

# Red Dress Day



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**Dedication: To the missing and murdered  
Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQQ+ Peoples  
across the  
◁ ᑎᑖᑦ askîy [land]**

As we embark on this journey towards working together to build an Indigenized and decolonized society as per the TRC Calls to Action we must understand that we can only do this through taking action and incorporating Indigenous laws and ethics; and by adhering to the MMIWG2S Calls for Justice, TRC and UNDRIP.

By taking a community-action-oriented approach, we can address the root causes of the harm inflicted by colonialism upon Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit individuals who go missing and are murdered across this nation, currently known as Canada, in epidemic proportions.

Let us recognize the interconnectedness of all living beings on ◁ ᑎᑖᑦ askîy [land] and the vital role that ancestral knowledge, bloodline memory, laws, and ethics play in guiding us forward.

DISCLAIMER: Please note that the writings in this guidebook are rooted in my personal experiences as an Indigenous person and legal scholar. My perspectives have been formed through interacting with people residing on Treaty 6, 7, and 8 territories, and interacting with people on the unceded territories across British Columbia and living my life as a white-passing Indigenous person. I am well aware of my mooniyaw face and this is another story I can tell at a later date. I have built good relationships with Treaty 6, 7, and 8 Nations, Métis Nations, Métis Settlements, Northern Secwépemc te Qelmūcw (Northern Shuswap Tribal Council), T'exelc (Williams Lake First Nation) and with Indigenous individuals, scholars, elders, knowledge keepers, youth, students across this nation politically known as Canada and hold myself accountable to all Indigenous nations.

I am a Métis Nation of Alberta citizen whose great grandparents, grandparents and parents suffered from diaspora and ended up residing on the east side of Treaty 6 territory (originally from the Red River Settlement). I grew up in the unceded territory of the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation, part of the Dakelh (Carrier) peoples' territory in Prince George, BC.

My insights have been shaped by being Métis and engaging with settler colonial institutions, systems and jurisdictions in various professional and personal capacities all my life and experiencing racism, misogyny, discrimination, colonialism, hatred, cruelty, bigotry, paternalism, sexism, cognitive dissonance, backlash, white innocence, gaslighting, white fragility, white supremacy, "nice" racism, white feminism, neoliberalism, capitalism, micro-aggressions which amounted to my own epistemicide, loss of identity, and self-hatred.

At present, I am teaching at the University of Calgary, Faculty of Law a course I designed, "Reconciliation and Lawyers" (LAW 693) and at Osgoode Hall Law School, York University, a course I co-designed, "Searching for Reconciliation Through Dispute Resolution" (ALDR6305). I am also the Lead Educational Developer, Indigenizing Curricula and Pedagogies and hold a cross appointment with the Centre for Teaching and Learning and with the Vice Provost Office, Indigenous Programming and Research at the University of Alberta.

The Community Take-Action guidebook was created as a result of creating and coordinating the REDress Project alongside its creator, Métis artist Jaime Black, at the Augustana Campus and North Campus of the University of Alberta in March 2012. We hung red dresses everywhere for a week in memory of the missing and murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2 Spirit people, and received national attention. It was during this time that I fell in love with Camrose, AB and believe that we can do many amazing things together. Especially on May 5 REDress Day.

The perspectives in this guidebook do not represent the official views or endorsement of the University of Alberta.

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# Red Dress Day

Also known as the **National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit People (MMIWG2S)**, is observed annually on **May 5th**. It is a day to honor and remember the countless Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit individuals who have been murdered, gone missing, or experienced violence. The red dress symbolizes the lives lost, and it is hung in public spaces to raise awareness about this ongoing crisis.

The choice of a red dress specifically has multiple meanings. The color red is often associated with life, strength, and resilience in many Indigenous cultures. Furthermore, red is thought to be the only color that spirits can see, so hanging red dresses can be seen as a way to call back the spirits of the missing and murdered individuals.



REDress Project installation at Augustana Campus, University of Alberta, Camrose, Alberta with artist Jaime Black; coordinator, Pippa Feinstein, JD, LL.M.; and volunteer Augustana students. March 2012. Photo credit: Andrea Menard, LL.B, LL.M.



REDress Project, Augustana Campus, University of Alberta with artist Jamie Black; coordinator Pippa Feinstein, JD, LL.M; coordinator Andrea Menard, LL.B, LL.M and volunteer Augustana students. March 2012. Photo credit: Andrea Menard, LL.B, LL.M.

