

Community Care, Collective Justice:

An MMIWG2S+ Advocacy Toolkit

MARCH 2026



**Native Women's
Association of Canada**



**L'Association des
femmes autochtones
du Canada**

The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) is a National Indigenous Organization representing the voices of Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse people. NWAC works alongside First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples to advance their safety, rights, and well-being. This toolkit was created to support families, communities, and grassroots advocates in strengthening their advocacy for urgent action and accountability to address the ongoing crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit people (MMIWG2S+).

About this Toolkit

This toolkit was created for families, survivors, youth, grassroots organizers, and community groups who are already doing the work of protection, advocacy, and resistance, often without funding, institutional support, and/or adequate rest. It also sits intentionally within NWAC's broader ecosystem of advocacy tools, including the Warrior's Briefcase, Safe Passage, Sister's in Spirit, the MMIWG2S+ Scorecards, and national accountability initiatives.

Where these tools support safety, healing, data collection, and monitoring, this toolkit provides the advocacy bridge between community experience and political power. It is meant to support people in understanding how systems work, how pressure is applied, and how to turn lived experience into sustained political action.

**This is not a toolkit about awareness.
Families have been telling the truth for decades.**

**This is a toolkit about enforcement,
accountability, and transformation.**





How to Use This Toolkit

This toolkit is meant to support families, survivors, grassroots organizers, and community members who are working to address the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirit People (MMIWG2S+). Some readers may be deeply involved in advocacy, while others may be starting their advocacy journey. This resource is not meant to replace the leadership of families, survivors, and communities. Instead, it is offered as a tool to support the work that people are already carrying forward.

What MMIWG2S+ Means

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse people (MMIWG2S+) refers to the ongoing and systemic violence experienced by Indigenous women in all their diversities including girls, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse people across Canada.

This violence is not new, and it is not isolated. It is rooted in colonial policies that have displaced Indigenous Peoples from their lands, disrupted governance systems, imposed colonial roles, and fractured kinship and community responsibility. These systems include policing, child welfare, housing, transportation, health, and justice systems.

For generations, families and communities have raised concerns about disappearances, unsafe conditions, and violence against Indigenous women in all their diversities long before governments acknowledged the scale of this crisis. These warnings were often dismissed or minimized.

Many systems including residential schools, child welfare, policing practices, and ongoing displacement have created conditions that increase vulnerability and place Indigenous Peoples at heightened risk of violence. The National Inquiry confirmed what families have always known, this violence is systemic, rooted in colonialism, and continues because meaningful action has been delayed.



MMIWG2S+ is Systemic Violence, Not Isolated Harm

MMIWG2S+ is not a collection of isolated tragedies; it is the result of systems that continue to place Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ people at risk. This includes:

- Policing systems that delay searches and dismiss early warnings
- Child welfare systems that fractured families and create vulnerability
- Housing systems which force people into unsafe and unstable conditions
- Transportation systems that place lives at risk along dangerous routes
- Health and justice systems which move slowly, if they even move at all

These systems do not fail independently; they reinforce one another in ways that deepen harm and make both safety and accountability harder to reach. The space between them are where Indigenous women are left without protection and where violence is allowed to continue. Even as public awareness has grown, that awareness has not translated into meaningful change. Without sustained pressure, clear timelines, and ways to measure what is promised against what is actually delivered, those in power can continue to rely on statements and partial steps instead of action. The Calls for Justice exist because what came before was never enough, they call for real change backed by real responsibility. In this way, grassroots advocacy keeps that responsibility alive by carrying lived experience into decision-making spaces and turning grief into collective strength that cannot be pushed aside any longer.



The National Inquiry and the 231 Calls for Justice

The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls concluded that the ongoing violence experienced by Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people is rooted in colonialism and constitutes a serious human rights crisis. At its conclusion the National Inquiry issued 231 Calls for Justice, establishing the legal and moral obligations for governments, service providers, and institutions across Canada to respond to the ongoing crisis. The Calls for Justice outline what must be done to prevent violence, support families and survivors, ensure accountability, and uphold Indigenous rights. There have been many broken promises and implementation delays which continue to endanger lives, underscoring the urgent need for continued advocacy as justice remains unmet.

