

# MISKOBAGIZI ADVOCACY BOOKLET

Part I: About the Installation  
Part II: Important Statistics  
Part III: Advocacy Guide



# MISKOBAGIZI: PRESENTING ABSENCE

miskobagizi (“the tree has red leaves”) is an installation that explores how Indigenous art positions absence as advocacy. miskobagizi is a site-specific installation created by Zoe Antoinette Eddy, an Indigenous (Algonquin Anishinaabe/Wendat) woman artist, and serves as a tribute reimagining of Jaime Black’s REDress Project. Rooted in Indigenous feminist praxis, the work centers the ongoing absence of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit people (MMIWG2S) through a visual poetics of disruption, grief, and invocation. Drawing from the motif of the red dress—but diverging in form—the installation deploys garments to suggest presences that linger yet refuse legibility. Absence becomes the material of the work itself.

As I worked on this project, as a survivor of the same violence that impacts my community, I interrogated how gendered violence renders Indigenous women hypervisible in public spectacle but invisible in justice systems—and I considered how art might trouble these frames. Instead of replicating the red dress movement exactly, miskobagizi renders error and absence aesthetically productive. Rather than invite viewers into consumption, I hope I can invite them into productive discomfort, curiosity, and even communal mourning.

Each garment was made in artistic concentration on an Indigenous woman, girl, or Two-Spirit person who was lost to racialized and gendered violence. As I made these dresses, some of which commemorated strangers and some which commemorated those in my own community, I reflected on personal and collective memory, the ethics of witnessing, and the political weight of making space for what is missing without claiming to represent it.

miskobagizi resists closure, instead asserting a land-based, relational response to grief—where mourning is not a private act but a public call to remain in relation. This work demonstrates how Indigenous women’s visual art can mobilize absence and aesthetic “failure” to foreground survivance, sovereignty, and kinship beyond representation, inviting viewers to confront both presence and loss as active, entangled forces.

# THE GIFT OF COMMITMENT (ABOUT THIS BOOKLET)

I co-curated the gift portion of this exhibit with my sister, Samantha Eddy. I knew that I wanted to offer participants the gift of commitment--that is an open invitation, by two Indigenous people, for non-Indigenous people to advocate for our missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirits. While #MMIWG2S is an Indigenous movement that needs to be led by Indigenous people, it is something that needs Indigenous allies. In our work as activists, my sister and I have often found that non-Indigenous people are not sure how to best enter advocacy for this issue.

To this end, and in the spirit of offering the gift of commitment, we have put together this advocacy booklet. It contains some background information on the movement, relevant statistics, and, most important, actionable steps for allies. This is a brief primer on this issue so that individuals can be informed and, therefore, better able to involve themselves.

Finally, for those Indigenous and non-Indigenous advocates who want to join us in the MMIWG2S movement, we would like to offer bracelets that signify commitment. Samantha is a leather worker: we have made 56 deerhide braided bracelets. These are for the 56.1% of Indigenous women who experience sexual violence in their lives. Deer, braiding, and the color red are all integral to our feminist praxis as Indigenous women, and we invite you to wear these with us. Justice needs witnesses, and we hope the Firefly community can help us continue to light the path of justice for our communities.

Chi-Miigwech (Big Thanks),  
The Artists

# THE REDress MOVEMENT

The Red Dress is an ubiquitous part of Turtle Island/North American Indigenous activism. The current iteration of the red dress originates with Jamie Black's landmark art movement, The REDress Project. Jamie Black, a multimedia Métis artist, started The REDress Project in 2010. The community-oriented and collaborative public art installation addresses the specific kinds of violence Indigenous women face. Black states on her art:

“The REDress Project focuses around the issue of missing or murdered Aboriginal women across Canada. It is an installation art project based on an aesthetic response to this critical national issue. The project has been installed in public spaces throughout Canada and the United States as a visual reminder of the staggering number of women who are no longer with us. Through the installation I hope to draw attention to the gendered and racialized nature of violent crimes against Aboriginal women and to evoke a presence through the marking of absence.” (Black 2020)

Black's project is one that is both stark and vibrant: the red dresses, installed in both public and private spaces, are beautiful and arresting. They are also rooted in longer Indigenous aesthetic lineages. The dresses, in their exhibition, are not uniform, but instead a patchwork of different designs redolent of different people: sparks of white trim, tiny blue flowers, and the marks of wear and tear separate the dresses from one another—every dress, like the person who might have worn it, is individual. The dresses themselves are not quite lifeless, but instead testaments of life that once existed. Surveying the cut of waistlines, slope of sleeves, and hem of skirts, it is easy to imagine the shape of legs, bellies, and wrists that might have filled out fabric. Additionally, there is the uncomfortable ambiguity as to the dresses' former wearers: Black's community sources the garments, asking for donations of red dresses for her installations, and the dresses' provenances are unclear. The most obvious tragedy is the reality that many of the dresses may be private, quiet memorials to those still missing and/or murdered.

