Red Dress Alert, but that AMC seeks to work with governments in order to implement an alert system for “missing AMC member First Nations citizens that is inclusive of all genders.”<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, the Edmonton 2 Spirit Society advocated for intentional inclusion of Two-Spirit and gender diverse individuals in a Red Dress Alert, particularly in the language used for the alert. The organization called for terminology that “encompass[es] the full spectrum of MMIWG [Two-Spirit and other] identities.”<sup>41</sup>

In its written submission, We All Take Care of Them (Giganawenimaanaanig), the organization asserted that the implementation of a Red Dress Alert in Manitoba should “encompass diverse facets, including system administration, operational protocols, communication strategies tailored to urban, First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities, as well as comprehensive support services for families and victims.”<sup>42</sup> Several witnesses stated that Indigenous populations living in urban environments and those who are not

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39 Valerie Gideon, Deputy Minister, Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, [Evidence](#), 18 April 2024.

40 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,” Submitted Brief](#), 11 April 2024.

41 Edmonton 2 Spirit Society, [“Brief: Implementing A Red Dress Alert in Canada, Including the 2SLGBTQIA+ population,” Submitted Brief](#), 11 April 2024.

42 We All Take Care of Them (Giganawenimaanaanig), [“Red Dress Alert,” Submitted Brief](#), 11 April 2024.



registered on the Indian Register under the *Indian Act* should be included in the development of the Red Dress Alert.<sup>43</sup>

Sandra DeLaronde emphasized the importance of properly acknowledging that families and survivors and other frontline workers on the ground, including in urban areas, “are the ones doing the work” to support families and communities when someone goes missing or is murdered. Finally, she argued for more resources and support services for these individuals.<sup>44</sup>

In its brief, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada cautioned that implementing the Red Dress Alert before implementing other integral Calls for Justice may “not adequately respond to Inuit experiences of MMIWG, particularly in Inuit Nunangat.”<sup>45</sup> In particular, the organization noted that a Red Dress Alert requires “the engagement of significant infrastructural, service-based resources, and cross-jurisdictional cooperation that Inuit across Inuit Nunangat have been denied for decades.” Notably, certain services are limited, under-resourced or not in place for Inuit people across Inuit Nunangat. For example, access to Internet, cell phones and reception, as well as emergency services, including safe and adequate policing services and mental health and community support services addressing trauma related to missing and murdered Indigenous people.<sup>46</sup> The organization indicated that consultations should aim to address these barriers for Inuit, particularly in Inuit Nunangat, as well as for Inuit who are living in the south.<sup>47</sup>

## CURRENT PUBLIC ALERTING SYSTEMS IN CANADA

The Committee heard about existing alerts and public alerting systems that are currently used in Canada. These initiatives are discussed below.

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43 Lisa Cooper, President and Chief, Native Council of Prince Edward Island, [Evidence](#), 21 March 2024; Charlene Lavallee, President, Association of Metis, Non and Status Indians Saskatchewan, [Evidence](#), 21 March 2024; and Jessica Savoy, National Youth Representative, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, [Evidence](#), 21 March 2024.

44 Ibid.

45 [Inuit Nunangat](#) is the Inuit homeland in Canada, which encompasses the land claims regions of Nunavut, Nunavik in Northern Quebec, Nunatsiavut in Northern Labrador and the Inuvialuit Settlement Regions of the Northwest Territories.

46 Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, “[MMIWG Red Dress Alert](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 11 April 2024.

47 Ibid.

## Current Federal Alerts

The committee heard how the current system used by the governments in Canada to issue public alerts functions. Kurt Eby, Director of Regulatory Affairs and Government Relations at Pelmorex Corp., told the committee that in 2009, with the approval of the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission,<sup>48</sup> Pelmorex built the National Alert Aggregation and Dissemination (NAAD) System. This system provides the software infrastructure for Canada’s national public alerting system.<sup>49</sup> The system validates and disseminates emergency alerts.

Kenza El Bied, Director General of Policy and Outreach Directorate, Emergency Management and Programs Branch at the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, explained that “public alerting is a collaborative initiative between federal, provincial and territorial governments, and industry partners.” In this context, the national public alerting system grants standard alerting capability to federal, provincial and territorial emergency management organizations.<sup>50</sup> Each government can then determine who is responsible, within their jurisdiction, for issuing alerts through the system; designated authorities decide the alert type, when to issue it, the message content and the targeted geographical area.<sup>51</sup> Federal-provincial-territorial collaboration regarding the national public alerting system is achieved primarily through the federal, provincial and territorial senior officials responsible for emergency management (SOREM).<sup>52</sup> SOREM is composed “of the heads of provincial and territorial emergency management organizations and the assistant deputy minister of the emergency management and programs branch of Public Safety Canada.” It develops and oversees the guidelines for emergency public alerting.<sup>53</sup>

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48 The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission is responsible for setting the regulatory framework for the mandatory distribution of alerts in Canada.

49 Kurt Eby, Director, Regulatory Affairs and Government Relations, Pelmorex Corp., *Evidence*, 19 March 2024.

50 Kenza El Bied, Director General, Policy and Outreach Directorate, Emergency Management and Programs Branch, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, *Evidence*, 18 April 2024.

51 Kurt Eby, Director, Regulatory Affairs and Government Relations, Pelmorex Corp., *Evidence*, 19 March 2024; and Kenza El Bied, Director General, Policy and Outreach Directorate, Emergency Management and Programs Branch, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, *Evidence*, 18 April 2024.

52 Kenza El Bied, Director General, Policy and Outreach Directorate, Emergency Management and Programs Branch, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, *Evidence*, 18 April 2024.

53 Ibid.



When the NAAD system was created, alerts were initially sent to TV and radio stations. Cell phone alert capability was developed in 2018.<sup>54</sup> Alerts processed by the NAAD system are “distributed by services such as The Weather Network,” owned and operated by Pelmorex.<sup>55</sup> This distribution through TV and radio broadcasters, as well as cell phone providers, means that alerts can reach people without any opt-in process.

The scope of the national public alerting system was discussed in Committee. Kurt Eby acknowledged that coverage can be an issue in rural areas but told the Committee that the broadcast and the radio channels of the national public alerting system can address some of these issues.<sup>56</sup> The Committee also heard that discussions are ongoing with communications providers through the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission to address public alerting in times of power outage.<sup>57</sup>

The NAAD system is also the infrastructure used to disseminate AMBER Alerts for missing children and SILVER Alerts for missing people with Alzheimer’s disease or dementia. The Committee was told that SILVER alerts were “recently” added into the system following a decision by SOREM.<sup>58</sup> Both AMBER and SILVER alerts are operated by provinces and territories, and law enforcement issue such alerts.

The Committee heard that Public Safety Canada has been working with CIRNAC to provide expertise on the potential use of the national public alerting system for a Red Dress Alert in Canada.<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, Kurt Eby emphasized that Red Dress Alerts could be issued and processed using the NAAD system. He said that it is “the only system that delivers life-saving alerts directly to all TV and radio broadcasters and cell phone providers without requiring consumers to sign up or opt in.”<sup>60</sup> The Committee was told that Pelmorex could easily add a red dress event code to the system, but that the decision around which criteria and situations warrant an alert rests with government agencies.<sup>61</sup> Arjun Vinodrai, Senior Director of Policy and Programs Development, Emergency Management and Programs Branch at the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness,

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54 Kurt Eby, Director, Regulatory Affairs and Government Relations, Pelmorex Corp., [Evidence](#), 19 March 2024.

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid.

58 Ibid.

59 KENZA EL BIED, Director General, Policy and Outreach Directorate, Emergency Management and Programs Branch, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, [Evidence](#), 18 April 2024.

60 Kurt Eby, Director, Regulatory Affairs and Government Relations, Pelmorex Corp., [Evidence](#), 19 March 2024.

61 Ibid.



clarified that “the exact requirements would need to be determined through the engagement,” which would then determine the timelines and the technological requirements needed to implement a Red Dress Alert.<sup>62</sup>

In addition to hearing about the national public alerting system, the Committee learned more about alert systems created through community initiatives, discussed in the section below.