The National Inquiry released its final report in 2019, outlining 231 Calls for Justice intended to address the systemic violence faced by Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people. From where we stand today, families and advocates have noted that only two of these Calls have been fully implemented. At this pace, there are growing concerns that these commitments may never be fully realized without stronger political will and sustained accountability. Our governments across Canada must move beyond statements and take immediate action to implement the Calls for Justice. The safety and dignity of our women require immediate and accountable leadership.





“ Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people face disproportionate levels of violence in Canada, despite making up a small percentage of the population.

Days of Remembrance, Resistance, and Action

Date	Day of Remembrance	Description
February 14	Women’s Memorial March	February 14 honours Indigenous women and girls who have been murdered or gone missing. Across Canada, particularly on the West Coast, marches honour lives lost while drawing attention to ongoing violence and government failure.
May 5	Red Dress Day	Red Dress Day is a National Day of Awareness and action. Across the country, red dresses are hung in public spaces to make absence visible and confront the reality of the loved ones that should still be here.
October 4	Sisters in Spirit	Sisters in Spirit Vigils honour those who are missing and murdered while supporting families and renewing Calls for Justice. These vigils are acts of remembrance and resistance and are often the starting point for deeper advocacy.



Symbols of MMIWG2S+ Advocacy

 <p>The Red Dress</p>	<p>The Red Dress symbolizes the lives of Indigenous women in all their diversities, including girls, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse people across Canada who are missing or murdered. It represents both absence and presence, a reminder that these lives matter and that accountability is still owed.</p>
 <p>The Red Handprint</p>	<p>The Red Handprint represents silenced voices and stolen lives. It is a symbol of both violence and resistance, marking the refusal to be quiet about ongoing harm.</p>

Understanding MMIWG2S+: Why this Work Exists

Canada has known for decades Indigenous women in all their diversities face disproportionate and targeted violence, yet families are still waiting for governments and services to keep their loved ones safe. The truth is not abstract. It is lived every day by families who search for missing loved ones, by survivors who are forced to navigate systems that dismiss and retraumatize them, and by communities that are compelled to organize their own safety when governments fail.

The National Inquiry brought to light what families and survivors have long advocated, that ongoing violence is systemic, rooted in colonialism, and sustained by government action. Yet families remain caught in the gap between commitments and reality. Families continue to call for immediate searches, safe housing and transportation, trauma-informed policing, and for justice systems that treat Indigenous women in all their diversity as worthy of dignity and protection. As time passes, families are met with delay, denial, or silence.

The crisis of MMWIG2S+ is not accidental. It is the result of systemic failures that have placed Indigenous lives at risk for generations. Meaningful change will only happen through sustained community advocacy and clear accountability from those responsible for protecting safety and justice.



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The National Inquiry confirmed that violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people is systemic, rooted in colonialism, and ongoing failures across policing, child welfare, housing, health, and justice.

Responsibility Rooted in Kinship and Consent

The continued advocacy for MMIWG2S+ justice is not simply a political exercise. It is the importance rooted in relationships, history, and survival. In many Indigenous teachings, responsibility does not come from positions or authority. It comes from kinship. We are responsible for one another because we are connected, through family, through land, through water, and through shared histories of resilience and resistance.

When an Indigenous woman, girl, or Two-Spirit person is taken, the loss does not stop with one life. It spreads outward, affecting families, communities, and future generations. This is why this work cannot be detached or performative. The families and survivors are not case studies; they are knowledge holders. They carry the truth of how systems fail and what safety actually requires. Their consent, boundaries, and choices must guide advocacy. Some families may choose to speak publicly, to meet with officials, or go to the media, while others may need privacy and quiet. Both are acts of strength, and both must be honoured.

Trauma-Informed and Inclusive Advocacy

Trauma-informed advocacy recognizes that this work holds grief, anger, fear, and exhaustion. It understands that people may need to step back, rest, or engage in ways that they feel safe. Our organizing spaces must feel safer than the places where families have too often been ignored, doubted, or treated without dignity. These safe places must never present the same harm that survivors and families face when they try to be heard and believed by those responsible for responding to them. Two-Spirit, transgender, and





gender-diverse people must be explicitly centered in this work. As colonial violence has always targeted those who do not conform to imposed gender systems.

