

Resolution proclaiming the fifth of May as Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Day of Awareness.

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, nationwide, the voices of Indigenous people have united to raise awareness of missing and murdered Indigenous women (MMIW); and

WHEREAS, May 5th honors the birthday of Hanna Harris, a member of the Northern Cheyenne Tribe who was killed in 2013, and has become a day that commemorates missing and murdered indigenous women and children everywhere; and

WHEREAS, the color red has come to hold significance in bringing awareness to missing and murdered indigenous women, often depicting a red handprint or red dress; and

WHEREAS, though awareness of the crisis is growing, data on the realities of this violence is scarce, and the current data is believed to be an underrepresentation of the severity of crisis of missing and murdered indigenous women and children and men; and

WHEREAS, in 2016, the National Crime Information Center reported nearly 6,000 cases of missing American Indian and Alaskan Native women and girls, yet the U.S. Department of Justice was tracking only 119 cases in the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUS) database; and

WHEREAS, no reliable data exists on the actual number of missing Indigenous women and girls in the United States, and instances of violence continue to be directed against Indigenous women, living both on reservations and in urban areas, at high rates; and

WHEREAS, Wisconsin has been ranked as sixth in the nation in sexual trafficking, according to the Human Trafficking Institute, with urban centers being the hubs in the I-90/94 corridor which has led to many Native women, girls, and two spirits being open to exploitation by traffickers; and

WHEREAS, Indigenous women experience racism and prejudice through invisibility, driven by a lack of media coverage. Instead of nationwide manhunts, alerts, and round-the-clock news coverage when an affluent, white woman goes missing, news coverage can be minimal to nonexistent when an Indigenous woman or girl goes missing. Many missing and murdered Indigenous women today remain unnamed and their disappearances unknown or unheard of; and

WHEREAS, Indigenous women often hesitate or are unable to access help and needed services after experiences of gender-based violence because their unique needs are often not understood or met by mainstream agencies. Structural factors such as racism, stigma, and criminalization of substance use and mental health issues, culturally incongruent shelter policies, siloed programming, and gender inequality interact in complex ways, resulting in gaps, and inefficient and inadequate services for women who identify as Indigenous; and

WHEREAS, the Wisconsin State Department of Justice formed the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Task Force in 2020 to collect and study data and identify solutions; and

WHEREAS, Department of Interior Secretary Deb Haaland created the Missing and Murdered Unit within the Bureau of Indian Affairs' Office of Justice Services to collect and analyze data, and to collaborate with different law enforcement and governmental agencies; and

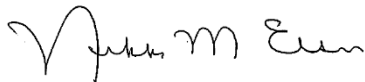
WHEREAS, some of the Wisconsin Indigenous women we know about include:
Bad River Ojibwe members Angeline Whitebird-Sweet, murdered in 1989, Charlene Couture, missing since 2009, Sheila St. Clair, missing since 2015, and Tess White, murdered in 2016;
Lac du Flambeau Ojibwe members Susan Poupart, murdered in 1990, LaVonne Frank, murdered 1997, Donna (LaBarge) Peterson, murdered in 2004, and Emily Anne Marie Wayman, murdered in 2010;
HoChunk members Jennifer Wesho, murdered in 1989, Jacinda Muir, murdered in 2015, and Kozee Decorah, murdered in May 2020;
Menominee members Lisa Ninham, missing since 1980, Rae Elaine Tourtillot, murdered in 1986, Ingrid Washinawatok, murdered in 1999, Katelyn Kelley, murdered in July 2020, and Stephanie Greenspon, murdered in August 2020;
and Oneida members Lorraine Brown Bear, murdered in 2016, and Krystal Torres-Smith murdered in 2017.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Common Council of the City of La Crosse that May 5th will be recognized as Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Day of Awareness.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City of La Crosse's governmental entities shall continue to recognize the 5th of May of each year as Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Day of Awareness.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City of La Crosse will strive to collaborate with the indigenous communities of the area and local organizations such as the Ho-Chunk Nation's Three River House, Cia Siab, Inc., New Horizons, Central's Indigenous People's Club, local health agencies, universities and others to increase awareness and support the health and wellbeing of people in La Crosse who identify as indigenous, native, American Indian, or First Peoples.

I, Nikki M. Elsen, certify that this resolution was duly and officially adopted by the Common Council of the City of La Crosse April 14, 2022.



*Nikki M. Elsen, WCMC, City Clerk
City of La Crosse, Wisconsin*