Sisters in Spirit (SIS)

- Over 582 Aboriginal women have gone missing or are feared dead in Canada over the past 20-30 years.
- Over half these women are under 31; 17% are 18 and under.
- The majority are mothers.

(From “Voices of Our Sisters in Spirit: A Report to Families and Communities”, NWAC, 2009)

The main goal of SIS was to research and raise awareness of alarmingly high rates of violence against Aboriginal women and girls in Canada. The program worked with families to ensure that experiences and recommendations were documented, and to restore the memory of loved ones.

What Aboriginal Women and Girls Can Do

Learn about safety planning. Having a plan in place will keep you and your family safe.

Community involvement means being aware and getting involved with initiatives that end violence against Elders, women, children, youth and men in our communities.

If you suspect that someone is missing you can file a Missing Persons Report. You can file a report over the phone or in person with police.

If you suspect that a child or youth under the age of eighteen has been abducted and is in danger, the police and media can issue an Amber Alert.

If you are a victim of a crime, Victim Services provides support to navigate the criminal justice system and to receive support services.

Friendship Centres in Ontario

Friendship Centres are community spaces that provide culturally appropriate activities, programs and services for Aboriginal people of all ages.

Contact or visit your local Friendship Centre:

- Sign up for a program or activity
- Seek support
- Find out what’s happening in your community
- Volunteer

For more information on this campaign, go to OFIFC.org or Kanawayhitowin.ca

1-800-772-9291

This Project has received financial support from the Government of Ontario, Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy.
Aboriginal Traditional Views of Sexuality

In most Aboriginal cultures, promiscuity was seen as harmful to one's wellbeing. Rape was uncommon and was a very serious crime with heavy consequences. Sex between family members and sex between adults and children was strictly forbidden. Living together as a couple was acceptable if the couple was emotionally mature and thoughtful. In some cultures, this was considered marriage.

Traditional Aboriginal people see sexuality as a natural, normal and spiritual part of life. Sexuality is sacred, not shameful. It is a rite and responsibility for young people to learn about their sexuality. Children need teachings about their bodies, moon time and other sexual and reproductive abilities, in ways that are respectful and safe. In the past, the whole family was involved more actively in pregnancy and birth than they are today. Birthing knowledge was commonplace.

Traditional women’s roles gave them a voice, and kept them safe from abuse, sexual assault and stalking. In many nations ancestry was traced through women. Women were seen as creators of life and nurturers and sustainers of communities, building and maintaining housing and supervising family affairs. Land and crops belonged to them. Women were highly politically active. Men’s traditional duties often required them to be away.

Women as Sexual Objects

The idea about sex as dirty and shameful, as something to purchase or controlled, came with colonization. Aboriginal women were treated not as human beings but as sexual objects. These attitudes continue to have an impact on Aboriginal communities today.

Aboriginal Women and Identity

Racist attitudes seek to destroy Aboriginal women’s identity by redefining that identity along racial and gender stereotypes. Aboriginal women have been seen historically as something untamed and not worthy of the same rights and considerations of other women; they were seen as worth less, and even consumable. This false picture of Aboriginal women continues today and consequently disrespects their original and true sacred place in Aboriginal cultures. It creates an atmosphere where Aboriginal women and girls are seen as open for unwanted sexual attention.

To exoticize something is to make something that is normal seem foreign and mysterious. Aboriginal women have been “exoticized” by the past and still are today.

Aboriginal Human Trafficking

“Sometimes young Indigenous women are prostituted by their boyfriends to pay off drug debts…. it has become an accepted practice to take advantage of young Indigenous women. Such actions take place in every day life and thereby create a vulnerability issue for these young Indigenous women.”


Aboriginal human trafficking is a unique problem identified by Aboriginal organizations and in government reports, non-governmental newsletters and human trafficking conferences. Poverty, abuse, and racism increase the vulnerability of Aboriginal women and girls to human trafficking.

Women who are sex workers, or who work in other areas of the sex industry, often experience violence from strangers, clients, acquaintances, partners and the police (NWAC 2010).

Young Aboriginal sex workers make up approximately 90% of the youth sex trade. Intergenerational trauma is a significant factor in their involvement. To fill the missing or lost sense of belonging, Aboriginal youth involved in the sex trade are exploited by gang culture, which seeks to replace family and community.

Talk4Healing
A Help Line for Aboriginal Women
1-855-554-HEAL (4325)