Back in March 2012, when I was the Director of Indigenous Academic Services at the Faculty of Law, University of Alberta, I co-created and coordinated the REDress Project alongside law student Pippa Feinstein JD, LL.M, a non-Indigenous ally. This initiative brought Métis artist Jaime Black to Edmonton and Camrose, Alberta where we installed over 600 dresses at both the North Campus and Augustana Campus of the University of Alberta. Prior to this, we had called for red dress donations in Edmonton, and many women from all over the area generously contributed their dresses while sharing the stories behind their donations.

Pippa and I then coordinated, and worked alongside University of Alberta student volunteers across campuses (approximately 30 students in total) to hang the red dresses along with Jaime Black, which was an intense two-day journey. The weather was cold, and all I could think of were the missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and Two Spirit peoples alone in the snow with nowhere to turn.

The project gained national attention for the MMIWG2S cause, resulting in numerous radio and TV interviews, as well as discussions with professors, leaders, classes, departments, and community presentations. Having experienced firsthand the power of community action in addressing this crisis, I am confident that communities across Canada can continue making a difference together



REDress Project, Augustana Campus, University of Alberta, Camrose, AB, volunteer Augustana students. March 2023, Photo credit: Andrea Menard, LLB, LLM.



I was delighted to find that, 11 years later, a group of multi-talented Indigenous and non-Indigenous community members in Camrose have come together, dedicating countless hours and raising funds throughout the community to bring attention to this important issue in 2023. A new group called Indigenous Camrose has taken the lead in organizing an event on May 5th, 2023, with numerous educational events planned to follow throughout May. The Community Take-Action guidebook was created as part of this collaborative effort when I met with the group to strategize on how we could raise awareness for the cause.

Below is **Indigenous Camrose's** poster:

We invite you to join Indigenous Camrose and our community of Camrose in solidarity and solution for missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and two spirit people



**May 5, 2023**

Gathering at 5:30 PM  
and starting at 6 PM

at Kamifurano Gazebo  
on the North side of Mirror Lake

There will be a prayer and smudge, educational speaker,  
drummer with dancer, and a short walk around the lake

Please dress appropriately for the topic & weather

Join the Facebook group "Indigenous Camrose" or email  
Indigenous.Camrose@gmail.com for more information on this and future event

# Terms:

## Colonialism:

Colonialism a practice or policy of control by one people or power over other people or areas, often by establishing colonies and generally with the aim of economic dominance. In the process of colonization, colonisers may impose their religion, language, economics, and other cultural practices. The foreign administrators rule the territory in pursuit of their interests, seeking to benefit from the colonised region's people and resources. It is associated with but distinct from imperialism.

## Decolonization:

Deconstructs colonial ideologies of the superiority and privilege of Western thought and approaches Involves dismantling structures that perpetuate the status quo and addressing unbalanced power dynamics Involves valuing and revitalizing Indigenous knowledge and approaches and weeding out settler biases or assumptions that have impacted Indigenous ways of being For non-Indigenous people, decolonization is the process of examining your beliefs about Indigenous peoples and culture by learning about yourself in relationship to the communities where you live and the people with whom you interact.

## Indigenization:

Is a collaborative process of naturalizing Indigenous intent, interactions, and processes and making them evident to transform spaces, places, and hearts. Indigenization benefits not only Indigenous students but all students, teachers, staff members, and community members involved or impacted by Indigenization. Indigenization seeks not only relevant programs and support services, but also a fundamental shift in the ways that institutions: Include Indigenous perspectives, values, and cultural understandings in policies and daily practices. Position Indigenous ways of knowing at the heart of the institution, which then informs all the work that we do. Include cultural protocols and practices in the operations of our institutions.

## **MMIWG2S:**

MMIWG2S stands for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit People. This acronym represents a crisis affecting Canadian society in which a disproportionately high number of Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit individuals have been reported missing or have been victims of violence and murder. Two-Spirit is a term used by some Indigenous peoples in North America to describe individuals who embody both masculine and feminine qualities or who identify as LGBTQ+ in some way. The MMIWG2S crisis has gained increased attention in recent years, as activists and community members work to raise awareness about the systemic violence and discrimination faced by Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people.

## **TRC:**

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in Canada is an official body established in 2008 as part of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. The commission was created to investigate and address the historical injustices and human rights abuses inflicted upon Indigenous peoples in Canada through the Indian Residential School system, which operated from (approximately) the 1850s until the late 20th century.

The primary objectives of the TRC in Canada are to:

- 1). Document the experiences of survivors, families, and communities affected by the residential school system.
- 2). Promote healing and reconciliation among Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada.

3). Create a comprehensive historical record of the residential school system and its impacts.

