



The Beaded Red Dress Commemorative Art Project - May 2022



NATIVE CHILD
AND FAMILY SERVICES
OF TORONTO



Women and Gender
Equality Canada

Femmes et Égalité
des genres Canada

This Beaded Red Dress Commemorative Art Project was created to honour the lives of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and Two-Spirit People (MMIWG2S) through the facilitation of virtual “Bead In” community engagement sessions. These “Bead In” sessions were guided with cultural teachings with respected Elder, Marilyn Sutherland, then followed with beading instruction from facilitator, Natalie Sweeney or with a variety of guest speakers such as Mary Lou Smoke, Fawn Wood, EJ Kwandibens, and Tammy Watson who each shared their own experiences, stories, and ways of healing trauma through art.

Participants created two beaded red dresses: one red dress was beaded to keep in honour of MMIWG2S and to memorialize a family member or friend, and the second beaded red dress was given to Native Child and Family Services of Toronto to contribute towards a community art exhibit that will become a living legacy of their artistic expressions. This photobook is a display of the participants' beaded red dresses along with their story on what this project meant to them.

We are extremely grateful to all the participants and those who were able to join our weekly virtual “Bead In” sessions where they learned, shared, connected, and reflected with each other on healthy pathways to navigate healing trauma through beading.

Chi-miigwetch (Thank you) to the Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE) for their support with this project and many thanks to our Support Staff, Elders, Knowledge Carriers, Beading Facilitator, and all the guest speakers. This community art exhibit will continue to honour our lost loved ones and raise further awareness of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and Two-Spirit People (MMIWG2S).

Miigwetch







**ALITA SAUVE
TAHLTAN AND CREE NATIONS
LIVING IN TORONTO**

"I am participating to honour all murdered and missing Indigenous persons."

ANNA HUDSON

"It has been a pleasure to participate in the Beaded Red Dress Commemorative Art Project and taking instruction from our wonderful facilitator. As I stitch each bead onto my pin I think about the MMIWG2S, their families and communities. Women are the pillars of community and they must be honoured , respected and protected!"





ANNA
SPIRIT NAME: DINDINSEE
OJIBWE

"My beaded dress allows me to bring awareness and to honour all the MMIWG. I also had the opportunity to learn the skill of beading."

ANNETTE CRISTO
RESIDES ON THE TRADITIONAL
TERRITORY OF ATIKAMEKSHENG
ANISHNAWBEK

*"My dress is about my Auntie Vickie who was taken at a young age by her partner. She was a mother, auntie, sister & friend. I was so young when she was taken, but I remember her beautiful face and her love of life. The fire in my pin represents that flame. The sparkle is the stars that she is among. I see it in her daughter and granddaughters
 ~ Baamaapii Gaawabmin"*





CAROLE
CARRIBBEAN DESCENT
BOWMANVILLE, ON

"I am a foster parent and have been working with indigenous children for over 15 years I am also learning about the culture I enjoy every bit of it and want to learn more."

CASSANDRA TWYNE
SPIRIT NAME: RAINDROP
MI'KMAQ AND SETTLER ANCESTRY
HAMILTON, ON

"Very happy to participate in this project, to help raise awareness of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. The Color Purple was incorporated in the dress to represent wisdom, bravery, and spirituality."

**CORINA
MI'KMAQ
MIAWPUKEK FIRST NATION**

"3 years ago, my young female cousin was the first person to ever be murdered on our reserve. This was a direct result of domestic violence by a non-Indigenous partner. I am just recently beginning to learn about my culture and understand what that means to me and for the first time identify openly as an Indigenous woman. I want to increase my awareness and knowledge of the MMIWG and impacts from intergenerational trauma of residential schools as this will support my personal healing journey."



CYNTHIA





DAGNEY GARDINER
TREATY 13

"This is an opportunity to bring awareness to MMIWG2S+ community. Making this pin was my first time beading. It offered me an opportunity to remember and grow through and with community, culture, and wellness."



DAWN
DAKELH FROM TL'AZT'EN NATION

"This is the first item I beaded. I'm part of the sixties scoop and am reconnecting."

