



Legislation Text

File #: 65154, **Version:** 1

The proposed resolution designates May 5, 2021, as "Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Awareness Day" in Madison, Wisconsin. It also directs that the Madison Police Department (MPD) and the Department of Civil Rights (DCR) work with the Wisconsin Department of Justice and other stakeholders to collect accurate data and implement solutions. DCR has recommended a base figure of \$50,000 to allow for necessary consultation hours and/or supplemental support to organizations like DAIS to expand capacity for this work. There is no budget for this and an appropriation would need to be made to fund this effort whether using City resources or potential grant funding. MPD has indicated that their role can be accomplished with existing resources.

Designating May 5, 2021, as "Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Awareness Day" in Madison, Wisconsin.

WHEREAS according to a 2016 report from the National Institute of Justice, 84% of American Indian and Alaskan Native women have experienced violence in their lifetime, more than half of whom experienced sexual violence; and

WHEREAS, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, homicide is the third leading cause of death among American Indian and Alaskan Native women between 10 and 24 years of age and the fifth leading cause of death for American Indian and Alaskan Native women between 25 and 34 years of age; 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 NamUS missing persons 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;

WHEREAS, the Urban Indian Health Institute found there have been at least six cases of missing and murdered tribal women and girls in Wisconsin in a 2018 report; 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, local law enforcement in urban areas rarely work with a victim's Tribal Nation, denying that Nation's inherent sovereignty and denying that Nation the chance to access data to protect its own citizens; 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 1990, 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 member Lorraine Brown Bear, murdered in 2016; and

WHEREAS, we commemorate the lives of missing and murdered American Indian and Alaskan Native women and girls whose cases are documented and undocumented in public records and media and demonstrate solidarity with the families of the victims in light of these tragedies;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Mayor and Common Council do hereby proclaim May 5, 2021, to be Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Awareness Day in the City of Madison. This is a day we mourn and call attention to the many missing and murdered Native women and girls, as well as those who have experienced violence and assault and resolve to act to prevent further victimization.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Mayor and Common Council directs that the Madison Police Department and the Department of Civil Rights work with the Wisconsin Department of Justice and any other

stakeholders to collect accurate data and implement solutions.