4). Provide recommendations for future action to address the ongoing consequences of the residential school system and promote reconciliation.

The TRC concluded its work in 2015, releasing a final report that included 94 Calls to Action. These calls to action covered a wide range of areas, such as child welfare, education, language and culture, health, and justice, with the aim of guiding Canadian society toward healing, reconciliation, and a more just and equitable future for Indigenous peoples.

## **UNDRIP:**

UNDRIP stands for the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It is a comprehensive international human rights instrument adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on September 13, 2007. UNDRIP outlines the rights of Indigenous peoples globally and establishes a universal framework of minimum standards for their survival, dignity, and well-being.

UNDRIP contains 46 articles that cover various aspects of Indigenous peoples' rights, including:

1). The right to self-determination, which includes the right to freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social, and cultural development.

2). The right to maintain and strengthen their distinct political, legal, economic, social, and cultural institutions while retaining the right to participate fully in the political, economic, social, and cultural life of the state.

3).The right to be free from discrimination and to have their cultural traditions, customs, and land rights recognized and respected.

4.)The right to maintain, protect, and develop the past, present, and future manifestations of their cultures, such as archaeological and historical sites, artifacts, designs, ceremonies, and technologies.

5).The right to redress for past human rights violations, including forced assimilation and dispossession of their lands, territories, and resources.

UNDRIP is a significant milestone in the recognition and protection of the rights of Indigenous peoples worldwide. While not legally binding, it serves as a guiding document for governments and other institutions to develop policies and practices that respect and promote the rights of Indigenous peoples.



## Background:

While the **TRC** primarily focuses on addressing the legacy of Indian Residential School systems; the **TRC Final Report in 2015** acknowledges the broader context of violence against Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people. For example, **TRC Call to Action #41** specifically calls upon the federal government, in consultation with Indigenous organizations, to appoint a public inquiry into the causes of, and remedies for, the disproportionate victimization of Indigenous women and girls.

This led to the establishment of the **National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in 2016**.

The National Inquiry's Final Report called, "**Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls**" released in 2019, identified the MMIWG2S crisis as a form of "Canadian genocide" and provided 231 individual Calls for Justice to address the systemic causes of violence against Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people.

## Community Events Created:

While recognizing that the focus on MMIWG2S is often driven by genuine commitments to reconciliation and justice, with various factions starting movements across Canada, such as **Red Dress Day** (May 5), **Sisters in Spirit** (October 4), **Moose Hide Campaign** (February and May), and the **Memorial March** (February 14), there are concerns that demonstrate a limited conception of the **MMIWG2S 231 Calls for Justice** that may not assist communities in taking sustained action to address the epidemic.

## 2019: MMIWG2S Calls for Justice:

The **MMIWG2S Calls for Justice** necessitate a response from all political, social, health, law, justice, education, and economic sectors at local, provincial, and national levels, with a focus on accountability. Both Indigenous and Non-Indigenous peoples must recognize the Calls for Justice as a unique opportunity to re-envision change in a multi-jurisdictional space like Canada.

The **MMIWG2S Calls for Justice** are numerous and wide-ranging, addressing various aspects of society, including culture, health, human security, justice, and education. Here are a few examples of the Calls for Justice that apply to society more broadly:

- 1). **Call for Justice 1.1:** Governments should acknowledge and address the historical and ongoing harms and human rights abuses experienced by Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people.
- 2). **Call for Justice 2.1:** Governments should fund and support Indigenous-led prevention and awareness programs to address violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people.
- 3). **Call for Justice 3.2:** Governments should support Indigenous-led initiatives to improve the representation of Indigenous people in media and popular culture.
- 4). **Call for Justice 4.3:** Governments should develop educational and awareness programs to address and eliminate racism, sexism, homophobia, and transphobia at the individual and systemic levels.
- 5). **Call for Justice 4.7:** Media and social influencers should report responsibly on violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people and should refrain from perpetuating stereotypes that harm these communities.

6). **Call for Justice 5.7:** Police services should establish better communication with Indigenous communities and engage in community-led training and education to promote understanding and reduce bias.

7). **Call for Justice 7.1:** Governments should fund and support Indigenous-led health and wellness services, with a focus on addressing the specific needs of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people.

8). **Call for Justice 9.3:** Governments should work with Indigenous communities to create culturally appropriate early learning and child care programs to ensure the safety and well-being of Indigenous children.

These Calls for Justice represent just a small selection of the comprehensive recommendations put forth in the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls' Final Report. They underscore the importance of collaborative and systemic efforts to address the ongoing crisis of violence against Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people.