Any advocacy that claims to stand for Indigenous women and girls but excludes 2SLGBTQQIA+ people is out of balance and causes further harm. Any advocacy that stands for Indigenous women must include women in all their diversities to prevent further harm.

Community Care as Advocacy

Community care is not something separate from advocacy. Instead, community care is one way advocacy takes shape. When families are supported with meals, transportation, childcare, accompaniment to court or meetings, and compassionate check-ins, it directly counters the isolation and neglect they so often face. These acts of care build safety and remind families that they are not carrying this alone. In this way, care strengthens people to keep going, to keep asking questions, and to keep demanding what their loved ones deserve.

Likewise, holding governments and decision-makers accountable grows out of that same place of care. After years of being met with delays and empty promises, families are done being asked for patience. Accountability is how our care for one another turns into action, pushing for real change, clear timelines, and responses that reflect the value of our people.

“Although the 231 Calls for Justice were developed, implementation has been slow and uneven, with families and advocates noting only 2 of the Calls have been fully implemented.”



Grassroots Advocacy: A Force to Change

Across Canada, grassroots advocacy is foundational to any national movement for justice. Throughout decades, families, survivors, and communities have long led the call for action to address the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit people (MMIWG2S+). The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) works to support these efforts by developing tools that help communities strengthen advocacy, organize collectively, and hold decision-makers accountable for meaningful action.

- **Warrior's Briefcase** – Supports those stepping into advocacy by offering ways to engage with political spaces while protecting their well-being.
- **Safe Passage** – The platform supports the documentation of MMIWG2S+ cases, allows people to report unsafe experiences, and creates space for families and survivors to share their stories on their own terms.
- **MMIWG2S+ Federal Scorecard** – Reporting on government commitments and progress, making it possible to see what has been promised, what has been delivered, and where accountability is still needed.

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Indigenous women and gender-diverse people
are overrepresented among those experiencing poverty,
housing insecurity, and lack of access to transportation,
all of which increase vulnerability to violence.



Sustaining the Work Together

MMIWG2S+ advocacy is work that people carry together over time. It does not begin and end with one vigil, march, or gathering. Instead, it grows through relationships, through showing up for one another, and through a shared understanding that no one should be left to carry this work alone.

Sustaining this work means making sure people have the time and space to care for themselves. The families, survivors, and organizers often carry deep grief, anger, and exhaustion. When communities make space for rest, compassion, and understanding, they help sustain the spirit and resilience of those who continue this work.

At the same time, communities also need to protect one another by setting boundaries around how much is asked of families and organizers. When care, rest, and emotional support are woven into how people organize, advocacy becomes something that can be carried forward over time.

Ultimately, sustaining this work means staying connected to one another and to the responsibility we carry. When communities continue showing up together, supporting one another, and refusing to accept conditions that place Indigenous women in all their diversity at risk, they create the strength needed to carry this work forward.

Why Advocacy Must Reach Federal Decision-Making

Across Canada, decisions that shape safety for Indigenous women in all their diversity are made through federal, provincial, and territorial governments that often feel distant from community realities. Because responsibilities are spread across many jurisdictions and decision-making tables, harm is repeatedly redirected instead of addressed. When responsibility is fragmented, delay becomes normalized, and people are left navigating a maze where urgency is treated like an inconvenience.

In practice, this fragmentation creates predictable patterns. When communities raise concerns about safety, they are often told to contact a different office. When communities ask for action, they are often offered processes instead. As a result, the space between decision-makers becomes the space where safety disappears. From this, grassroots advocacy is essential because it is often the only way to close the space between what is promised and what is



happening. Without steady community pressure, commitments can be made and then quietly set aside while harm continues. When working with government, it is important to track what has previously been said and ensure collective action takes place to hold decision-makers accountable. By leveraging a collective presence, it keeps attention on what matters and makes responsibility harder to avoid.

