

Press Release

13th Annual Memorial March for Missing and Murdered Indigenous women, two spirit, and gender non-conforming people

The 13th Annual Memorial March for Missing and Murdered Indigenous women, two spirit, and gender non-conforming people will be held on Friday, February 14th, 2020. We welcome people of all ages, genders, cultures, and physical abilities to gather in front of the Sault Ste. Marie Courthouse, 426 Queen St. East, beginning at 11:30 am, for a memorial event that will include guest speakers, songs, prayers, and other expressions of reverence and solidarity. We will then march along Queen Street to The Delta Hotel, 208 St Mary's River Dr., where refreshments will be provided, and a facilitator will encourage storytelling and conversation in a sharing circle. Resources will also be available for those experiencing violence directly or indirectly, and for those who would like to seek counselling services.

The Memorial March originated 28 years ago, on February 14, in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. The march calls attention to the disproportionately high numbers of missing and murdered Indigenous women.

In the week leading up to the event, ribbons will be tied on trees in downtown Sault Ste. Marie. These ribbons will be of four different colours that represent the four cardinal directions, reminding us of Anishinaabe teachings about the interconnectedness amongst different peoples, beings, stages of life, and medicines. We will also hang red dresses, following the REDress Project by Métis multidisciplinary artist Jamie Black. The empty dresses are an aesthetic response that draws attention to unfulfilled journeys and unanswered questions. This march is a time to stand in solidarity with the families whose loved ones have gone missing and been murdered across Canada and beyond.

According to the RCMP's 2015 updated report *Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women: A National Operational Overview*, 1,017 Indigenous women have been murdered over the past 31 years. There are 174 Indigenous women who were missing, and 111 of those cases were under suspicious circumstances yet remain unsolved. Statistics Canada (2011) reported rates of violence against Indigenous women is three times higher than for non-Indigenous women, and seven times higher for homicide rates. These numbers are what has been presented publicly, often criticized by Indigenous communities as underreported and reported as accidental by police, and failing to include trans women, two spirit, and gender non-conforming people. The real number is projected to be over 4,000 cases of Murder Missing Indigenous Women in Canada.

Last year in 2019, Mayor Christian Provenzano has declared that February 14th will be recognized as Memorial Day to remember and honour Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and encourages all residents of the city to support this important national event.

We call on our family, friends, and supporters across the globe to wear red or their regalia, to show love, and to join our efforts to eliminate systemic violence by

demanding concrete action from all levels of government. Gendered and colonial violence implicates all of us who live on Indigenous land and territories.

Let's walk together.

Accessibility Information:

There will be seats available for Elders at the site in front of the Courthouse. The site and The Delta Hotel are wheelchair accessible. Please dress for the weather.

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