## De-Col-O-Nize Framework:

The **DE-COL-O-NIZE** framework comprises of ten interconnected components and I will only go into the first six in this guidebook. They are as follows:

1). **Disrupting Colonial Narratives (D)** Community members must engage in a rigorous process of decolonizing and understand that willful blindness does not exonerate them from partaking in a colonially violent process.



**2). Empowering Community Voices: Centring Indigenous Laws (E)** Elevate the voices of Indigenous peoples by centring Indigenous laws that often get ignored or mistranslated as another 'diversity initiative'. Indigenous peoples have sovereign rights that extend well beyond 'nice' meetings.

**3). Cultivate Being and Ethical Translator (C)** Become an ethical translator for other allies who need assistance in this work.

**4). Ongoing Self-reflection and Accountability (O)** Community members must engage in regular self-reflections and critical examinations of how they continue to practice in colonially violent systems and how they are going to get out of doing so.

**5). Localized Indigenous & Indigenized Decision-making (L)** Promote decision-making at the local Indigenous levels, because that is where the laws are. Question, who is local to you? What Indigenous matriarchs are in your community right now doing all the hard work. Seek them out.

**6). Open Dialogues & Trauma-Informed & Ethical Spaces (O)** Learn heart-centered, honest, brave, and truthful communication skills and learn to decolonize and call out a system that is wrong.

# Critical Failures in Efforts Towards MMIWG2S:

The critical failure in efforts to make sustained changes for MMIWG2S in societies lies in the performative actions of the majority of people who struggle to address the issue. What communities need to do is learn how to turn inward personally, as it all starts with the individual.

Interactions between non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples are often perceived as communications between "educated/police/law/health/business experts" and "non-expert Indigenous people who need their help." The perpetual cycle of victimization of Indigenous people and the assumption of the "savior" role for white people must come to an end.

What is often not acknowledged in conversations between "the expert community member" and the "non-expert Indigenous person" is that an Indigenous person may be speaking from a completely different worldview and "language" (both literally and figuratively), invoking distinct pedagogies, practices, laws, and deploying unique educational categories and claims. These differences have been rendered untranslatable due to colonial violence and the spaces designed to prevent others from truly hearing Indigenous voices.

What I am asking non-Indigenous community members to do is to become more informed on issues such as "White Saviorism," "White Fragility," "White Innocence," "White Benevolence," and "Nice Racism," and to view encounters with Indigenous peoples as interactions between two experts.

# Indigenous Laws:

As generations of Indigenous peoples and scholars who study Indigenous laws have repeatedly pointed out, Indigenous laws are alive in Canada. These laws live in resilient legal traditions that have survived repeated attempts by the colonial state to erase Indigenous laws along with Indigenous cultures and languages. The continued existence of these plural legal orders makes Canada a “multi-juridical nation”

In fact, the TRC Report urges us to recognize ‘Indigenous law’ as a source for reconciliation and **TRC Call #50** specifically point to the importance of learning Indigenous law. **Article 40 of UNDRIP** also acknowledges the relationship between ensuring access to justice for Indigenous peoples and formal recognition of Indigenous law and legal systems.

Similarly, the **MMIWG2S Calls for Justice** emphasize the importance of Indigenous law as a source of law and call for the formal recognition of Indigenous legal systems. Several recommendations in the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls' final report address this topic:

1). **Call for Justice 1.2:** Calls upon all governments to recognize Indigenous peoples' inherent right to self-determination, including the right to freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social, and cultural development.

2). **Call for Justice 1.4:** Calls upon all governments to recognize and respect Indigenous peoples' rights to their culture, language, employment, education, health, and housing, and to maintain and strengthen their distinct political, economic, legal, social, and cultural institutions.

3). **Call for Justice 13.1:** Calls upon all governments to support the establishment and long-term sustainable funding of Indigenous-led low-barrier shelters, safe spaces, transition homes, second-stage housing, and services for Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people who are fleeing violence or have been subjected to sexualized violence and exploitation.

4). **Call for Justice 16.8:** Calls upon all governments to fund Indigenous-led initiatives to provide culturally appropriate and trauma-informed support services for families of MMIWG2S and survivors of violence.

These Calls for Justice underscore the need for governments to recognize and respect Indigenous law and legal systems, as well as to support Indigenous-led initiatives that reflect Indigenous values, traditions, and legal principles. Recognizing and incorporating Indigenous law into the broader legal framework is an essential step towards addressing the systemic issues contributing to the MMIWG2S crisis and promoting justice and reconciliation.