When harm happens, it is rare because no one knows. It is because systems are set up in ways that allow issues to be passed around, slowed down, or quietly forgotten. Without organized pressure, even the most serious concerns can become lost in layers of process and delay. When communities speak together, return to the same issues, and keep track of what is being said and done, something shifts. Patterns become visible. Silence becomes noticeable and commitments can no longer disappear without being called out. This is why community-led advocacy is so powerful. It creates continuity. It creates memory. It makes it harder for leaders to respond with sympathy but with no action.

Engaging Federal Leader and Members of Parliament

Many of the conditions that shape safety for Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse people are influenced by decisions made at the federal level. Funding for shelters, transportation programs, support for families, national policing approaches, and prevention initiatives are all shaped by federal policies and investments. Because of this, reaching out to Members of Parliament (MPs) is one of the ways communities can ensure their voices are heard in the spaces where decisions are made.

When MPs hear directly from families, survivors, and community members, it helps bring attention to issues that might otherwise remain invisible. It also reinforces that addressing MMIWG2S+ is not someone else's responsibility. It is a shared responsibility that requires leadership and action. When communities continue to raise concerns, follow up commitments, and ask for accountability, it becomes much more difficult for decision makers to ignore the need for change.



There are several ways to engage with a member of parliament, including:

- Sending an email or letter
- Calling their constituency office
- Requesting a meeting with the MP or their staff
- Attending community events where an MP is present

To assist in identifying a member of parliament, and their contact information, Parliament of Canada publishes their information here:

[Find Members of Parliament - Members of Parliament - House of Commons of Canada](#)

When reaching out to MPs or other leaders, it can help to remember the following:

- You do not need the “right” words. Speaking truthfully from what is happening in your community is enough.
- Referring to the **Calls for Justice** connects lived experience to commitments governments have already made.
- Being clear about what you are asking for helps leaders understand what action is needed.
- Reaching out together strengthens the message and reduces the burden on anyone.

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Every major acknowledgement of the MMIWG2S+ crisis, including the National Inquiry and National Action Plan, exists because of the pressure from families, survivors, and grassroots advocacy.”



Example Email to a Member of Parliament



MMIWG2S+
ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

Subject: Urgent Action Needed on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit People (MMIWG2S+)

Dear [MP's Name],

I am writing to you as a member of the community to raise urgent concern about the ongoing crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit people (MMIWG2S+).

Many families and communities across the country continue to live with the impacts of this violence every day. The National Inquiry into MMIWG2S+ outlined 231 Calls for Justice that clearly identify the responsibilities of governments and decision-makers. These are not simply recommendations; they are obligations that require meaningful and sustained action.

As our elected representative, your leadership and accountability in this work matter. I am asking what concrete actions you and your office are taking to advance the Calls for Justice and address the systemic conditions that continue to place Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people at risk.

Our communities are watching closely for progress, and many of us are committed to continuing to raise these concerns until meaningful change is visible.

I would appreciate the opportunity to learn more about the steps being taken and how your office plans to ensure that addressing MMIWG2S+ remains a priority.

Thank you for your time and attention to this urgent issue.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Community / Organization, if applicable]





From Lived Experience to Collective Action

Every advocacy effort begins with something real, a disappearance, a loss, a lack of safe housing, a delayed search, a survivor who cannot access support. Advocacy gives communities a way to carry these experiences forward together. It allows people to say, “this is what is happening here, and it is not acceptable.”

When communities write letters, request meetings, or speak publicly, they are not just telling stories. They are building a shared record of what is happening and what has been asked for. Over time, that record becomes one of the strongest tools communities have. It shows patterns. It shows delays. It shows where responsibility has not been met.

Often, advocacy begins with realities communities’ are already experiencing. In many communities, concerns about safety, gaps in service, or the lack of response from systems responsible for safety and support bring people together to talk about what needs to change. From these conversations, community members may choose to learn more about the Calls for Justice, identify the decision-makers responsible for key issues, and consider what actions feel possible in their own context. Over time, these early efforts can grow into coordinated advocacy that strengthens community voices and pushes systems to respond.

