

Community Education Tool Kit

Information to share from the
Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC)
and their Sisters In Spirit (SIS) initiative.

Navigating the Missing Persons Process



Sisters In Spirit is a research, education and policy initiative of the
Native Women's Association of Canada

The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) is founded on the collective goal to enhance, promote, and foster the social, economic, cultural and political well-being of First Nations and Métis women within Aboriginal and Canadian societies.

NWAC is an aggregate of thirteen native women's organizations from across Canada and was incorporated as a non-profit organization in 1974. Much like a "Grandmothers Lodge", we as Aunties, Mothers, Sisters, Brothers, and Relatives collectively recognize, respect, promote, defend and enhance our Native ancestral laws, spiritual beliefs, language and traditions given to us by the Creator.

The very prospect of having a missing loved one is something we hope you and your family never have to experience. We can only imagine what a parent or grandparent must feel when they realize someone close to them is missing. We have heard that this process can be very isolating and emotionally overwhelming and we want you to know that NWAC and our Sisters In Spirit (SIS) initiative are here for you. SIS is designed to increase public knowledge and understanding of the impact of racialized, sexualized violence against Aboriginal women often leading to their disappearance and death.

Too many of our daughters, mothers, sisters and aunties are being targeted and victimized in Canada, especially in the public sphere where societal indifference wrongfully turns a blind eye. Until this needless and preventable violence ends, we want family members and friends to know how to navigate the missing persons process and to know that you have rights!

This Tool Kit is an introduction to the missing persons process in Canada and is based on information gathered through meetings between NWAC and the National Aboriginal Policing Services of the RCMP. Should you need to contact your local policing authorities with regards to a loved one, please use this information as a valuable guide. This Tool Kit is one of several packages prepared by the NWAC to share knowledge and empower Aboriginal families and communities.

What do I need to know?

A missing person is someone whose location is unknown.

In addition to being missing, this person may also be in need of assistance. They may need help to be reunited with his/her family or to return home. Help because they may have fallen victim to a crime or offence. Or, support because they are in need of medical attention, are unable to care for themselves, or may pose a danger to themselves or the safety of others.

What do I do if a loved one goes missing?

KEEP YOUR OWN NOTES
(Track everything)

Conduct a search. Call family, friends and relatives. Ask them to help you call or look around your neighbourhood. Remember to check favourite places and hangouts. Write down all the places that you have checked. This information will be useful for the police.

File a missing person report. This can be done in person or over the phone with the police (see 'Know who to contact' on Page 3 for more information). There is no time limit as to how long a person needs to be missing before you call. You do not need to wait 24 hours. You do not have to be a relative. Anyone can file a missing person report.

Prepare to answer a number of questions. The more information you can provide, the better. Where was your loved one last seen and who were they with? What do they look like and do they have any unique markings like a tattoo or scar? Make sure they ask about Aboriginal ancestry or race. Let them know where you have already looked or called. If your loved one never goes anywhere without calling you and has never not come home before, keep repeating this over and over. Share other information like whether or not they have been on the computer a lot in chat rooms, have access to a car, have problems at work or home, have suffered a recent break-up or death in the family. Any unusual behaviour or anything you remember that was out of the ordinary lately should be shared.

Ask your own questions. Keep a record of the report/file number, who is assigned to the file and when someone will be visiting your residence to follow-up on the missing persons report. You may want anyone you speak with to repeat the information they already have on file to ensure that you have their

Date & Time _____
Badge No (ID No) _____

Report No _____
Officer in charge _____

attention and that they are familiar with the report. Ask if similar cases have been reported in the last few weeks or months. You may also feel that the media needs to be contacted (which is always done for children or Alzheimer's patients). Perhaps a search party needs to be formed. All these activities are dependent on the 'category' of missing person your loved one is given.

Get the attention your loved one deserves. Although there is no set time as to when follow-up should be done on the missing persons file you made, you have the right to ask "*What is being done to find my loved one?*" or "*Who have you been in contact with since we last spoke?*" Perhaps there is something more you can do, for example, like make and distribute a missing persons poster with a recent photo. Whatever questions you ask, remember that you have rights. If you feel more can be done, say so. If you would feel more comfortable discussing this case with the police, ask to speak with a police Detachment Commander in your community. There are also informal and formal complaint processes, which you have a right to access and learn about.

Know who to contact. Always begin by contacting your local police department. Depending on where you are in Canada, this could be the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) or a Municipal Police Service or a First Nations Police Service. For those in Ontario this could be the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) or a Municipal Police Service or a First Nations Police Service. For those in Quebec this could be the Sûreté du Québec (SQ) or a Municipal Police Service or a First Nations Police Service.

Local detachment of the RCMP: Look in your phonebook or call your local operator.
Ontario Provincial Police (OPP): 1.888.310.1122
Sûreté du Québec (SQ): 1.800.771.1800



Royal Canadian Mounted Police Gendarmerie royale du Canada

In cooperation with the
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