**More than Acknowledgement:** It must be more than a mere acknowledgment of the "multicultural" nature of Canadian society, an idea that underlies much of the existing literature on "getting to know" Indigenous peoples and "their issues" broadly. Reconciliation requires more than just attending to the specific needs of a marginalized minority group. A true commitment to reconciliation demands acknowledging the foundational violence of colonialism that has shaped Canada, Canadian laws, education, and its citizens and creating accountability measures the community can work towards moving forwards towards justice.

**More than Sensitivity Training:** Sensitivity training alone does not prepare non-Indigenous community members to recognize and confront systemic issues. It is essential to delve deeper into sensitivity training and "DEI" (diversity, inclusion, and equity) initiatives as community members transition from "broad commitments" to the more challenging task of translating these commitments into specific skills needed to become ethically competent, legally informed, and heart-centered. This understanding of sovereignty will help build capacity for making sustained changes.

**Indigenization:** Indigenization is a necessary approach due to the existing gaps of knowledge in the current colonial system Canadians currently operate in. Utilizing Indigenization transforms harmful systems into systems that heal.

**Expose:** community members need to practice exposing the colonial underpinnings of Euro-centric knowledge systems that dominate daily life and decision-making and they need to call it out and change it effectively. Willful blindness will not exonerate you.



**Piecemeal Attempts:** It is important to ask what, if anything, can be achieved through piecemeal attempts (such as a "celebrating" National Day for Truth and Reconciliation every September 30th (when this should not be a celebration at all), or "allowing" "alternative" (instead of mandatory) courses like, a generic "Indigenous Peoples" in schools. Doing these performative "band-aid solutions" in the absence of broader ongoing conversations about existing social, political, and economic inequities and ways in which colonial processes continue to reflect or replicate colonial violence?

**Epistemic Disobedience:** In order to move beyond the limitations of colonialism, Mignolo, W. and Tlostanova, M.V. (2012) "Learning to unlearn: Decolonial reflections from Eurasia and the Americas") suggest that we need to engage in what is called epistemic disobedience. This involves questioning dominant narratives and challenging the legitimacy of the systems and institutions that perpetuate colonialism. By doing so, we can begin to shift the balance of power and create new possibilities for collective action.

**Becoming a Traitor:** Danielle Lussier, PhD Métis legal scholar and Steven Stuchley in, "“Other Materials” - Traitorous Love and Decolonizing the Canadian Guide to Uniform Legal Citation" argue that simply being an ally to Indigenous peoples is not enough - instead, they advocate for a more radical approach that involves actively challenging dominant Western paradigms and supporting the work of Indigenous peoples in rebuilding their communities. By using the term, "traitorous," Lussier and Stuchley are suggesting that this approach requires a willingness to challenge established norms and values within the [legal] system, even if it means going against one's own interests or those of one's colleagues. In this sense, they see their work as a form of resistance against colonial ideologies that continue to operate within the academy and the [legal] system more broadly.



Lussier, D. (2021) Decolonizing Legal Education, Developing Indigenous Legal Pedagogy, and Healing Community: Law with Heart and Beadwork (Doctoral dissertation), pp.iv. Retrieved from uoResearch: <https://ruor.uottawa.ca/handle/10393/42012> on April 30, 2023

"The goal of becoming culturally competent does not prepare non-Indigenous community members to recognize and challenge systemic problems that limit their ability to make decisions appropriately in this multi-juridical world we live in."

*~Andrea Menard, LL.B LL.M*



## Taking Action As A Community:

**Local community dialogues:** Facilitate community-driven initiatives that bring together Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to share their experiences and perspectives related to **MMIWG2S**. This can include interactive workshops, public forums, and digital platforms for sharing stories. By creating trauma-informed and ethical spaces for dialogues, communities can work together to address the root causes of the **MMIWG2S** crisis and begin to understand everyone has a part to play. Creating open dialogues and trauma-informed and ethical spaces is essential for decolonizing our beliefs and truthing our way forward. By providing trauma-informed and ethical spaces for sharing experiences, voicing concerns on the violence of colonialism in everyone's daily lives and how it harms Indigenous women, girls and 2 Spirit and LGBTQQ+ people, one can learn to utilize heart-centred wisdom in order to create the stamina for difficult conversations and plans to take form. The Seven Grandfather Teachings of honesty, wisdom, humility, love, truth, respect and bravery (what I like to call "Indigenous ethics") can be utilized when difficult and 'risky' conversations arise. It will frame the open dialogues between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous peoples effectively.