This uncomfortable near emptiness is Black's aim. In a 2015 interview, Black stated, “Seeing nothing in it is a stark reminder that someone is not there.” For Black, the discomfort of emptiness, made manifest in the visual art installation, serves as a gateway to advocacy: “Visual art has a kind of symbolic power that allows people to enter into a conversation... when you see a visual image it impacts you emotionally first... art has the power to allow people to feel emotionally connected to what's going on before they find out even the particulars of what happened” (ShawTV Winnipeg 2015). The REDress Project encourages discussion, awareness, and cohesion across multiple communities. From the donations to the installations, Black works on a collaborative level that uses the power of visual art and performance to build advocacy.

In 2025, 15 years after Black's initial installation, the REDress Project has blossomed into a polyvalent, collaborative, and multiple times re-interpreted Indigenous art movement. Indigenous activist-artists, whether or not they are familiar with Black's initial project, have adopted guerilla art movement tactics as a way to bring attention and memorial to the continuing violence against Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit people. *miskobagizi* (Anishinaabemowin: “the tree has red leaves”) is an interpretation of the REDress movement imagined within the context of Firefly's participatory arts framework.

# INSTALLATION GLOSSARY

1. MMIWG2S– Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit people.
2. Two-Spirit– A pan-Indigenous term for people with both masculine and feminine traits; sometimes (not always) used alongside the non-Indigenous term LGBTQ; Two-Spirit presentation varies highly across Turtle Island Indigenous communities.
3. Red Dress– A symbol honoring and mourning missing and murdered Indigenous women.
4. Sovereignty– The inherent right of Indigenous nations to govern themselves.
5. Colonialism – A system that continues to displace and oppress Indigenous peoples and cultures.
6. Human Trafficking – The exploitation and trade of people, often targeting Indigenous women and girls.
7. Land Back – A movement to return stolen lands to Indigenous stewardship.
8. Indigenous Grassroots – Community-led organizing by and for Indigenous people.
9. Justice – More than legal punishment; it means truth, healing, and accountability.
10. Turtle Island – A name for the landmass referred to as North and Central America; references various Turtle Island Indigenous creation myths

# IMPORTANT STATISTICS



Read More Here:

[ncjrs.gov/pandoc/tandoc/pandoc.cfm?cid=3398&tid=10](https://www.ncjrs.gov/pandoc/tandoc/pandoc.cfm?cid=3398&tid=10&cid=3398&tid=10)

[bia.gov/service/mmu/missing-and-murdered-indigenous-people-crisis](https://www.bia.gov/service/mmu/missing-and-murdered-indigenous-people-crisis)

[nativehope.org/missing-and-murdered-indigenous-women-mmiw/](https://www.nativehope.org/missing-and-murdered-indigenous-women-mmiw/)

[nativewomenswilderness.org/mmiw](https://www.nativewomenswilderness.org/mmiw)

[pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/15311980/](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/15311980/)

[ictnews.org/news/known-and-not-forgotten/](https://www.ictnews.org/news/known-and-not-forgotten/)