For Mackie Basil, MMIWG from Tl'azt'en Nation."



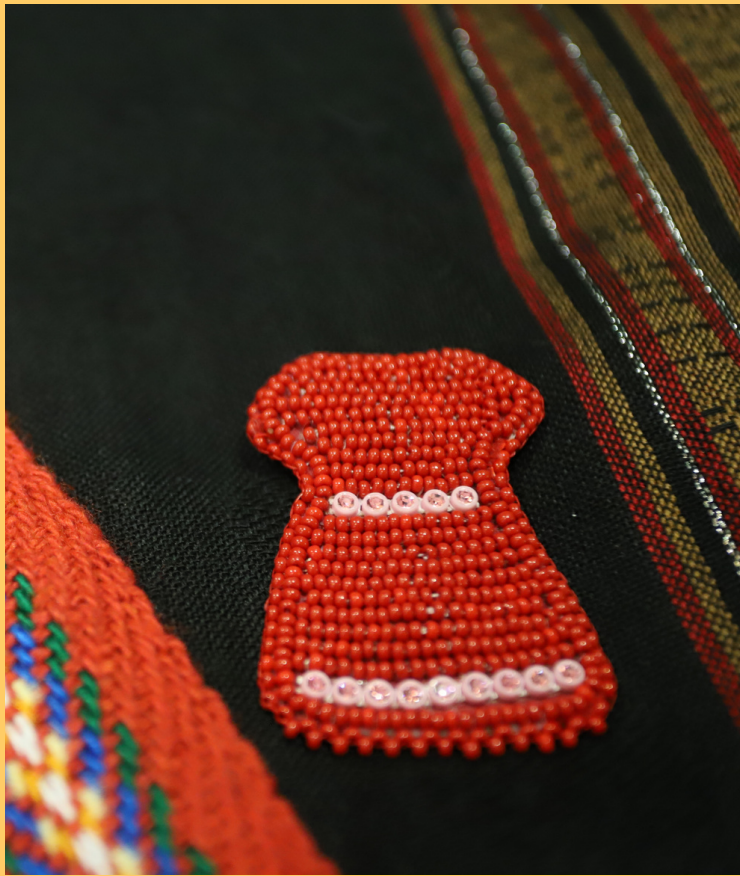
**DAWN
MI'KMAQ
CURRENTLY RESIDING IN ONTARIO**

"Three years ago, a special young lady was taken from her family and friends. Reading her story and watching family members suffer her senseless loss was heart-breaking. Seeing red dresses hung all over her home town showing compassion and love spoke to my heart and resonates within me. This tragedy ignited something in me to want to learn and know more of who I am and my heritage."



**DEBRA HOGGAN
CREE AND MÉTIS
PAPASCHASE FIRST NATION
CURRENTLY RESIDING IN VANCOUVER**

"The process of beading the little dress allows me time to focus on what it represents. It reminds me of my connection to my peoples's history and it represents hope. I wear it proudly."



DEBRA MARY CAMPBELL JURCA
OJIBWAY/NORWEGIAN
LAC SEUL FIRST NATION RESERVE

"I don't know any of our sisters who have been lost, but I feel close to this project. I didn't finish high school, I was too busy self harming and living an extremely dangerous lifestyle due to the horrific abuse I suffered in various foster and group homes. Due to this lifestyle, I placed myself into incredibly unsafe situations many times. A lot of times, I felt like I might not make it through. This is why I feel close to this project. I could very well have been one of these sisters."



DOROTHY
MOHAWK OF THE BAY OF QUINTE

"I made this dress for my children's nanny she was a strong indigenous woman who was taken from us! Not a day goes by that we don't miss her or feel her loss."



HEATHER LEICH

"I was born and raised in Toronto. My family were settlers from Ireland, Scotland and France. I have two young boys of Irish and Cree decent.

My dress is in honour of my friend Leanne Freeman who was murdered in 2011. I am also a recovering addict of 7 years and wanted to find a way to heal and do self care. The red dress to me symbolizes that we will never forget our missing and murdered sisters."