**Decolonizing Public Spaces:** Rename streets, parks, and public spaces to reflect Indigenous languages and histories. Work with Indigenous communities and individuals to develop public art installations that showcase Indigenous perspectives and challenge colonial narratives. This will create a more inclusive environment that fosters dialogue and understanding between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in each Canadian community.

**Land Acknowledgement and Reparations:** Implement approaches to land acknowledgement that go beyond tokenistic statements. Encourage community members to establish land-based learning centers that actively engage in reclamation and restoration of Indigenous lands that were taken away illegally. Support reparations initiatives that return land and resources to Indigenous communities, empowering them to exercise their inherent rights to self-determination and sovereignty.

**Revitalizing Indigenous Legal Systems:** Collaborate with Indigenous legal scholars, elders, knowledge keepers, and Indigenous matriarchs to implement Indigenous laws into community bylaws, policies, regulations, mandates, mission statements, visions, strategic plans, operational plans across the police forces, city operations and planning, hospital operations and strategies, courts, law, schools, local businesses and more.

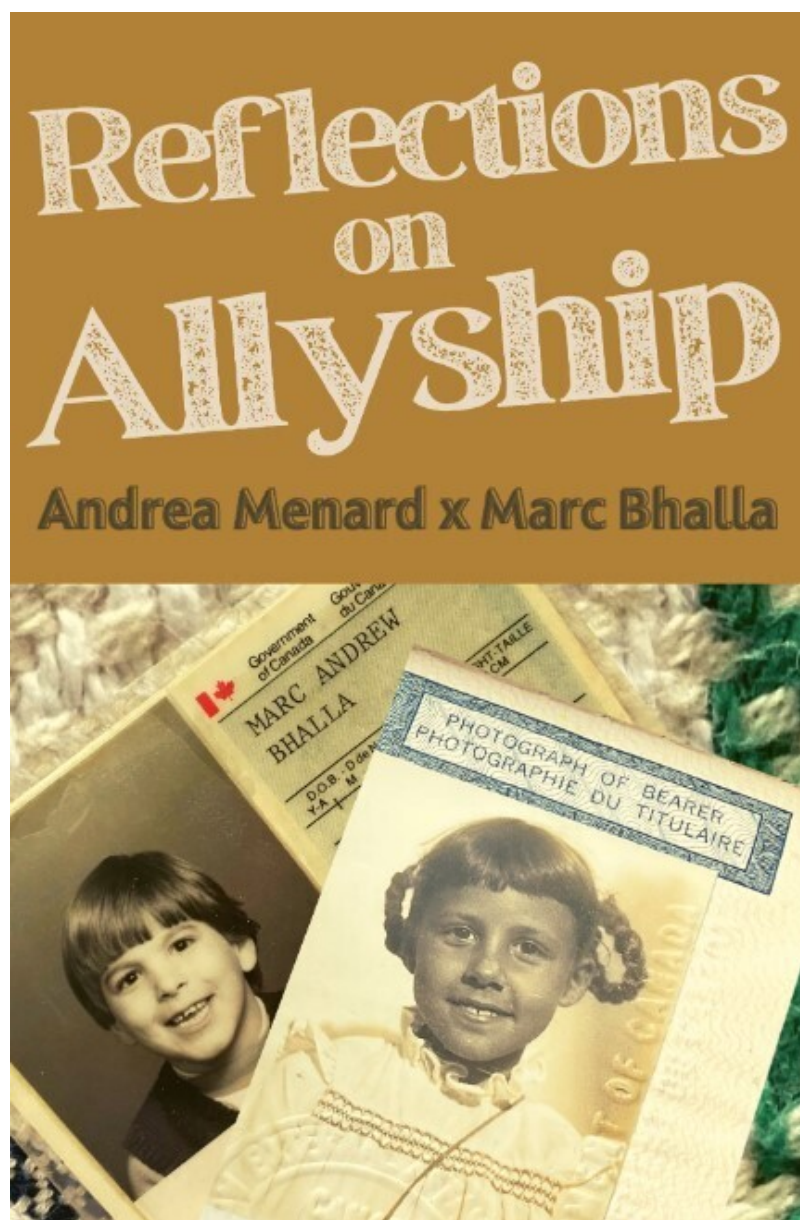
**Digital Sovereignty:** Establish digital platforms, designed and managed by Indigenous people in the community, that allow for the documentation, preservation, and sharing of local Indigenous knowledges, languages, and legal traditions. These platforms can serve as hubs for dialogue and collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, fostering mutual understanding and respect for Indigenous laws, lands, traditions, and protocols in each community across Canada.