# Lifetime Violence



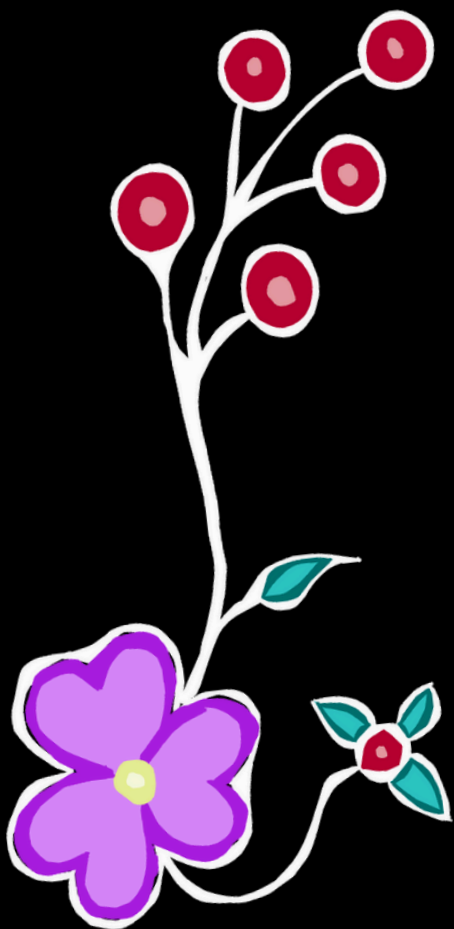
**84.3%**

OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN  
HAVE EXPERIENCED  
VIOLENCE IN THEIR  
LIFETIME



**56.1%**

HAVE EXPERIENCED  
SEXUAL VIOLENCE



**55.5%**

HAVE BEEN PHYSICALLY  
ABUSED BY INTIMATE  
PARTNERS

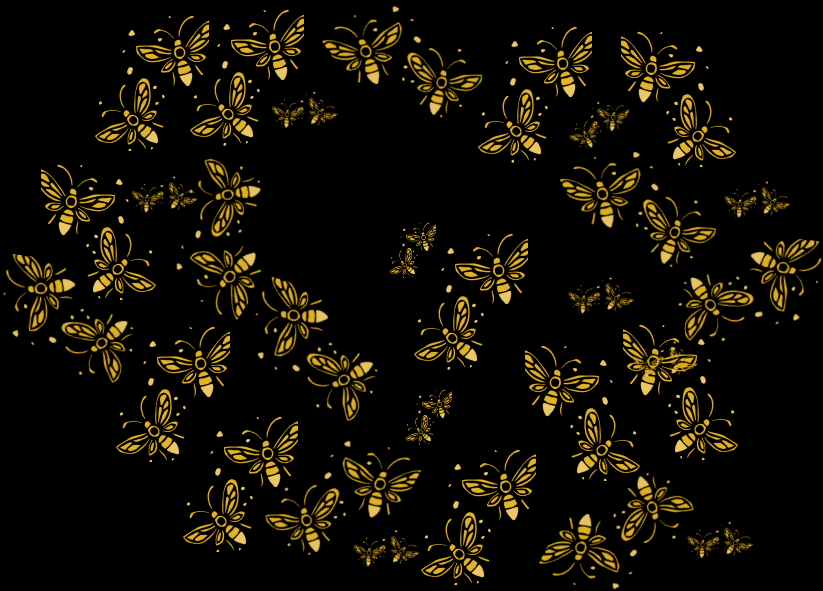


Indigenous women face  
disproportionate  
amounts of violence in  
all aspects of their lives.