JACQUELINE NICOLE DANIELLE YOUNG MILLBROOK FIRST NATION





JENNIE
HAUDENOSAUNEE, SIX NATIONS

"Previously working at a Native Woman's VAW shelter, I feel that I connect to the cause, in a different way than I did before."

"I was taught Beadwork at a younger age and thought this workshop would be a great way to revisit an old hobby that contributes to this important movement."



JENNIFER
MATTAGAMI FIRST NATION,
TREATY 9 TERRITORY, TURTLE CLAN

"This project will raise awareness for MMIWG2+, something that most Canadians do not pay too much attention too nor see as a crisis, even after the reports and headline news. Stories of the people lost need to be told and shared and their loss and spirits healed, those that have loved and lost. For too long, our female spirits and two-spirited people have been harmed and there are no answers, perhaps this project will begin to shift that, and that is why I wanted to be a part of this project."



JENNIFER MACNEIL
MI'KMAQ & EUROPEAN ANCESTRY
KITPU FIRST NATION OF THE PORT AU
PORT PENINSULA NEWFOUNLAND

"Contributing to this project gave me the opportunity to learn a traditional art form, I have otherwise only admired in the work of other community members. I am so honored, not only to have beaded this red dress but to have sat in circle with such a strong and beautiful community of women. The red dress to me means; honoring the Spirits of MMIWG and asserting to those in power and those who bring harm that the Victims of MMIWG continue to be important, worthy and loved."



JENNIFER
MÉTIS

"I am learning more about my family and Indigenous culture everyday."

"I joined this project to learn a new skill and connect with other amazing Indigenous women. These pins are a good way to start these tough conversations and to help bring awareness to others. Maybe the more we talk about it, the less likely it may happen. That is my hope."



JENNIFER TOWN
MK'MAQ, SHUBENACADIE AND BEAR
RIVER RESERVES, NOVA SCOTIA

"I am also making several of the pins to send out to northern communities. I placed a bit of sage between the backing and the pin. I feel that the prayers and good intentions that I use while making each pin creates a spiritual connection to those women that are not physically with us and those of us that are still here. We unite through our spirits. We don't have to verbally speak to one another - that silent spiritual intention and those medicines will connect us."



JESSICA RUIZ
MAYA KICHE

"It is important to remember and acknowledge the missing and murdered indigenous women. This dress is to honour them."

JUDI EDWARDS
SIX NATIONS



JULIANA

"Every bead I beaded into the material caused me to be patient, caused me to be still and focused. With every bead I beaded my thoughts were on these missing and murdered women and what there thoughts may have been. What there lives were and could have been. I thought of my own daughter and if this had happened to her. I mourned them as I beaded. I know loss so it brought it all back to the surface. I connected to the spirit of these women and allowed my mind to wonder where they rested. I am awakened by their cries"





JUNE PHILLIPS

"I'm on my own healing journey here from Toronto discovering my Ojibwa teachings."

Creating these pins was a way of sitting with others and sharing a safe space. It was an honour to participate and an honour to acknowledge the MMIWG2S+."

KAT EDDY SETTLER

"The week I was doing this beaded project we were teaching all about the Metis and celebrating Louise Riel so I tried to make my dress look like there were Metis flowers and patterns on my dress. Mussi for allowing me to join in on this important project. I also want to mention that Prince George resides on a Hwy known as the Hwy of Tears. The red dresses are near and dear to my heart and our community."





**KAT
CHIPPEWAS, THAMES FIRST NATION**

"I was asked by my oldest daughter, who works for NCFST, to participate in this project with her. As we live in different provinces, we video chatted as I taught her how to bead. I am a master beader and have been teaching beading and other traditional crafts for over 30 years. I have made items and participated in other red dress and MMIW projects but this one, will always be special because I was able to share my knowledge and experience with my own daughter. I was able to show her pictures and explain other MMIW projects I have participated on. Discuss the many topics with her on being an Indigenous woman on Turtle Island during these times."