**Intercultural Competency Education Programs:** Develop mandatory Indigenous intercultural competency education modules for all adults who did not get educated appropriately on Indigenous peoples in their K-12 years or in their professional years. The first goal can be "intercultural competencies" as outlined in the TRC Calls to Action, and should cover pre-colonization and colonization in Canada. By bridging the learning gap through intercultural competency education, we can ensure that people have with the "beginning knowledge" to understand that Indigenous peoples have a completely different set of laws and worldviews that need to be respected, understood, and incorporated.

**Creative Art and Media Initiatives:** Encourage art and media projects that raise awareness of MMIWG2S, Red Dress Day and related issues. This can include murals, street art, documentaries, podcasts, and other creative expressions that centre Indigenous voices and promote decolonization and truthing our way forward to reconciliation by being accountable to the Calls. By amplifying Indigenous perspectives and fostering public engagement, these initiatives can contribute to a broader understanding of the MMIWG2S crisis.

**Community Healing Circles:** Organize and support community sharing circles led by Indigenous-Elder-matriarchs, local-community-Indigenous-matriarchs, and Indigenous-traditional-knowledge-keepers-matriarchs. Indigenous-matriarchal-led sharing circles can offer culturally appropriate spaces for Indigenous and non-Indigenous community members to come together, share their experiences, and work collaboratively towards effectively dismantling toxic systems that sustain violence against Indigenous women, girls, 2 Spirit individuals and LGBTQQ+ peoples. By fostering personal connections and understanding, these circles can help dismantle stereotypes and prejudices that perpetuate the MMIWG2S crisis locally, provincially, and nationally.

**Decolonized Allyship Networks:** Establish networks of non-Indigenous allies who are committed to supporting Indigenous communities in their fight for justice, safety, and sovereignty. These networks can provide resources, guidance, and opportunities for collaboration, empowering non-Indigenous individuals to actively participate in the process of decolonization and reconciliation. See the Authentic Allyship Project at: [www.authenticalllyship.ca](http://www.authenticalllyship.ca) as an example of a non-Indigenous ally and an Indigenous individual who apply professional and life experiences to identify practical steps in support of the acknowledgement truth and the goal of reconciliation and follow us!



**Cultivate a Culture of Radical Allyship:** Canadian communities can embrace a culture of radical allyship, where non-Indigenous individuals actively challenge and confront colonial systems, beliefs, and practices that perpetuate the marginalization of Indigenous peoples. Allyship requires ongoing self-reflection, education, and a genuine commitment to supporting Indigenous rights, sovereignty, and well-being. Non-Indigenous peoples can engage in ongoing education about Indigenous histories, cultures, and contemporary issues. They can actively support Indigenous-led movements, organizations, and initiatives, while amplifying Indigenous voices in public discourse. Furthermore, they can challenge and dismantle racist and colonial attitudes and beliefs within their own social circles and communities. For more information on radical allyship, order our book, "Reflections on Allyship" [here](#), and feel free to contact us for more information, assistance with workshops, or questions [here](#).

**Partnership Building:** Establish partnerships with local Indigenous organizations, women's groups, and 2 Spirit collectives to facilitate dialogue, knowledge exchange, and collaboration. Encourage these groups to participate actively in the decision-making process, ensuring their voices and perspectives are centered in community discussions.

**Policy Development and Implementation:** Review and revise existing policies, bylaws, and governance structures to accommodate and promote matriarchal principles. Engage Indigenous women and 2 Spirit leaders in the development and implementation of new policies that align with matriarchal values and prioritize the well-being of the entire community.

**Leadership Opportunities:** Create opportunities for Indigenous women and 2 Spirit individuals to assume leadership positions within community organizations, boards, and committees. Encourage mentorship programs and leadership development initiatives that empower these individuals and foster their growth as community leaders.

**Community Events and Celebrations:** Organize community events and celebrations that honour and showcase the contributions of Indigenous women, girls, and 2 Spirit people. These events can serve as platforms for promoting matriarchal values and strengthening community bonds. By actively engaging in this process, Canadian communities can move in truth towards reconciliation and take accountable and more meaningful matriarchal-centred steps to get there. This paradigm shift will not only empower Indigenous women, girls, and 2 Spirit people but also contribute to the overall well-being and harmony of the entire community.



**Prioritizing the safety and well-being of Indigenous women, girls, and 2 spirit individuals** is an essential first step in addressing the MMIWG2S crisis. This involves recognizing the unique risks and vulnerabilities they face in colonial society and developing policies, programs, and holistic and Indigenized and decolonized services tailored to fit different worldviews and laws.