# Disparity in Reporting

5,712

116



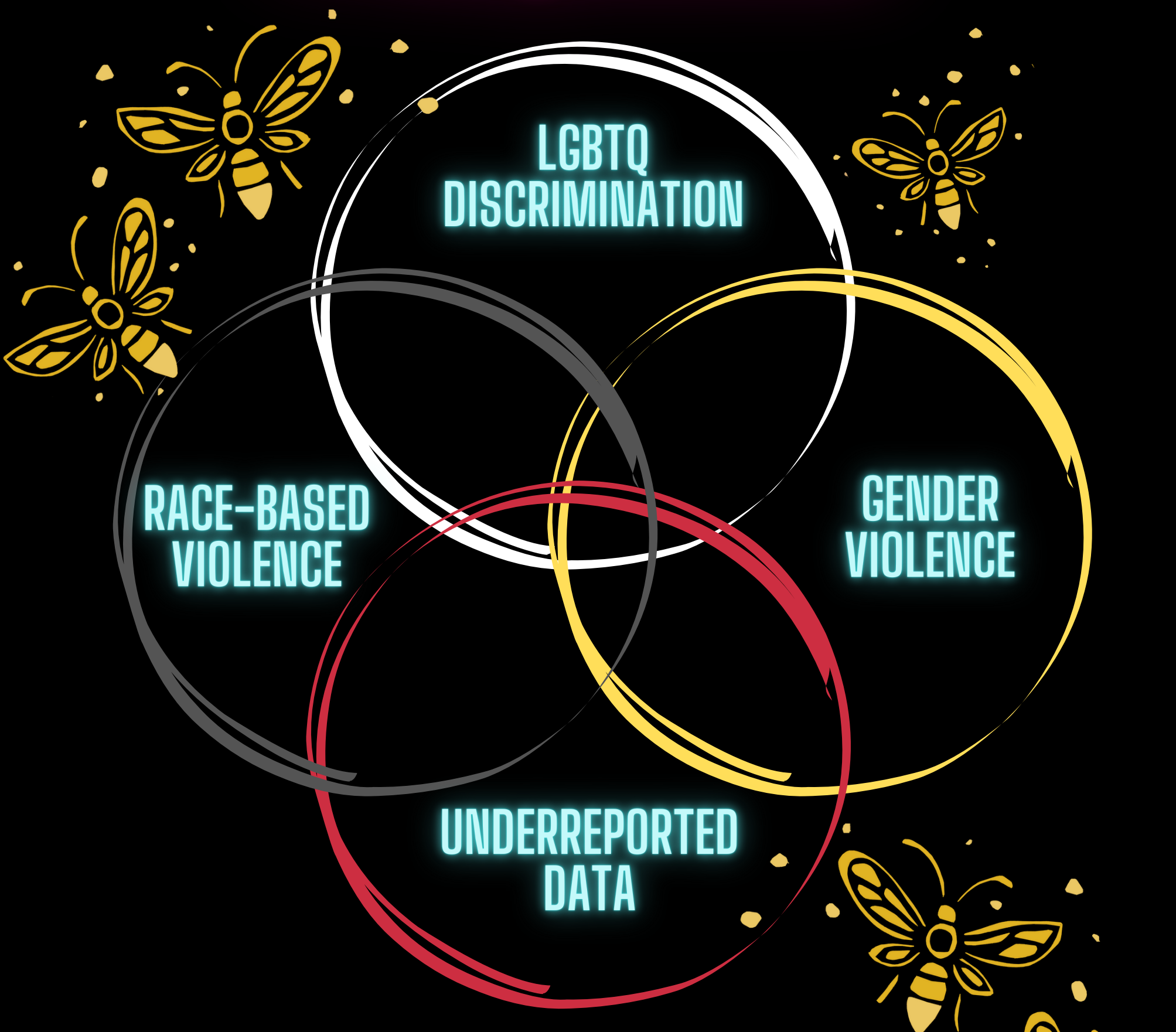
**CASES OF MISSING  
INDIGENOUS WOMEN  
AND GIRLS REPORTED**



**CASES OFFICIALLY  
LOGGED BY US  
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE**

**In 2016, 5,712 cases  
were reported. Only 116  
cases were logged in  
DoJ databases.**

# Two-Spirit People, 4 x Marginalization



78%–85% of Two-Spirit  
people have experienced  
sexual assault and  
physical violence.

# Non-Indigenous Perpetrators



# 67%

**OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN  
REPORT SEXUAL ASSAULTS  
WERE COMMITTED BY  
NON-INDIGENOUS  
PERPETRATORS**

In the US, the exponentially high rate of sexual violence against Indigenous women is often dismissed as an "Indian problem"--that is, it is assumed Indigenous people are harming Indigenous women. This does not align with existing data on perpetrator race and ethnicity.

# Systemic Failure

## Reporting

CASES ARE UNDERREPORTED DUE TO BOTH LAW ENFORCEMENT BIASES, TRIBAL REGULATIONS, AND AFFECTED PARTIES FEAR OF ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEMS

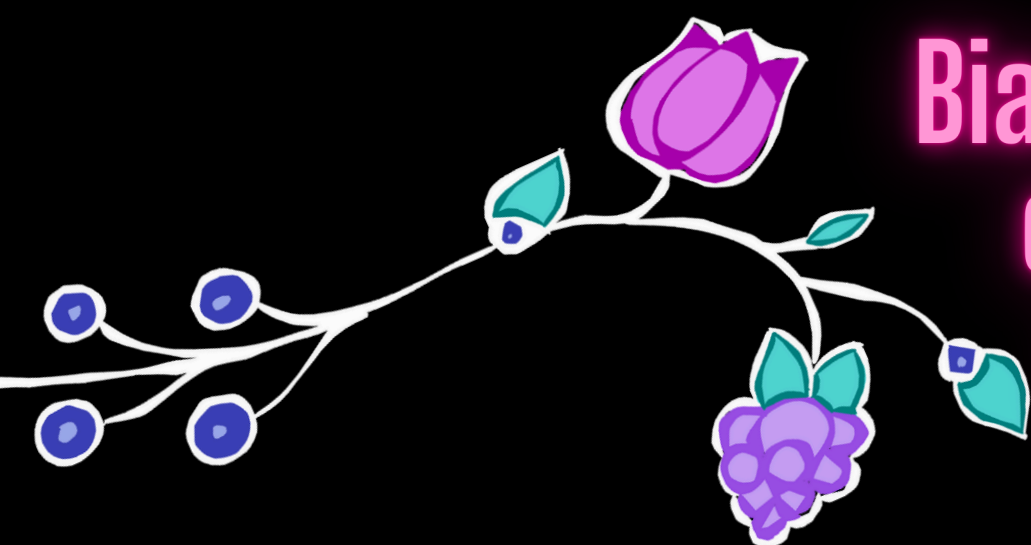
## Investigation

INVESTIGATIONS, IF THEY HAPPEN, ARE OFTEN MINIMAL AND INCOMPLETE DUE TO INSTITUTIONAL BIAS

## Prosecution

IF A CASE MAKES IT TO PROSECUTION, AFFECTED PARTIES OFTEN FACE INCREASED PREJUDICE IN FORMAL BODIES, PARTICULARLY IF THE ALLEGED OFFENDER IS A NON-INDIGENOUS PERSON

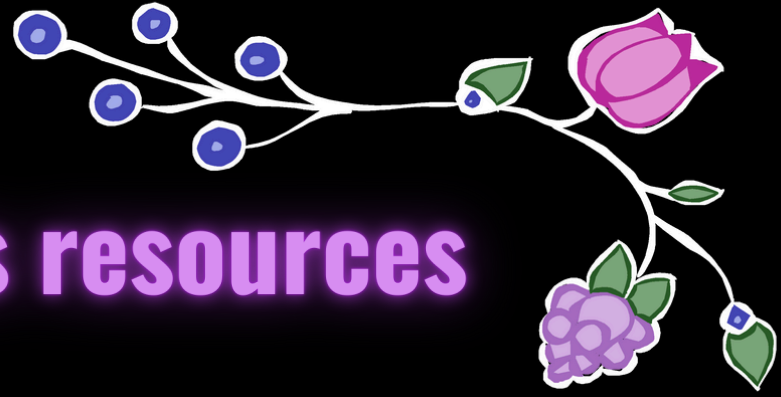
Bias against Indigenous communities creates multiple gaps in the justice system.



# ADVOCACY GUIDE



# Center Indigenous Voices

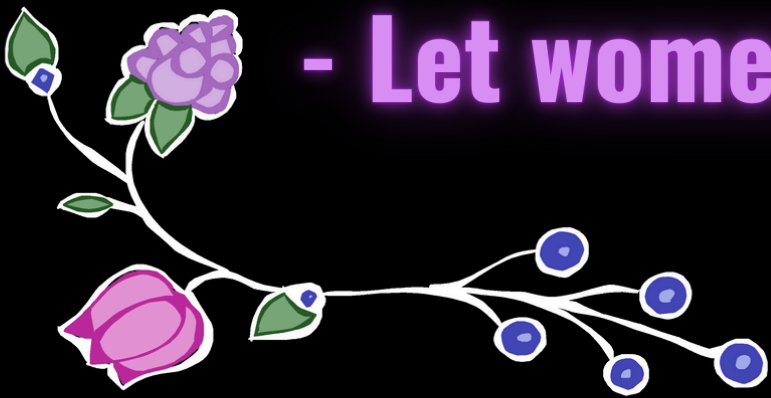


- Share Indigenous resources

- Amplify Native experts

- Avoid tokenism

- Let women and Two-Spirits lead



Don't co-opt the  
movement.