### Community Initiatives

Jennifer Jesty, Emergency Resiliency Manager of the Union of Nova Scotia Mi’kmaq, explained to the Committee how the alert she created works, the Unama’ki Emergency Alert System. The Unama’ki alert covers “five Cape Breton Indigenous communities” and utilizes the Everbridge platform, which requires people to fill out a short form in order to receive alerts.<sup>63</sup> At the time she appeared before the Committee, 4,127 people had registered to receive alerts and 183 alerts had been sent since the alert was implemented in September 2020.<sup>64</sup> Jennifer Jesty shared that they have “reunited 67 young people with their families because of the alerts,” and “96% of people were reunited with their families within the first hour of sending the alert.”<sup>65</sup>

The Committee was told that the delivery of alerts has been feasible because the Union of Nova Scotia Mi’kmaq owns and operates the alert system and they do “not need the say so from authorities and [do] not need to wait one more minute.”<sup>66</sup> Additionally, Jennifer Jesty clarified that operating their system allowed the Union of Nova Scotia Mi’kmaq to create their own protocols regarding when, how and why an alert should be sent. She added that law enforcement is always involved when an alert for a missing person is sent. Jennifer Jesty emphasized that it took a lot of persistence on her end to convince law enforcement to share information about ongoing emergency situations, so that she could send out a timely alert through the Unama’ki alert system.<sup>67</sup>

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62 Arjun Vinodrai, Senior Director, Policy and Programs Development, Emergency Management and Programs Branch, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, *Evidence*, 18 April 2024.

63 Jennifer Jesty, Emergency Resiliency Manager, Union of Nova Scotia Mi’kmaq, *Evidence*, 19 March 2024.

64 Ibid.

65 Ibid.

66 Ibid.

67 Ibid.



Through the Everbridge platform, Unama’ki alerts can be sent to all forms of communication available through that platform instantly, namely sending a text or calling a cell phone, sending an email and calling a landline.<sup>68</sup> The landline option was presented as an important form of communication for elders and for areas where there is very little cell service.<sup>69</sup> However, Jennifer Jesty clarified that calling a landline in the middle of the night is reserved only for situations that present an immediate threat to life and safety.<sup>70</sup> Jennifer Jesty also highlighted the fact that the Everbridge platform allows Chiefs in the communities to record the message of the alert in their own language.

Finally, Jennifer Jesty talked about the ease with which the same alert system can be set up in other communities: one was set up in Lennox Island, Prince Edward Island, and one is scheduled to be set up in Conne River, Newfoundland.<sup>71</sup> The Unama’ki alert is currently funded through Indigenous Services Canada’s Emergency Management Assistance Program and the cost of running the system is based on the number of people who subscribed to the alert through the Everbridge platform.<sup>72</sup>

## **CONSIDERATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING A RED DRESS ALERT IN CANADA**

Witnesses shared with the Committee various considerations that should be acknowledged when designing and implementing the Red Dress Alert. These considerations cover the roles of different jurisdictions, the role of police, and other key aspects that are central to creating an effective Red Dress Alert. The following sections discuss the considerations brought forward to the Committee.

### **Jurisdictions**

As previously mentioned, one important challenge in implementing the Red Dress Alert is the issue of provincial and territorial borders and the jurisdiction to issue alerts. Kurt Eby specified that “alerting is such an interesting field because [...] public safety is a provincial jurisdiction, but certain federal agencies have their own jurisdiction. [...] This has always been a collective and collaborative effort between the federal government and provincial

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68 Ibid.

69 Ibid.

70 Ibid.

71 Ibid.

72 Ibid.

governments.”<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, Kurt Eby mentioned that Alberta gave access to the public alerting system to 26 First Nations communities.<sup>74</sup> He added that Pelmorex “would love direction from the federal government, provincial governments or both to work directly with First Nations because of the nature of the jurisdiction there” and stressed that “working directly with the communities on this issue particularly is key.”<sup>75</sup>

To address challenges posed by overlapping jurisdiction, witnesses provided recommendations regarding the roles of different governments and where the power to issue alerts should reside.

Most Indigenous people want the Red Dress Alert to be Indigenous-led.<sup>76</sup> Agreeing with this premise, Lori Campbell told the Committee that good intentions can go bad “because Indigenous leaders, professionals, experts and community members have not been able to lead the work intended to have meaningful impact in their own communities.”<sup>77</sup> When asked about collaboration with Indigenous Peoples, Kurt Eby said that making “sure that they have the power to issue these alerts and to use the technology to its fullest extent is super important.”<sup>78</sup> The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs addressed the need for granting jurisdiction to Indigenous Peoples with the Red Dress Alert system:

This entails empowering First Nations leaders with legislative authority to oversee and execute alerts, administer necessary mechanisms such as policing and special operations

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73 Kurt Eby, Director, Regulatory Affairs and Government Relations, Pelmorex Corp., [Evidence](#), 19 March 2024.

74 Ibid.

75 Ibid.

76 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](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 10 April 2024; Ending Violence Association of Canada, “[Brief for the Study on Implementing a Red Dress Alert in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 11 April 2024; Lorraine Augustine, President and Chief, Native Council of Nova Scotia, [Evidence](#), 9 April 2024; Hilda Anderson-Pyrz, Chair, National Family and Survivors Circle, [Evidence](#), 21 March 2024; Lori Campbell, Associate Vice-President, Indigenous Engagement, University of Regina, as an individual, [Evidence](#), 16 April 2024; Lisa Cooper, President and Chief, Native Council of Prince Edward Island, [Evidence](#), 21 March 2024; Jennifer Jesty, Emergency Resiliency Manager, Union of Nova Scotia Mi’kmaq, [Evidence](#), 19 March 2024; Charlene Lavallee, President, Association of Metis, Non and Status Indians Saskatchewan, [Evidence](#), 21 March 2024; Melanie Omeniho, President, Women of the Métis Nation, [Evidence](#), 9 April 2024; Leslie Varley, Executive Director, British Columbia Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, [Evidence](#), 19 March 2024; Ontario Native Women’s Association, “[Improving Indigenous Women’s Safety through a Red Dress Alert System](#),” *Submitted Brief*, April 2024; and We All Take Care of Them (Giganawenimaanaanig), “[Red Dress Alert](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 11 April 2024.

77 Lori Campbell, Associate Vice-President, Indigenous Engagement, University of Regina, as an individual, [Evidence](#), 16 April 2024.

78 Kurt Eby, Director, Regulatory Affairs and Government Relations, Pelmorex Corp., [Evidence](#), 19 March 2024.



units dedicated to searching for missing individuals, and, in extreme circumstances, granting power of attorney to extend search efforts beyond cold cases.<sup>79</sup>

Some witnesses mentioned that the Red Dress Alert needs to be implemented nationally because the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous women and girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ people is national.<sup>80</sup> While witnesses emphasized that the system must be Indigenous-led, most, including Sandra DeLaronde acknowledged that “there is a place for government.”<sup>81</sup> The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs pointed out that “[a] genuine partnership must exist between First Nations and all crown representatives, emphasizing the importance of respecting First Nations' self-determination in all aspects.”<sup>82</sup>

More precisely, Hilda Anderson-Pyrz mentioned that “everybody has a responsibility to be actors in the safety and security of Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit and gender-diverse people.” A “collective collaborative approach” between the federal government, provincial and territorial governments and Indigenous Peoples is necessary for the Red Dress Alert to be successful.<sup>83</sup> Charlene Lavallee, President of the Association of Metis, Non and Status Indians Saskatchewan, agreed that the Red Dress Alert needs to be implemented at the national level through provincial and territorial entities and added that national scope is necessary to share information across all jurisdictions.<sup>84</sup>

Lorraine Augustine, President and Chief, Native Council of Nova Scotia, suggested the creation of a national office and offices in every province and territory because not all the work can be done “from a national perspective.”<sup>85</sup> Jessica Savoy emphasized the need for the Red Dress Alert to be Indigenous-led while also recognizing that “all sectors—whether it's with justice, health care or child welfare—and [I]ndigenous peoples” should collaborate.<sup>86</sup> Underlying support from the federal government is also

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79 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](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 10 April 2024.

80 Hilda Anderson-Pyrz, Chair, National Family and Survivors Circle, *Evidence*, 21 March 2024; Lorraine Augustine, President and Chief, Native Council of Nova Scotia, *Evidence*, 9 April 2024; and Charlene Lavallee, President, Association of Metis, Non and Status Indians Saskatchewan, *Evidence*, 21 March 2024.

81 Sandra DeLaronde, Executive Director, Giganawenimaanaanig, *Evidence*, 21 March 2024.

82 Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, “[Written Brief for the Standing Committee on the Status of Women Committee for its Study on Implementing a Red Dress Alert in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 11 April 2024.