**KAYLA TWYNE AND TOQINTMATITLMUINL
(THE ONE WHO WALKS BESIDE THE BEARS)
MI'KMAW AND EAGLE CLAN**

"I am participating in this project because as a Mi'kmaw woman and social worker, MMIWG2S+ has touched the lives of me and many community members that I know. I have sat with people who have feared for their missing relatives. I have experienced fear when community members have gone missing. I have heard the stories of injustice and failures of protection from police. It is something that often makes me feel powerless, because the systemic structures in place are not there to protect us. Joining this project is an opportunity to sit and reflect, listen to others stories, and gather with others who have been affected by MMIWG2S+ in a safe place. I hope that this project will help raise more awareness, and in some small way bring comfort to those who are grieving."

KRISTIN FALTMARSCH
MI'KMAQ, SNAKE CLAN

"My being able to be part of something so much bigger than I am and have it mean so very much to my people, to my sisters and cousins, my nieces and my daughters and granddaughter, my Aunts, and my mother.



Everything I've been through heals just a little bit more with each bead. I listen to powerful songs that I enjoy learning or performing or just empowering my healing while I bead, I put that powerful energy into each piece. Putting your healing feelings into such a special purpose like this one is powerful. This is my way to heal, heal myself, and heal others."



LENA

SPIRIT NAME: STRONG HEART MEDICINE WOMAN
MOHAWK, KHANEWAKE FIRST NATION, BEAR CLAN

"This is my first time beading. This project was important to me as residential schools, sixties scoop and children's aid crown wardship was the generational impacts of my life. I wanted all our stolen sisters to know I care, I think about them and I will never forget. I hope with this project that their spirit can look at us and know that they were and are worthy, they were and are loved and missed. We are important and we matter. That we as a community will continue to fight for the safety and well being of our women and girls. I put all my love in this pin for my spirit sisters, aunties and grandmothers."



LISA
RED RIVER MÉTIS

"The MMIWG2S+ is an important issue to me that affects so many families across Turtle Island. It is one that needs more awareness. It is not acceptable that our country has let this go on so long. Creating this dress reminds me of all the souls who never made it home and honouring their stories."



LINDA CRAWLY
MÉTIS

"I foster two boys age 9 yrs, 13yrs. This was my first time beading, it was a challenge but with prayers, I have completed the Red Dress project. It's not perfect, but I did it with LOVE and reflected on all girls, and women whose lives were taken. it was a privilege to participate. My Red Dress that I have created gave me daily reflections on all lives that were taken, knowing they live in our hearts because of Creator."



**LINSDAY
FIRST NATION, TRADITIONAL
WILLIAMS TREATY**

"I have tried beading before, but this was the first time I have completed a project. It was very important to me, because of the MMIW movement. Many of my Indigenous friends and family have lost someone close, and most with no answers as to what happened. I need to do what I can to bring awareness to this important cause."

LUCIA OBREGON

"Mother of two kids. I am originally from Peru, but live in Toronto for more than 15 years. I love to learn about history."

I heard about this project, and I felt attracted for the meaning, before this project I was not aware what the red dress pin meaning, now that I learned I am happy to share with my friends. For me it is an excellent project. I have been learning a lot during these weeks, I hope that I can have the opportunity to participate in more initiatives."





MARISSA MAGNESON
CREE MÉTIS

"My red dress pin represents those impacted by MMIWG2S and shows the strength of Indigenous women in our community."

MARNI ELLIS





**MARILYN SUTHERLAND
CONSTANCE LAKE FIRST NATION**

"I am grateful to be involved with this wonderful project because it is time WE declare our nations as part of our beautiful country and our land on Mother Earth. I want to share the impact this has made to us as a nation and encourage all to do same with stories. Miigwetch. The beaded red dress is a symbol of our resilience as women and healers of our nations."

**MARY LOU SMOKE
ANISHNAWBE KWE
BATCHAWANA BAY**

"I made the Red Dress to honour my sister Debbie Sloss/Clarke's who was murdered in Toronto in 1997."