# Share Data, Not Trauma

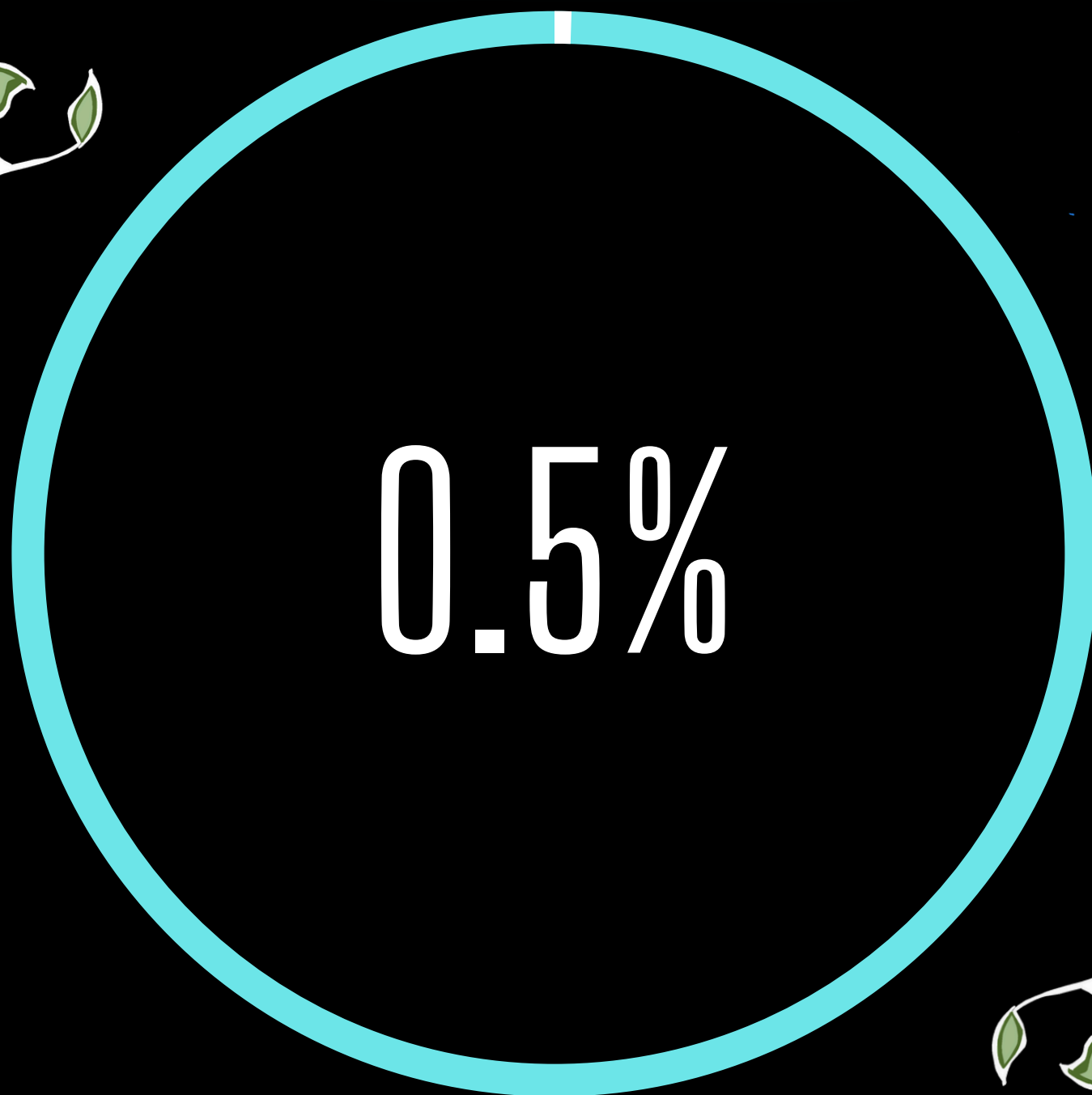
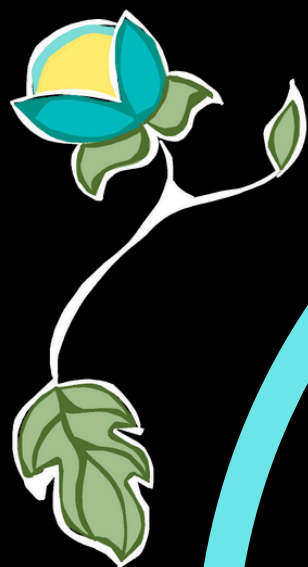


- **Share verified statistics and data**
- **Listen to the wishes of survivors, communities, and families**
- **Avoid circulating graphic content without community consent**
- **Refuse to circulate click bait and sensational headlines**



**Respect the line between awareness and exploitation.**

# Fund the Frontlines



Indigenous people are roughly 3% of the population. In 2024, the share of philanthropic grant dollars specifically benefiting Native-led organizations was only .5%.