83 Hilda Anderson-Pyrz, Chair, National Family and Survivors Circle, *Evidence*, 21 March 2024.

84 Charlene Lavallee, President, Association of Metis, Non and Status Indians Saskatchewan, *Evidence*, 21 March 2024.

85 Lorraine Augustine, President and Chief, Native Council of Nova Scotia, *Evidence*, 9 April 2024.

86 Jessica Savoy, National Youth Representative, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, *Evidence*, 21 March 2024.

required. Kenza El Bied recognized that determining a timeline and implementing the Red Dress Alert will require “a lot of engagement with the provincial and territorial organizations.”<sup>87</sup> Lisa Cooper, President and Chief, Native Council of Prince Edward Island, agreed that search efforts have the potential to be successful when they “are coordinated across different provinces, organizations and police services.”<sup>88</sup> However, she also cautioned that “theoretical models just don’t work in most places. Each community has to develop a model that works for their community.”<sup>89</sup>

Clee Lieverse, Detective Constable, Missing Person Investigator at the Greater Sudbury Police Service, believes that the new system needs to be tiered: “It needs to be scalable from a local to a provincial to a national alert when the situation calls for it. It needs to be flexible to address the needs of both the local community and the nation as a whole.”<sup>90</sup>

The Honorable Gary Anandasangaree explained CIRNAC’s engagement activity to the Committee. He said that there are “at least two provinces and two territories willing to start” the process of testing out a Red Dress Alert system.<sup>91</sup> Krista Apse explained that CIRNAC are looking to implement the Red Dress Alert on a “regional basis first” and then more broadly. The department, wants to ensure that they “can get the local considerations right” since there are differences across the country.<sup>92</sup> Valerie Gideon reiterated that CIRNAC’s advice “is to proceed with a regional approach to work out what the possibilities are and then bring that back to a national table with partners to reflect on how that has gone.”<sup>93</sup> On 3 May 2024, the Government of Canada and Manitoba announced a partnership to launch a Red Dress Alert pilot that will “be developed together with Indigenous partners.”<sup>94</sup> While witnesses agreed that the implementation of a Red Dress Alert must be Indigenous-led, many witnesses specified that the Red Dress Alert system

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87 Kenza El Bied, Director General, Policy and Outreach Directorate, Emergency Management and Programs Branch, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, [Evidence](#), 18 April 2024.

88 Lisa Cooper, President and Chief, Native Council of Prince Edward Island, [Evidence](#), 21 March 2024.

89 Ibid.

90 Clee Lieverse, Detective Constable, Missing Person Investigator, Greater Sudbury Police Service, [Evidence](#), 11 April 2024.

91 Honourable Gary Anandasangaree, P.C., M.P., Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, [Evidence](#), 18 April 2024.

92 Krista Apse, Director General, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Secretariat, Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, [Evidence](#), 18 April 2024.

93 Valerie Gideon, Deputy Minister, Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, [Evidence](#), 18 April 2024.

94 Government of Canada, [Government of Canada and the Government of Manitoba announce partnership to develop a Red Dress Alert together with Indigenous partners.](#)



must be led by Indigenous women, Two-Spirit and gender diverse people, and frontline Indigenous women’s organizations.<sup>95</sup> Furthermore, families and survivors must be involved through all stages of development and implementation of a Red Dress Alert.<sup>96</sup>

## Police Involvement in a Red Dress Alert

The Committee heard about the ways in which police forces in Canada should and should not be involved in a Red Dress Alert. The following sections describe the historical context and colonial legacy of policing in Canada and the resulting harms to Indigenous people, as well as the ways in which witnesses suggested that police services should be involved in the Red Dress Alert. Some witnesses referenced Indigenous police services, noting that experiences with these forces are often better than non-Indigenous forces. Examples of this testimony are highlighted in later sections.

## A Brief Overview of the National Inquiry’s Findings on the History of Policing and Colonization in Canada

In *Reclaiming Power and Place: the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Volume 1a (Report Vol. 1a)*, the Inquiry provides a detailed overview of the history of policing in Canada, the police role in colonization and the harmful effects of this legacy on Indigenous Peoples’ relationships with police in the present day.<sup>97</sup> Some findings from the Inquiry’s report are included below to contextualize witness testimony related to Indigenous Peoples’ relationships with police and the role police should play in a Red Dress Alert in Canada.

According to Report Vol. 1a:

Policing was established as another institution – like marriage – that worked to exert colonial control over Indigenous women and gender-diverse people through negatively transforming relationships between the genders, by intervening in intimate aspects

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95 Leslie Varley, Executive Director, British Columbia Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, [Evidence](#), 19 March 2024; Hilda Anderson-Pyrz, Chair, National Family and Survivors Circle, [Evidence](#), 21 March 2024; Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, [“MMIWG Red Dress Alert,” Submitted Brief](#), 11 April 2024; Ontario Native Women’s Association, [“Improving Indigenous Women’s Safety through a Red Dress Alert System,” Submitted Brief](#), April 2024; and DisAbleD Women’s Network Canada, [“Amplifying the Voices of Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ Living with Disability: A Call for Intersectional Approach in Implementing the Red Dress Alert,” Submitted Brief](#), 11 April 2024.

96 Winnipeg Indigenous Executive Circle, [“Brief,” Submitted Brief](#), 10 April 2024.

97 National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, [Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls](#), 2019, p. 253-255.

of women's lives, by enabling sexual abuse, and through the implementation and perpetuation of beliefs and policies at the root of the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.<sup>98</sup>

Furthermore, Report Vol. 1a findings include that:

- The Canadian justice system is premised on settler-colonial society's values, beliefs, laws, and policies. It is a justice system that fails to include Indigenous concepts of justice. The Canadian justice system has been imposed on Indigenous Peoples and has oppressed and replaced the Indigenous justice systems that served Indigenous communities effectively since time immemorial.
- The government of Canada used the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and its predecessor, the Northwest Mounted Police [NWMP], to implement and enforce laws and policies designed to control, assimilate, or eliminate Indigenous Peoples. On behalf of the Government of Canada, the RCMP: ensured the forced relocations of Indigenous communities; removed children from their families and communities to place them in residential schools; enforced laws that prohibited traditional spirituality and ceremonies; enforced the Indian Act governance structures, including the pass system, at the behest of Indian agents; facilitated the apprehension of children during the Sixties Scoop; and enforced other discriminatory and oppressive legislation and policies.
- This historic role of the RCMP has not changed significantly. The RCMP must still enforce present-day discriminatory and oppressive legislation and policies in areas such as child welfare and land and resource disputes.
- The historic and present-day role of the RCMP, the continued racism and sexism by many RCMP officers directed at Indigenous Peoples, the high rates of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people, and lack of resolve have caused many Indigenous Peoples and communities to lose trust and confidence in the Canadian justice system, the RCMP, and police services in general.<sup>99</sup>

Report Vol. 1a states that as "attitudes had begun to harden towards Indigenous Peoples" in certain Western regions, the NWMP became "even more involved in policing First Nations women" who were "cast by government and by society as a menace to the emerging non-Indigenous community." Métis women also "fared poorly" in the context of this policing.<sup>100</sup> Both First Nations and Métis women were "described as a threat to

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98 Ibid., p. 253.

99 Ibid., p. 717.

100 Ibid., p. 254.



public security through accusations regarding their own health and contagion, and alleged sexual promiscuity.”<sup>101</sup> As a result, Report Vol. 1a stated that:

Indian agents and police actively pursued the regulation of movement for Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people, particularly in the wake of the 1886 panic over the idea of “Traffic in Indian Girls.” When newspapers ran an article raising concerns over the trafficking of Indigenous girls, police blamed First Nations men for running an active racket on young women rather than investigate the crime. The police then used racist fears around “mixing races” to further drive a wedge between First Nations and European settlers.<sup>102</sup>

Furthermore, according to Report Vol. 1a, police “began to more actively enforce the prostitution clauses within the *Indian Act*, criminalizing First Nations women and girls.” Report Vol. 1a indicates that:

Despite little to no evidence that Indigenous women were engaging in the sex trade more frequently than other women, the Indian Act was amended to directly criminalize Indigenous women and those who kept or frequented a “wigwam” to purchase sex. The consolidation of the Criminal Code in 1892 further made it easier to convict First Nations women of the crime of prostitution.<sup>103</sup>

Report Vol. 1a explained that “as the fur trade wound down in the early 19th century, the control and policing of First Nations and Métis women within the colonies became even more closely bound within the structures of the church and of the state,” helping to enforce “a system that was racist, patriarchal, and controlling – a primary tool of domination, dispossession, and genocide within First Nations communities.”<sup>104</sup>

Regarding Inuit experiences specifically, Report Vol. 1a explains that:

Canada’s claims of sovereignty within the Arctic provided the grounds for the introduction of a Canadian justice system, and laid the foundation for the role that the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, and later the RCMP, would play in Inuit Nunangat in the early 20th century, by applying Canadian laws in the Arctic territory. Their responsibilities were broader than other police postings. In addition to law enforcement, they were required to gather census information and aid Inuit in emergency situations. The RCMP played an important role in establishing the Canadian state’s authority over Inuit society and its claims of Arctic sovereignty over Inuit Nunangat.<sup>105</sup>

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101     Ibid.