**MEENU
PUNJABI-SIKH**

"I am participating in this project to raise awareness for MMIWG as I have friends and chosen family that have been impacted and affected by this. My beaded red dress for me is my way to show my support for those impacted by this crisis and that is why I will wear my beaded red dress everywhere I go."

**MICHELLE
MI'KMAQ
MILLBROOK FIRST NATION
TREATY 13 TERRITORY**

"This red dress means to never forget. It is dedicated to my friend Frankie. Frankie was beaten to death while on the phone with 911. This dress is also dedicated to every MMIWG2S+ person and their families, and our community. I want to spread more awareness and to be more connected to the community."





MOHANIE

"I am a foster parent who participated in support of my foster daughter as I accompany her on her journey.

My beaded dress allowed me the opportunity to be a part of a great statement that this would be the last victims. It will be a reminder of all the innocent and defenceless girls who were taken away too soon. May it bring honour to them all. Not one would ever be forgotten. May this red dress provoke the conscience of everyone as it echoes the unheard voices of these MMIGW. Crying out "We, like every other, women deserved to be cherished and adored!"

NATALIE SWEENEY INDIGENOUS AND JAMAICAN

"I consider myself a child of the universe. I'm Metis, from Dartmouth Nova Scotia (Ojibway & Mi'kmaq)

I was invited to facilitate the beading project, which I was very honored to be a part of.

I am a two time cancer survivor, Through my work I want to create awareness."





**RUTH KENNY
LAC SEUL FIRST NATION,
TREATY 3 TERRITORY**

"Beading was something my mom did alot of growing up. I turned my nose up at it as a youth, and thought I was too good for it! The red dress signifies the tragic loss of our Indigenenous people, the discrimination and hardships we have to live with. I am happy to share in this project, happy to be able to bead and sit with others, listen to stories and feel that sense of connection, even it is by Zoom! :) Chi meegwetch! "

**SARA PITAWANAKWAT
(WASAEABIN) POTTAWATTOMI FROM
WIIKWEMIKOONG UNCEDED TERRITORY
LIVES IN TORONTO**

"Participating in this Beaded Red Dress project was important to me as I stand in solidarity with my sisters who have gone missing. I also have a love for beading special pieces that hold so much meaning like the Beaded Red Dress."





**SHARON
MÉTIS AND CREE**

"The red dress represents an opportunity to connect with my heritage. It helps me feel connected to my ancestors and my community."

SHEILA

"This beaded dress pin was an honour to make, to be a part of this amazing project was truly humbling. I am so grateful to have been included and learning the process of beading was the beginning of a new craft that I hope to learn more about and enhance what I learned."





SHELLEY LE SARGE
ANISHNAABE KWE, RED SKY
INDEPENDENT METIS NATION

"I am participating in this project to continue to bring awareness to the MMIWG2S issue. The Red Dress symbolizes the blood of Indigenous women, who have been oppressed and mistreated through Canada's history. The Red Dress also symbolizes the power and resistance of Indigenous women and the resurgence of Indigenous Power!"

TANYA

"I am honoured to have experienced the medicine of this awareness project. MMIWG is part of a larger issue of genocide which Indigenous nations have been facing since colonizers usurped Turtle Island. In the style of a ribbon-skirt, I added an Orange Heart {re: Every Child Matters} on braided hide {re: Moose Hide Campaign and traditional materials}. Gizhe Manidoo, please bring peace to the families left behind and keep our ancestors safe until we sky-walk together."





**TRISHA SULLIVAN
WAAWAATAE INDIZHINNIKAAZ,
TURTLE ISLAND INDOONJBAA**

"Beading the red dress means to me that I am helping to spread awareness and provide a visual to all to give a representation of all MMIWG. Having the opportunity to participate in a project that not only connects the community together, but also gives opportunity to gain knowledge from our elders is an experience that I am Forever grateful for. Chi migwetch"

VIVIAN ROY





NELSON MANDELA GIRLS GROUP:

*Aazenhnii, Amariyha, Briana, Fatima, Julissa,
Kamiliyah Mjamba, Salma, Sinchana*





Miigwetch!



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