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Many Indigenous communities, particularly northern, remote, and rural areas, face ongoing gaps in emergency response, transportation, and crisis services, increasing risks, and limiting access to provide proper response.



Working with Media and Public Awareness

Advocacy often becomes stronger when community voices are heard beyond immediate circles. Media and public awareness can help bring attention to issues which have been raised by communities for years.

When stories and concerns are shared publicly, it can put additional pressure on decision-makers to respond. Further, media coverage can help communities connect with others who may be facing similar challenges.

Communities may choose to engage media by:

- Sharing public statements about community concerns
- Speaking with local journalists or media outlets
- Writing opinion pieces or community letters
- Using social media to raise awareness and share information
- Inviting media to attend community events or gatherings

At the same time, decisions about public visibility should always respect the wishes and boundaries of families and survivors. Some families may want to speak publicly, while others may prefer privacy. When used thoughtfully, media and public awareness can amplify community voices and help ensure that ongoing harm is not ignored.



Tracking and Follow-Through

Effective advocacy requires communities to keep track of what has been raised, what has been promised, and what actions follow. Maintaining records of interactions with decision-makers helps ensure that concerns are not forgotten and that commitments remain visible over time.

When communities contact or meet with their Members of Parliament (MPs), or their staff, keeping notes about those interactions can help create a shared record of what concerns were raised and what responses were given. Communities may choose to record:

- The date of the meeting, email, or phone call
- Name of the MP or staff member contacted
- The concerns or issues raised
- Any commitments or next steps that were discussed

Following Up Afterwards

After a meeting or conversation with an MP, communities may choose to reach out again to ask how the issues discussed are being addressed or what actions have been taken. The follow up helps ensure that conversations do not end when a meeting is over. Ongoing communication reminds decision-makers that communities are paying attention to and expect meaningful progress. Over time, tracking interactions and following through strengthens advocacy by helping communities return to earlier discussions, ask for updates, and continue pressing for action that improves safety for Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people.



Taking Care of Yourself While Doing Advocacy

Bringing awareness towards MMIWG2S+ can be powerful and meaningful but also can be emotionally and physically demanding. Many people involved in this work are already carrying grief, frustration, and exhaustion. Protecting the well-being of those who are doing the work is essential to sustaining advocacy over time. Communities can support one another by recognizing when people need to take care of themselves by sharing responsibilities so that no one person carries the weight of this work.

This may include:

- Rotating responsibilities so the work is shared
- Setting boundaries around time and availability
- Checking in regularly with one another
- Taking breaks when the work becomes overwhelming
- Asking for support when it is needed

Building a National Movement Without Losing Community

MMIWG2S+ advocacy has never belonged to one organization, one community, or one moment in time. It has always lived in the relationships between people, in the ways families hold one another up, and in the shared refusal to let those who are missing or harmed be forgotten. Every letter written, every gathering held, and every name spoken keeps that living network growing.

When people share what they are doing, what they are learning, and what they are demanding, those connections become stronger. A march in one place, a letter campaign in another, and a safety project somewhere else all become part of the same movement when they are carried out in relationship with one another.





While staying connected does not mean doing everything the same way. Each community carries its own teachings, its own histories, and its own priorities. What matters is that people are not working in isolation. When knowledge, strategies, and stories move between communities, everyone becomes more powerful. People see what is possible. They learn from one another's courage. They find ways forward that may not have been visible on their own. This kind of movement grows through sharing. It grows when communities pass along what has worked, sharing what has not, and when they offer support without needing to take over. It grows when families know they are not alone in their grief or in their fight for justice. It grows when organizers know that others, in many places, are walking the same path.

From coast to coast, communities and nations continue to stand together in the shared responsibility to protect one another and demand justice. Through collaboration, families, advocates, and organizations strengthen the collective voice calling for meaningful change. In the face of ongoing loss and injustice, remaining silent is no longer an option. Everyone must continue to speak, organize, and stand together for our women, until this is treated as a national priority. The ongoing work must continue with conviction, because justice remains unfinished and bringing our loved one's home matters.

**This is the work, and we will continue it
until justice is no longer delayed
and until our women in all their diversity are safe.**



NO MORE STOLEN SISTERS.



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