102     Ibid.

103     Ibid.

104     Ibid., p. 252.

105     Ibid., p. 295-296.



Report Vol. 1a includes additional details on Inuit experiences with colonial police forces that continue to affect the relationship between Inuit and police today, including the killing of sled dogs and the relocation of Inuit communities.<sup>106</sup>

Moreover, the final report explains that police played a role in the residential school system and the illegal pass system:<sup>107</sup>

Indian agents on reserves, as well as police forces, delivered children to the church-run schools by applying pressure in the form of withholding rations or supplies, threatening members of the family, or straight-up seizure without consent.<sup>108</sup>

As well:

For First Nations people of all genders, the NWMP also enforced the illegal pass system, which required all First Nations people to obtain a pass from their farm instructor or Indian agent before leaving the reserve...Among other reasons, the pass system was partially justified by those who enforced it as the need to prevent the loitering of Indigenous women as threats to public safety.<sup>109</sup>

Finally, regarding ongoing discrimination by police, Report Vol. 1a notes that:

If families do reach out to the police or another representative of the criminal justice system, they are often confronted with an individual, policy, procedure, or way of relating that shows little to no awareness or understanding of the histories and complexities in the relationship between Indigenous people and the police. Instead, within this institution, the family and their lost loved one are viewed through a lens of pervasive racist and sexist stereotypes – stereotypes that ultimately blame Indigenous Peoples, and especially Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people – for the violence and difficulties they face, and/or see them as guilty of committing violence or other crimes themselves.<sup>110</sup>

The above excerpts provide some context to the harmful role of police in the colonization of Indigenous Peoples in Canada. Their actions have left a legacy of intergenerational trauma among Indigenous Peoples and families, with significant negative effects that persist today. According to Report Vol. 1a:

[F]ollowing negative encounters with police, many witnesses said that they no longer felt safe to reach out to the police when they were in danger, fearing that the police

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106 Ibid., p. 303 and 474.

107 Ibid., p. 254-255 and 259.

108 Ibid., p. 259.

109 Ibid., p. 254.

110 Ibid., p. 627.



themselves might also inflict further violence. These experiences of violence – predation with impunity – were a chief contributor in the reluctance of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA people to trust institutions.<sup>111</sup>

The historical context and legacy of the policing of Indigenous Peoples in Canada has created a persistently strained relationship between many Indigenous people and police forces. Some Indigenous Peoples have established their own police forces. The barriers Indigenous police forces often face are also referenced in Report Vol. 1a, such as insufficient equipment and resources which are impeding the performance of many of their duties.<sup>112</sup>

The Inquiry's Supplementary Report on Quebec indicated that today, policing in Quebec is different in some ways, compared to other provinces in Canada. For example:

Quebec has the highest number of independent Indigenous police forces of any province. Thus, when Indigenous women experience violence in Quebec, the Indigenous police forces are often the ones called to act as first responders.<sup>113</sup>

The Supplementary Report on Quebec also includes a section on the barriers that Indigenous police forces encounter, notably related to being under-resourced.<sup>114</sup>

The difficult relationship with police, as described above, exists in other jurisdictions across Canada. The following section highlights some of the ways in which witnesses described this troubled relationship, as well as their suggestions for police involvement in a Red Dress Alert in Canada.

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111 Ibid., p. 115.

112 Ibid., p. 655.

113 National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, *A Supplementary Report, Kepek – Quebec*, 2019.

114 Ibid.

## Indigenous Peoples' Relationship with Police Forces Today

The relationships with police in Canada remains strained with many Indigenous people.<sup>115</sup> Jessica Savoy explained that the implementation of a Red Dress Alert will be challenging because of the difficult relationship with police, notably the:

[H]istory of colonialism and abuse, the often reported anti-Indigenous racism in the delivery of policing services, the killing of Indigenous [P]eoples by police officers during mental wellness checks and the dismissal by law enforcement of those reported cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, Two-Spirit and gender diverse peoples.<sup>116</sup>

Several other witnesses shared experiences of reporting a missing Indigenous loved one or community member to police. They explained that the police were often too slow to respond or dismissed reports altogether.<sup>117</sup> For example, Denise Halfyard, Assistant Director, Tears to Hope Society, explained that “many families who go to the police are told to wait 24 hours; however, we know that this is not a true regulation, as the first 72 hours are the most important.”<sup>118</sup> As Leslie Varley, Executive Director, British Columbia Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, described:

The police still have discretion to decide whether or not they are going to enact an alert system [...] When we look behind the reasons for why they're not calling, they go back to systemic racism and the ideologies we're raised with as Canadians about Indigenous people and the fact that we're underserving [...] They go back to us not being fully

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115 Charlene Lavallee, President, Association of Metis, Non and Status Indians Saskatchewan, [Evidence](#), 21 March 2024; Jennifer Jesty, Emergency Resiliency Manager, Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq, [Evidence](#), 19 March 2024; Leslie Varley, Executive Director, British Columbia Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, [Evidence](#), 19 March 2024; Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, “[Written Brief for the Standing Committee on the Status of Women Committee for its Study on Implementing a Red Dress Alert in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 11 April 2024; Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, “[MMIWG Red Dress Alert](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 11 April 2024; Ontario Native Women's Association, “[Improving Indigenous Women's Safety through a Red Dress Alert System](#),” *Submitted Brief*, April 2024; Women Walking Together (Iskwewuk E-wichiwitochik), “[Summary: Study for Red Dress Alert](#),” *Submitted Brief*, April 2024; Lorraine Augustine, President and Chief, Native Council of Nova Scotia, [Evidence](#), 9 April 2024; Clee Lieverse, Detective Constable, Missing Person Investigator, Greater Sudbury Police Service, [Evidence](#), 11 April 2024; and Mitch Bourbonniere, Community Helper, as an individual, [Evidence](#), 9 April 2024.

116 Jessica Savoy, National Youth Representative, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, [Evidence](#), 21 March 2024.

117 Jennifer Jesty, Emergency Resiliency Manager, Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq, [Evidence](#), 19 March 2024; Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, “[MMIWG Red Dress Alert](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 11 April 2024; and Sheila North, Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc., [Evidence](#), 16 April 2024.

118 Denise Halfyard, Assistant Director, Tears to Hope Society, [Evidence](#), 16 April 2024.



human. All of these old colonial ideologies about Indigenous people still exist in this country everywhere, in every service that we're trying to access.<sup>119</sup>

Furthermore, Sheila North spoke about police response to reports of MMIWG and 2SLGBTQIA+. She stated that:

I wanted to drive home the common theme that kept coming up when I talked to families and friends of victims and survivors of MMIWG2S+ and that was the responses by police. Most of my experiences have involved cases handled by the Winnipeg Police Service and the RCMP in Manitoba. The common theme is police attitudes and responses to families and friends who looked to them for help in finding their loved ones. I can say that in all the stories I've ever done for the media and all the stories I have ever heard, police were dismissive, condescending and disrespectful... Many of the police forces across the country have eroded the trust of many MMIW families and survivors. They are not trusted to do the right thing on their own, and to report on all cases of missing loved ones in a timely and respectful manner.<sup>120</sup>

In a written submission, the Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA) added that Indigenous women, girls and Two-Spirit people and their families continue to reference the lack of safety when interacting with police or the justice system. ONWA added that "Indigenous [P]eoples continue to be over an under policed due to the history of colonization, residential schools, and inter-generational compounded trauma...the process of seeking 'justice' can often be retraumatizing."<sup>121</sup>

Indigenous Peoples' treatment from, and relationships with, police often continue to be negatively affected by stereotypes, colonial ideologies and systems. Lori Campbell shared her own story of the effects of these systems:

I mentioned earlier that I am from the sixties scoop. I was taken from my birth mom when I was 14 months old because of violence towards her and me by a non-[I]ndigenous man in our home. When mom called the police for help, they took me away, not the white man. She thought it was temporary and that they would bring me back when he left. Instead, they put me in care and adopted me out. It took me 25 years to find her again. My mom had come across many dangerous and violent men in her lifetime. The way she took control of that was to start to make them pay for it. She was a street worker for her entire career. She saw no other options...When I finally met my birth mom after years of searching, she quietly told me that she was scared to find me. She was worried I would be angry—strangely, not because of her past addictions or career as a sex worker but because she had made me "an Indian". I'll ask you to sit with that for a moment. It still

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119 Leslie Varley, Executive Director, British Columbia Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, [Evidence](#), 19 March 2024.