# Relevant Initiatives, I



## 1. Sovereign Bodies Institute (SBI)

A Native-led research organization that maintains the most comprehensive MMIWG2S database and supports Indigenous communities with data sovereignty.  
<https://www.sovereign-bodies.org>

## 2. National Indigenous Women's Resource Center (NIWRC)

A Native-led nonprofit providing policy advocacy, technical assistance, and grassroots training to end gender-based violence in Native communities.  
<https://www.niwrc.org>

## 3. MMIW USA

A grassroots organization supporting families of missing and murdered Indigenous women through direct aid, awareness campaigns, and safety initiatives.  
<https://www.mmiwusa.org>

## 4. Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC)

A national advocacy organization for Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people that spearheaded the original REDress campaign and MMIWG2S awareness work.  
<https://www.nwac.ca>

## 5. StrongHearts Native Helpline

A confidential, culturally-appropriate helpline staffed by Native advocates supporting victims of domestic and sexual violence.  
<https://www.strongheartshelpline.org>



# Relevant Initiatives, II

## 6. Native Women Lead

An Indigenous-women-led economic justice and leadership organization that reinvests in Native women's safety, well-being, and entrepreneurship.

<https://www.nativewomenlead.org>

## 7. Walking With Our Sisters

A grassroots commemorative art installation project honoring over 1,800 missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people.

<https://walkingwithoursisters.ca>

## 8. Queer Indigenous Gathering (QIG)

A Two-Spirit-led nonprofit centering healing, visibility, and justice for queer and Two-Spirit Indigenous people affected by gender-based violence.

<https://www.qigathering.org>

## 9. Justice for Our Sisters

A Native-led initiative providing direct aid to MMIWG2S families and organizing legislative advocacy in rural and reservation communities.

<https://www.facebook.com/justiceforoursisters/>

## 10. Waking Women Healing Institute

An Anishinaabe-led organization focused on healing, community education, and safety for Indigenous women, including work on the MMIWG2S epidemic in the Great Lakes region.

<https://www.wakingwomenhealingint.org>

# Pressure Policy Makers



**Call on your legislators  
to support legislation  
that addresses the  
MMIWG2S crisis and  
supports Indigenous  
rights.**



# Legislative Efforts



## 1. Savanna's Act (Public Law No: 116-165)

Status: Passed into law in 2020

Purpose: Requires the DOJ to strengthen data collection, coordination, and response to MMIWG cases.

Action: Urge your representatives to fund and enforce Savanna's Act and monitor agency compliance.

## 2. Not Invisible Act (Public Law No: 116-166)

Status: Passed in 2020

Purpose: Creates a joint advisory committee on violent crime in Native communities and coordinates law enforcement efforts.

Action: Call on Congress to support the continued implementation and accountability of this law.

## 3. Reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)

Status: Reauthorized in 2022, but tribal provisions need strengthening

Purpose: Grants tribal courts expanded authority to prosecute non-Native perpetrators.

Action: Advocate for stronger tribal jurisdiction and funding for culturally appropriate services.

## 4. Bridging Agency Data Gaps Act

Status: Introduced

Purpose: Would require federal agencies to address missing person and murder case disparities across Native communities.

Action: Urge representatives to co-sponsor and advance this bill.

## 5. Bad River Band of the Lake Superior Tribe Act

Status: Introduced (2023)

Purpose: Addresses tribal sovereignty and environmental protections for Indigenous lands.

Action: Pressure representatives to support tribal self-determination, which is critical for preventing violence.

# Uplift Two-Spirit People



Two-Spirit People face  
overlapping violence. Promote  
Two-Spirit inclusion in  
MMIWG2S advocacy.

**IF YOU ARE  
COMMITTED TO  
SPREADING  
AWARENESS ABOUT  
MMIWG2S, PLEASE  
REMEMBER TO TAKE  
A BRACELET AND/OR  
SOME STICKERS AS  
A GIFT.**