**Community-Based Response Teams:** Establish community-based response teams that are trained and equipped to address MMIWG2S cases with an Indigenized and decolonized approach and with a trauma-informed lens that promotes ethical and holistic space. These teams should be composed of Indigenous community members and allies who are committed to providing immediate, trauma-informed support to families and survivors, as well as working collaboratively with law enforcement and other agencies who will be educated on decolonizing, Indigenizing, be trauma-informed themselves and have knowledge of Indigenous laws in a multi-juridical space.

**Strengthening Accountability:** Create innovative mechanisms to hold law enforcement, government, and other institutions accountable for their role in the MMIWG2S crisis. This can include the establishment of independent oversight bodies, monitoring and reporting systems, and robust complaint processes that centre the voices and experiences of Indigenous women, girls, and 2 spirit individuals.

**Decolonized Data Collection and Research:** Develop decolonized approaches to data collection and research related to MMIWG2S. This should involve Indigenous researchers and communities in designing and conducting studies, as well as the development of culturally appropriate methodologies and frameworks that respect Indigenous knowledge systems, ethics and laws.

## **Culturally Responsive Services:**

Advocate for and support the creation of transformative, culturally responsive services for Indigenous women, girls, and 2 spirit individuals. This can include health care, mental health support, housing, education, and employment services that are designed and delivered in partnership with Indigenous communities, ensuring that they are accessible, relevant, and empowering.

## **Next Step: Implementing the MMIWG2S Calls for Justice:**

The crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and 2-spirit individuals (MMIWG2S) is a pressing issue that requires immediate attention and action locally, provincially and nationally. The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada has made 231 Calls for Justice, outlining the necessary steps to address this crisis along with this Community Take-Action guidebook, and the national [Authentic Allyship Project](#).

Through the reclamation of Indigenous laws, the initiation of land back movements, and the **MMIWG2S Calls for Justice**, let us seek to create a future where the rights, dignity, laws, lands, ethics, and well-being of all Indigenous peoples are respected, centred, and upheld where ever we are.

May we honour the legacy by tirelessly working to create a decolonized and Indigenized system where every Indigenous woman, girl, and 2SLGBTQQ+ person can live in safety, dignity, and harmony on this land that has nurtured and sustained the four legged, flyers, water beings, crawlers, plants, rocks, trees, water, humans, and the ones in the spirit world since time immemorial. In memory, solidarity, and hope, let us be courageous.



## Resources:

Canada, 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, vol 1a (Marion Buller).

Canada, National Inquiry Into Truth and Reconciliation Commission, “Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada” (2015), online (pdf): Truth and Reconciliation Commission <trc.ca> [perma.cc/V22-VTPJ].

Wilson, K., & Hodgson, C. (n.d.). Pulling Together: Foundations Guide. In Pulling Together: A guide for Indigenization of post-secondary institutions. A professional learning series. Retrieved from <https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationfoundations/>

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, GA Res 295 (II), UNDRIP, 61 Sess, Supp No 53, UN Doc A/61.

Parmar, P. (2018). Reconciliation and Ethical Lawyering: Some Thoughts on Cultural Competence. *Canadian Bar Review*, 96(1), 63-88.  
<https://cbr.cba.org/index.php/cbr/article/view/4558>

Napoleon, V., & Friedland, H. (2014). An Inside Job: Engaging with Indigenous Legal Traditions through Stories. *McGill Law Journal*, 61(4), 725-754.

Napoleon, V., & Friedland, H. (2016). Indigenous Legal Traditions: Roots to Renaissance. In M. Asch, J. Borrows, & J. Tully (Eds.), *The Promise and Perils of Reconciliation: Indigenous Peoples and the Law in Canada* (pp. 123-145). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

# A Call for Justice:

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Embarking on a journey of decolonization and truth-telling, we acknowledge the significance of Indigenous laws in this land we call Canada and its multi-jurisdictional space, encompassing Indigenous laws, common law, and civil law. We also recognize the corresponding 231 Calls for Justice for the MMIWG2S, which we must address collectively as a community. We cannot do it individually. We must learn to decolonize processes and practices in our efforts to stop systemic violence against Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, and LGBTQQIA+ individuals. We understand that by learning about and centering local Indigenous laws where we each live, we can create ethical spaces that facilitate trauma-informed practices and promote accountability towards reconciliation and respect for Indigenous knowledge systems. Red Dress Day must go beyond mere recognition of an MMIWG2S event; it must serve as an impetus for communities across Canada to take action, receive appropriate Indigenous-centered education that explains Indigenous laws, and make transformative changes that disrupt the colonial status quo.