120 Sheila North, Manitoba Keewatinowik Okimakanak Inc., [Evidence](#), 16 April 2024.

121 Ontario Native Women's Association, "[Improving Indigenous Women's Safety through a Red Dress Alert System](#)," *Submitted Brief*, April 2024.

tears my heart. She was worried I would be mad at her simply because she brought me into this world with a target on my back—an [I]ndigenous, 2-spirit girl child. I made a decision right then and there that I would stand tall and be unapologetically proud of my indigeneity in a way she never had opportunity to.<sup>122</sup>

Witnesses underscored the need for cultural sensitivity training for police forces to ensure they understand the historical context of police and Indigenous Peoples' relationships, and the lasting effects of this history.<sup>123</sup> Furthermore, this training is integral for police to properly respond to cases of MMIWG and 2SLGBTQQA+ people. For example, Lisa Cooper explained that when a young Indigenous woman went missing on Prince Edward Island, the “municipal police force and the RCMP officers did not know what the acronym of MMIWG stood for.” While some police forces may offer cultural sensitivity training, it is not standardized across the country and some types of training are more effective than others. Witnesses called for implementation of this training across the country, and where this training is already in place, it must be improved to ensure its effectiveness in addressing systemic racism and discrimination against Indigenous Peoples in policing institutions in Canada.

The Committee heard from some witnesses that Canadian police forces do want to improve relationships with Indigenous Peoples, and address MMIWG and 2SLGBTQQA+ people. However, witnesses were cautious, noting that while the intention may be there, it remains to be seen how these efforts will play out in rebuilding trust.<sup>124</sup> Sheila North noted that there is a distinction between First Nations Police and non-Indigenous police forces, she cited her experience with First Nations Police, which has been better than with non-Indigenous police forces.<sup>125</sup> Marjolaine Étienne asserted that in recent discussions with First Nations police chiefs, it was clear that they want to be able to respond to the needs of missing Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQA+ people.<sup>126</sup> Finally, Lorna Brown emphasized that “we have the highest population in B.C. of [F]irst [N]ations people. I don't know that we even have any [I]ndigenous police in northern B.C. For a population of that size, we definitely need more [I]ndigenous police.”<sup>127</sup>

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122 Lori Campbell, Associate Vice-President, Indigenous Engagement, University of Regina, as an individual, [Evidence](#), 16 April 2024.

123 See for example: Jennifer Jesty, Emergency Resiliency Manager, Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq, [Evidence](#), 19 March 2024; and Melanie Morrison, “[Need for a Red Dress Alert system in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 15 April 2024.

124 Lorna Brown, Executive Director, Tears to Hope Society, [Evidence](#), 16 April 2024.

125 Sheila North, Manitoba Keewatinowik Okimakanak Inc., [Evidence](#), 16 April 2024.

126 Marjolaine Étienne, President, Quebec Native Women Inc., [Evidence](#), 9 April 2024.

127 Lorna Brown, Executive Director, Tears to Hope Society, [Evidence](#), 16 April 2024.



Regarding federal initiatives related to policing and police relationships, Valerie Gideon stated:

[T]here has been an increased amount of work that Public Safety has done through new investments with respect to establishing trilateral agreements with communities with respect to policing. As well as increasing the number of self-administered police services among [F]irst [N]ations and Inuit. There's been 93 new and ongoing projects in that regard. As well as investments in police infrastructure. I think this is improving relationships over time. More needs to be done for sure. It is a very important priority of a number of [F]irst [N]ations. If we can potentially look at some of these self-administered police agreements that exist in some jurisdictions and start in regions that have those types of relationships and actually bring that forward to chiefs of police across the country, I'm sure there would be openness to look at the type of protocols and relationship building that's happened.

Despite this work to improve relationships, multiple witnesses reiterated the systemic racism that Indigenous Peoples can experience at the hands of police:

The initial response to the disappearance of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ people is often marred by stereotypical views held by the police, who often assume they have simply gone out partying with friends. This type of response suggests a systemic issue where Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ people are not taken seriously when they are reported missing, leading to delayed and often inadequate investigations.<sup>128</sup>

Leslie Varley added that structural racism exists and is an important aspect contributing to Indigenous Peoples' experiences in Canada, including with police. She added that systemic racism and related ideologies contribute to the devaluation of Indigenous Peoples in Canada, and the negative ways in which these affect Indigenous Peoples in Canada.<sup>129</sup>

Clee Lieverse explained that the Greater Sudbury Police Service has made significant efforts to improve and strengthen relationships with Indigenous Peoples in the region and Darrell Rivers, Constable, added that they “work directly with two First Nations communities within [their] jurisdiction.”<sup>130</sup> One of these efforts includes creating the position of Indigenous Liaison Officer, currently occupied by Darrell Rivers. In his role as Indigenous Liaison Officer, Darrell Rivers explained that he provides training to all new recruits in the police force and works to encourage ongoing engagement with

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128 Melanie Morrison, “[Need for a Red Dress Alert system in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 15 April 2024.

129 Leslie Varley, Executive Director, British Columbia Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, [Evidence](#), 19 March 2024.

130 Clee Lieverse, Detective Constable, Missing Person Investigator, Greater Sudbury Police Service, [Evidence](#), 11 April 2024; and Darrell Rivers, Constable, Greater Sudbury Police Service, [Evidence](#), 11 April 2024.

Indigenous people.<sup>131</sup> Darrell Rivers agreed that an Indigenous Liaison Officer is an important position to have across police forces in Canada. He added that an inaugural conference of Indigenous liaison officers is being organized, in hopes of sharing experiences and supporting “other services across the province” in rebuilding relationships with Indigenous people.<sup>132</sup>

An Indigenous Advisory Committee was also created in Sudbury, based on feedback from Indigenous people in the region. The committee meets quarterly with Sudbury’s Chief of Police to discuss community concerns and challenges, working collaboratively with police to identify solutions. According to Darrell Rivers, Indigenous welfare agencies and school boards are also invited to these meetings.<sup>133</sup>

Despite the efforts described above by individuals from the Greater Sudbury Police Service, the Committee heard from many witnesses that the police should not play a lead role in the Red Dress Alert system. Furthermore, they agreed that the police role should be determined by Indigenous people, particularly Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit and gender diverse individuals. Various witnesses agreed that police should be involved in the alert system in some way, such as by providing support when needed. The ways in which police should be involved in a Red Dress Alert system are discussed in more detail in the following section.

### Police Role in a Red Dress Alert

While the Committee heard that efforts are being made in some police forces to improve relationships with Indigenous Peoples, nearly all witnesses agreed that due to the difficult and often unsafe relationships between Indigenous people and law enforcement, they agreed police should not be responsible for managing and issuing a Red Dress Alert in Canada. More precisely, Leslie Varley mentioned that an

Indigenous women-centred service model would address the distrust and discomfort [I]ndigenous people have with police services, the larger justice system and the existing mainstream anti-violence service bodies. These apps won’t work for [I]ndigenous people if they are police- or mainstream-run.<sup>134</sup>

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131 Darrell Rivers, Constable, Greater Sudbury Police Service, [Evidence](#), 11 April 2024.

132 Ibid.

133 Ibid.

134 Leslie Varley, Executive Director, British Columbia Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, [Evidence](#), 19 March 2024.



However, many witnesses acknowledged that police should be involved in the system in some way. Dr. Anita Olsen Harper stated that:

For sure the police have to be involved in the red dress alert. There's no way that the police cannot be part of it, but they should not be the final and the sole authority on how it works, who gets to push the button as we say. ... As far as what the role is and how much they play that should be up to Indigenous groups. It should come from the grassroots communities and the families who are involved who have lost women and girls to violence.<sup>135</sup>

Many witnesses told the Committee that the police should play a supporting role, where they work in collaboration with Indigenous people and families to locate a missing Indigenous person once an alert is issued.<sup>136</sup> Cleo Lieveise agreed that there are certain functions, tools and information that police forces have access to, that Indigenous Peoples do not, that can be integral in locating missing persons, so police involvement in the alert would be beneficial.<sup>137</sup> However, as indicated above, witnesses underscored the need for cultural sensitivity training and education to ensure that police forces are properly and safely responding to cases of MMIWG and 2SLGBTQIA+ people, as well as the more general needs of Indigenous people and families.

Regarding the supporting role that police could play in a Red Dress Alert, the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs described some suggestions in their written submission. Among these suggestions were to empower First Nations to:

- “administer necessary mechanisms such as policing and special operations units dedicated to searching for missing individuals;”
- establish “protocols for collaboration and information-sharing between police and First Nations authorities and external agencies, local law enforcement that respects First Nations data sovereignty and follow the First Nations principles of ownership, control, access and possession with search and rescue teams and government agencies;” and

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135 Anita Olsen Harper, as individual, [Evidence](#), 16 April 2024.

136 Sheila North, Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc., [Evidence](#), 16 April 2024; Lori Campbell, Associate Vice-President, Indigenous Engagement, University of Regina, as an individual, [Evidence](#), 16 April 2024; and Lorna Brown, Executive Director, Tears to Hope Society, [Evidence](#), 16 April 2024.

137 Cleo Lieveise, Detective Constable, Missing Person Investigator, Greater Sudbury Police Service, [Evidence](#), 11 April 2024.



- “in extreme circumstances, [grant] power of attorney to extend search efforts beyond cold cases.”<sup>138</sup>

## Considerations for an Effective Red Dress Alert

The Committee heard that there are certain additional considerations related to implementing a Red Dress Alert in Canada. For example, various witnesses spoke about the importance of privacy and safety for Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people who are missing, but who do not wish to be found. Some women may be fleeing violence or have other reasons for disappearing. In some situations, for instance where human trafficking is involved, it may not be safe for people to report information to police. Leslie Varley argued that there should be a way to anonymously report information and sightings of MMIWG and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, “so that those reports can be made without fear of retaliation.”<sup>139</sup> A Red Dress Alert system must protect all of these individuals.<sup>140</sup>

Furthermore, many witnesses highlighted the ineffectiveness of a Red Dress Alert in areas without access to broadband Internet, which is often the case following natural disasters, in many rural, remote and Northern communities and along sections of the Highway of Tears in British Columbia, which runs from Prince Rupert to Prince George.<sup>141</sup> Hilda Anderson-Pyrz told the Committee that “effective responses require listening to

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138 Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, [“Written Brief for the Standing Committee on the Status of Women Committee for its Study on Implementing a Red Dress Alert in Canada,” Submitted Brief](#), 11 April 2024.

139 Leslie Varley, Executive Director, British Columbia Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, [Evidence](#), 19 March 2024.

140 Ending Violence Association of Canada, [“Brief for the Study on Implementing a Red Dress Alert in Canada,” Submitted Brief](#), 11 April 2024; Lisa Cooper, President and Chief, Native Council of Prince Edward Island, [Evidence](#), 21 March 2024; Clee Lieverse, Detective Constable, Missing Person Investigator, Greater Sudbury Police Service, [Evidence](#), 11 April 2024; Jessica Peebles, [“Red Dress’ Alert System,” Submitted Brief](#), April 2024; Edmonton 2 Spirit Society, [“Brief: Implementing A Red Dress Alert in Canada, Including the 2SLGBTQQIA+ population,” Submitted Brief](#), 11 April 2024; and Women Walking Together (Iskwewuk E-wichiwitochik), [“Summary: Study for Red Dress Alert,” Submitted Brief](#), April 2024.

141 Hilda Anderson-Pyrz, Chair, National Family and Survivors Circle, [Evidence](#), 21 March 2024; Leslie Varley, Executive Director, British Columbia Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, [Evidence](#), 19 March 2024; Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, [“MMIWG Red Dress Alert,” Submitted Brief](#), 11 April 2024; Jessica Savoy, National Youth Representative, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, [Evidence](#), 21 March 2024; Lisa Cooper, President and Chief, Native Council of Prince Edward Island, [Evidence](#), 21 March 2024; Ending Violence Association of Canada, [“Brief for the Study on Implementing a Red Dress Alert in Canada,” Submitted Brief](#), 11 April 2024; Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, [“Written Brief for the Standing Committee on the Status of Women Committee for its Study on Implementing a Red Dress Alert in Canada,” Submitted Brief](#), 11 April 2024; Sheila North, Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc., [Evidence](#), 16 April 2024; Lorna Brown, Executive Director, Tears to Hope Society, [Evidence](#), 16 April 2024; and Denise Halfyard, Assistant Director, Tears to Hope Society, [Evidence](#), 16 April 2024.



those directly affected, especially in remote areas like Nunavut, where limited connectivity poses additional challenges.”<sup>142</sup>

Several witnesses suggested that Red Dress Alerts and information on missing persons should be communicated through various platforms. Witnesses pointed to not only cell phone alerts, but also to email, landline and billboards, to ensure that people without Internet access or individuals—often elders—without cell phones, are able to receive the information.<sup>143</sup>

Arjun Vinodrai agreed that access to connectivity and broadband is “an issue that comes up in many conversations with regards to emergency management and public safety.” He added that Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED) leads the efforts related to broadband and wireless coverage in Canada, but Public Safety Canada works with them regularly on this issue.<sup>144</sup> Valerie Gideon provided an update on efforts related to broadband in Canada. She explained that:

As of December 2023, the universal broadband fund, which is led by Innovation, Science and Economic Development, is on track to exceed its goal of providing access to high-speed Internet to 98% of Canadian households by 2026 and 100% of households by 2030. I have also myself had [conversations at the Deputy level] with ISED to see how we could engage with other provincial territorial jurisdictions, where they have identified areas of risk, to see how we could expedite cell tower establishments, just like was done at the Highway of Tears which was a collaboration with the provincial government and ISED in order to be able to fund 12 new cell phone towers along that highway.<sup>145</sup>

Despite some initiatives and improvements in connectivity in Canada, witnesses emphasized that more investment and additional work must be dedicated to improving connectivity. Denise Halfyard stated that:

Cell service continues to be an issue that gets raised. There are many areas that still don’t have that service. North of Terrace there is zero service unless you have personal

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142 Hilda Anderson-Pyrz, Chair, National Family and Survivors Circle, [Evidence](#), 21 March 2024.

143 Jennifer Jesty, Emergency Resiliency Manager, Union of Nova Scotia Mi’kmaq, [Evidence](#), 19 March 2024; and Leslie Varley, Executive Director, British Columbia Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, [Evidence](#), 19 March 2024.

144 Arjun Vinodrai, Senior Director, Policy and Programs Development, Emergency Management and Programs Branch, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, [Evidence](#), 18 April 2024.

145 Valerie Gideon, Deputy Minister, Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, [Evidence](#), 18 April 2024.

Wi-Fi, so if an alert were to go out while I,m on any parts of those highways, I would have no idea who to look for because I wouldn't get the alert until it's too late.<sup>146</sup>

Ensuring equitable wireless connectivity and broadband access across the country, in all rural, remote and Northern regions, is integral to implementing a successful Red Dress Alert.

Finally, various witnesses pointed to language inclusivity in a Red Dress Alert, noting that to ensure comprehension and accessibility of an alert, it should be issued in multiple languages.<sup>147</sup>

### **Additional Initiatives to Support a Red Dress Alert in Canada**

Many witnesses have stressed that it is critical for a Red Dress Alert to be implemented in combination with various preventative measures and wraparound support services, and that these services be culturally sensitive. The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs asserted that:

It is imperative that culturally sensitive approaches are deeply integrated into every stage of the alert system, spanning from its initial development to its execution. This holistic approach is crucial to ensure that the distinct needs, values, and perspectives of AMC member First Nations are not only recognized but also prioritized throughout the process. By embedding cultural sensitivity into the foundation of the alert system, we can foster greater trust, inclusivity, and effectiveness in serving the diverse and unique requirements of First Nations in Manitoba.<sup>148</sup>

On the subject of wraparound services, Hilda Anderson-Pyrz emphasized that:

[W]raparound services also uphold [...] Indigenous and human rights because as Indigenous women, girls and Two-Spirit and gender-diverse people, when [they're] born [they're] born with a bundle of rights and, right from birth as Indigenous women, [their] rights are not upheld.<sup>149</sup>

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146 Denise Halfyard, Assistant Director, Tears to Hope Society, *Evidence*, 16 April 2024.

147 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](#)," *Submitted Brief*, 10 April 2024; and Jennifer Jesty, Emergency Resiliency Manager, Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq, *Evidence*, 19 March 2024.

148 Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, "[Written Brief for the Standing Committee on the Status of Women Committee for its Study on Implementing a Red Dress Alert in Canada](#)," *Submitted Brief*, 11 April 2024.

149 Hilda Anderson-Pyrz, Chair, National Family and Survivors Circle, *Evidence*, 21 March 2024.



She emphasized the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls' Call for Justice 3.4, which calls for:

[A]ll governments to ensure Indigenous communities receive immediate and necessary resources, including funding and support for the establishment of sustainable, permanent, no-barrier, preventative, accessible and holistic wraparound services.<sup>150</sup>

Witnesses and submitted briefs highlighted the importance of various additional measures and wraparound support services, such as:

- Providing counseling, legal assistance and access to liaison officers for families impacted by missing people;<sup>151</sup>
- Prioritizing a comprehensive approach to health and wellness including the holistic wellbeing of families impacted by missing loved ones;
- Advocating for social justice and providing educational opportunities, training programs, which includes preserving and passing on traditional knowledge, skills, and cultural practices related to safety, awareness, and education;<sup>152</sup>
- Ensuring that support services culturally meet the needs of Indigenous people, promote culture and access to culture;<sup>153</sup>
- Improving access to support services for physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health, with a focus on remote and rural communities and streamlining the way all support services are offered and accessed;<sup>154</sup>

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150 Ibid.

151 Melanie Morrison, "[Need for a Red Dress Alert system in Canada](#)," *Submitted Brief*, 15 April 2024.

152 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](#)," *Submitted Brief*, 11 April 2024.

153 Jessica Savoy, National Youth Representative, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, [Evidence](#), 21 March 2024; and Ending Violence Association of Canada, "[Brief for the Study on Implementing a Red Dress Alert in Canada](#)," *Submitted Brief*, 11 April 2024.

154 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](#)," *Submitted Brief*, 10 April 2024; Jessica Savoy, National Youth Representative, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, [Evidence](#), 21 March 2024; and Lorna Brown, Executive Director, Tears to Hope Society, [Evidence](#), 16 April 2024.

- Implementing appropriate and culturally sensitive resources for treatments to address trauma;<sup>155</sup> and
- Creating educational and training opportunities to pass on cultural practices and traditional knowledge and creating awareness campaigns for Canadians to understand the history and cultural beliefs of Indigenous Peoples.<sup>156</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Based on the lived experiences and recommendations shared by expert witnesses in their testimony and in written submissions, the implementation of a Red Dress Alert in Canada must continue to be Indigenous-led and co-developed with Indigenous partners. Ongoing consultation and engagement with Indigenous partners must address key considerations, such as alert jurisdiction, oversight and management, as well as the role of police in this alert. In addition, witnesses emphasized the importance of accompanying a Red Dress Alert with the relevant infrastructure and services, including broadband and connectivity access, as well as wraparound services that are culturally appropriate and trauma-informed. The Committee hopes to see ongoing and immediate progress towards the provision of these infrastructures and services across Canada. Finally, successfully implementing a Red Dress Alert will require sufficient and sustained long-term funding.

If you are feeling distressed and in need of support, the following resources are available:

- The National Indian Residential School Crisis Line provides 24-hour crisis support to former Indian Residential School students and their families, at the toll-free number: 1-866-925-4419.
- Individuals impacted by the issue of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) are encouraged to contact the MMIWG Crisis Line at the toll-free number: 1-844-413-6649.
- First Nations, Inuit and Métis people seeking immediate emotional support can contact the Hope for Wellness Help Line at the toll-free

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155 Clee Lieveise, Detective Constable, Missing Person Investigator, Greater Sudbury Police Service, [Evidence](#), 11 April 2024.

156 Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, "[Written Brief for the Standing Committee on the Status of Women Committee for its Study on Implementing a Red Dress Alert in Canada](#)," *Submitted Brief*, 11 April 2024.



number: 1-855-242-3310, or through the online chat at [hopeforwellness.ca](http://hopeforwellness.ca).

The first 16 recommendations must be implemented in full compliance with all relevant rights instruments, as affirmed in Calls for Justice 1.2, which uphold the right of self-determination and self-governance of Indigenous Peoples, in collaboration and consultation with provinces and territories, and under the direction and leadership of Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit and gender diverse people. With this acknowledgment, the Committee recommends:

#### **Recommendation 1**

**That the Government of Canada support the success and effectiveness of a Red Dress Alert in Canada by accelerating work in collaboration and consultation with provinces, territories and Indigenous Peoples.**

#### **Recommendation 2**

**That the Government of Canada implement all the Calls for Justice contained in *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*, in particular the Calls for Justice that would support the implementation of a Red Dress Alert, including but not limited to: 3.3 and 3.5 (related to health and wellness services); 5.5 and 5.7 (related to justice, police and emergency services, including broadband access); and 7.1 (related to Indigenous-led health and wellness service provision).**

#### **Recommendation 3**

**That the Government of Canada continue to invest in the ongoing co-development of a Red Dress Alert, through inclusive consultations with First Nations, Inuit and Métis led by Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit and gender diverse people living on and off reserve, in urban, rural and remote communities; and that these consultations examine key considerations for an effective Red Dress Alert, including but not limited to: alert oversight and management; criteria for issuing alerts; the role of police in the alert system; language of alerts; protection of privacy; and the provision of wraparound, culturally appropriate, trauma-informed, community-based supports and services.**

#### **Recommendation 4**

**That the Government of Canada respect the calls from Indigenous governments, communities, organizations, families, survivors and other individuals, that the**

**management, oversight and issuance of Red Dress Alerts be led by Indigenous women, girls, Two Spirit and gender diverse people, thereby ensuring respect for cultural heritage and community sensitivities, and be established, in collaboration and consultation with Indigenous Peoples who will guide how the police can support the alert system.**

**Recommendation 5**

**That the Government of Canada support and fund the creation of a central system led by Indigenous women, girls, Two Spirit and gender diverse people, to coordinate with police, emergency services, women’s shelters and translation services to report missing women, analyze data from applications, provide standardized search training and provide support to the community to immediately begin the search.**

**Recommendation 6**

**That the Government of Canada ensure oversight of a Red Dress Alert system is facilitated by family members, advocates, and existing organizations who are already providing services to Indigenous families and women, girls, Two-Spirit and gender diverse individuals.**

**Recommendation 7**

**That the Government of Canada, in its implementation of an Red Dress Alert system to notify and ask the public for assistance in finding missing Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit and gender diverse people, ensure that efforts are coordinated across emergency services, police services, victim services, and anti-violence services.**

**Recommendation 8**

**That the Government of Canada ensure that the procurement process related to the Red Dress Alert system is open, transparent and competitive.**

**Recommendation 9**

**That the Government of Canada, at the next Federal-Provincial-Territorial Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Justice and Public Safety, identify ways to improve police forces’ understanding of the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit and gender diverse people, and pursuant to Calls for Justice 9.1 to 9.11, develop best practices for responding to Red Dress Alerts and implement concrete measures to improve the relationship between police and Indigenous Peoples across Canada, for example by co-developing with Indigenous Peoples and implementing:**



- **cultural sensitivity and unconscious-bias training, including education on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Two-Spirit and gender diverse people, for police forces and Crown prosecutors, with the goal of enhancing understanding the role of police and the justice system in colonization, as well as the ways in which inter-generational trauma continues to affect Indigenous Peoples, individuals and communities, including the adverse effects on Indigenous Peoples' relationships with police and the justice system today;**
- **Indigenous-led programs and culturally safe supports, to help Indigenous survivors and families navigate the justice system when reporting experiences of violence and/or missing persons, and to improve reporting and data collection for these crimes; and**
- **supports for police forces across Canada to establish positions, such as an Indigenous liaison officer or a community response officer who would be responsible for regularly engaging and working with Indigenous communities and people to improve relationships and trust between police forces and the Indigenous communities and people in each police forces' jurisdiction;**
- **measures within the ongoing process of co-development of First Nations Police Services legislation, to ensure that First Nations police forces are recognized as essential services, and as such, are allocated sufficient funding to respond to the needs in their jurisdictions and communities; and**
- **measures to address anti-Indigenous racism in the delivery of policing services across Canada and to prevent violence against, including the killing of, Indigenous people during mental health and wellness checks, as well as to ensure that police respond appropriately and promptly to reports of missing Indigenous loved ones.**

#### **Recommendation 10**

**That the Government of Canada support the implementation of a tiered and decentralized system for the Red Dress Alert to ensure that this alert is scalable from local to provincial and territorial and national levels, as needed, and that this alert system takes into consideration the importance of privacy for individuals who may not wish to be found for safety reasons.**



**Recommendation 11**

**That the Government of Canada ensure that the Red Dress Alert is effective and accessible in urban, rural, remote and Northern regions, by allocating additional resources to accelerate the development of necessary infrastructure to expand the reach of cellular networks, to support equitable access to communication technologies, including wireless Internet and cellular connectivity, in communities across Canada, and that the Minister of Rural Economic Development and the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry table regular progress reports in this area.**

**Recommendation 12**

**That the Government of Canada provide long term and sustainable funding for equitable access to wraparound, culturally appropriate, trauma-informed, and community-based services for survivors, individuals, families and communities affected by the ongoing crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit and gender diverse people.**

**Recommendation 13**

**That the Government of Canada develop and implement an awareness campaign on the Red Dress Alert system, which would deepen Canadian society's understanding of the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit and gender diverse people, intergenerational trauma, and the ongoing effects of colonization on Indigenous Peoples in Canada.**

**Recommendation 14**

**That the Government of Canada provide services to all Indigenous Peoples to support the development of a national missing Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit and gender diverse people database that can be shared throughout Canada.**

**Recommendation 15**

**That the Government of Canada support the creation of a downloadable application created and run by Indigenous Peoples which could be used to search for missing loved ones anywhere in Canada, report sightings and relay information about a missing person.**

**Recommendation 16**

**That the Government of Canada continue to fund alert systems that are currently in place such as the Unama'ki alert system while a national program is being developed.**



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The Committee also recommends:

**Recommendation 17**

**That the Government of Canada provide support consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and other international conventions related to the human rights of Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit and gender diverse people.**

## APPENDIX A: LIST OF WITNESSES

The following table lists the witnesses who appeared before the committee at its meetings related to this report. Transcripts of all public meetings related to this report are available on the committee’s [webpage for this study](#).

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
<b>British Columbia Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres</b> Leslie Varley, Executive Director	2024/03/19	100
<b>Pelmorex Corp.</b> Kurt Eby, Director, Regulatory Affairs and Government Relations	2024/03/19	100
<b>Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq</b> Jennifer Jesty, Emergency Resiliency Manager	2024/03/19	100
<b>Association of Metis, Non and Status Indians Saskatchewan</b> Charlene Lavallee, President	2024/03/21	101
<b>Congress of Aboriginal Peoples</b> Jessica Savoy, National Youth Representative	2024/03/21	101
<b>Giganawenimaanaanig</b> Sandra DeLaronde, Executive Director	2024/03/21	101
<b>National Family and Survivors Circle</b> Hilda Anderson-Pyrz, Chair	2024/03/21	101
<b>Native Council of Prince Edward Island</b> Lisa Cooper, President and Chief	2024/03/21	101
<b>As an individual</b> Mitch Bourbonniere, Community Helper	2024/04/09	102
<b>Native Council of Nova Scotia</b> Lorraine Augustine, President and Chief	2024/04/09	102

<b>Organizations and Individuals</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Meeting</b>
<b>Quebec Native Women Inc.</b> Marjolaine Étienne, President	2024/04/09	102
<b>Women of the Métis Nation</b> Melanie Omeniho, President	2024/04/09	102
<b>Greater Sudbury Police Service</b> Clee Lieverse, Missing Person Investigator Darrell Rivers	2024/04/11	103
<b>As an individual</b> Lori Campbell, Associate Vice-President, Indigenous Engagement, University of Regina	2024/04/16	104
<b>Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc.</b> Sheila North, Former Grand Chief Anita Olsen Harper	2024/04/16	104
<b>Tears to Hope Society</b> Lorna Brown, Executive Director Denise Halfyard, Assistant Director	2024/04/16	104
<b>Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs</b> Hon. Gary Anandasangaree, P.C., M.P., Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations Krista Apse, Director General, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Secretariat Valerie Gideon, Deputy Minister	2024/04/18	105
<b>Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness</b> Kenza El Bied, Director General, Policy and Outreach Directorate, Emergency Management and Programs Branch Arjun Vinodrai, Senior Director, Policy and Programs Development, Emergency Management and Programs Branch	2024/04/18	105

## **APPENDIX B: LIST OF BRIEFS**

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The following is an alphabetical list of organizations and individuals who submitted briefs to the committee related to this report. For more information, please consult the committee's [webpage for this study](#).

**Amnesty International Canada**

**Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs**

**DisAbled Women's Network of Canada**

**Edmonton 2 Spirit Society**

**Ending Violence Association of Canada**

**Giganawenimaanaanig**

**Infinity Women Secretariat**

**Iskwewuk E-wichiwitochik**

**Morrison, Melanie**

**National Family and Survivors Circle**

**Native Women's Resource Centre**

**Ontario Native Women's Association**

**Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada**

**Peebles, Jessica**

**Winnipeg Indigenous Executive Circle**



## REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

A copy of the relevant *Minutes of Proceedings* ([Meetings Nos. 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 111, 112, 113, 114, 116 and 117](#)) is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Shelby Kramp-Neuman  
Chair





## **Complementary opinion of the Bloc Québécois**

"I feel we have a duty to remember the women and girls who have disappeared, who have been murdered. We must do this work rigorously, seriously, to honor their memory, so that they did not die in vain. That's what I'm hoping for as I listen to the witnesses today." Andréanne Larouche, MP for Shefford, March 21, 2024.

### **RED DRESS ALERT REPORT**

Over the past few months, we have conducted this study with determination and humility, in collaboration with several fellow MPs from all parties. Although our mandate has been described as a daunting challenge, both inside and outside Indigenous communities, we believe we have achieved our goal thanks to the extraordinary efforts of everyone involved. One of the reasons this was possible was that parliamentarians were able to use their voice to summon and compel the transmission of information.

This study is first and foremost about ensuring the safety of Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirited people. The committee has enabled communities to be listened to, to express themselves freely and to be understood, thus fostering profound change in our society.

A variety of expert witnesses, including survivors and loved ones of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirited, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, queer, questioning, intersex and asexual (2ELGBTQQIA+) people, representatives of organizations working in communities affected by the FFADA and 2ELGBTQQIA+ crisis, police officers and representatives of federal government departments, have contributed their expertise and many years of experience to set up a Red Dress Alert system in Canada. We would like to express our deep gratitude to the witnesses for sharing their stories, inspiring our approach. Their courage and determination to make their voices heard were essential in ensuring that the emergency was recognized and treated seriously. Thank you for your invaluable contribution to this vital cause.

The staff who supported us did an outstanding job, ensuring an exhaustive and comprehensive study despite time and resource constraints. We are grateful for their tireless efforts, to which this report bears witness.

The Bloc Québécois reaffirms its support for the 231 Calls for Justice to address the root causes of violence against First Nations, Inuit and Métis women, girls, two-spirited people, and people of diverse gender identities. The Bloc Québécois reiterates the importance of these Calls for Justice, as well as regular follow-up on them.

The Bloc Québécois concludes from the many testimonies that parallel studies on the specific issues of violence against Indigenous people, on the state of their mental health and on the response of police services to these communities must be undertaken. Many

witnesses raised fundamental issues in Indigenous communities that need to be addressed through studies that complement the Red Dress Alert study.

**Recommendation:**

That, given the importance and complexity of the Red Dress Alert study, the Bloc Québécois calls on the federal government to conduct complementary studies on the profound systemic inequalities and disparities in Indigenous communities; the specific issues of violence against Indigenous people; the state of Indigenous people's mental health; and the police response to Indigenous people.