

MISSING & MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN & GIRLS

The Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women & Girls (the MMIW acronym and hashtag was created by Indigenous journalist Sheila North Wilson in 2012) belt is a modern design created by Rich Hamell in collaboration with native leaders and educators at the Seneca Art & Culture Center in Victor New York (Onöndowa'ga:' (Seneca) Territory) to bring attention the high rates of violence experienced by Native women. In many American Indian cultures the color red symbolizes a call to the ancestors in the spirit world; during ceremony children may be dressed in red as an introduction to the ancestors. The black half of the belt represents the loss and unknown status of these "stolen sisters". Belt weaver Rich Hamell states that the "Turquoise tear represents the grief and hope the women will be found" and at its center is an original carved wampum bead dating back to the 17th century.

In the U.S. homicide is the third leading cause of death among Native women ages 10-24. Native women from across the U.S. are victims of murder at 10x the national average according the U.S. Department of Justice, and are 12x as likely to go missing as women from any other ethnic group. The statistics found by the Canadian National Inquiry on women in the First Peoples nations are similar. Much of the data available on the MMIW crisis in the United States was compiled by Anitta Lucchesi - Doctoral Intern at the Urban Indian Health Institute (UIHI) and Southern Cheyenne descendant- and Abigail Echo-Hawk - Director of the UIHI and enrolled member of the Pawnee Nation of Oklahoma - in their 2018 report, "Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women & Girls: A snapshot of data from 71 urban cities in U.S." Across 71 cities they found reports of 280 Indigenous women who had been murdered, 128 Indigenous women who were missing, and 98 cases of Indigenous women with "unknown status."

A 2006 report by Amnesty International found that Native women were 2.5x as likely to experience sexual violence as any other ethnic group.

These are widely considered low counts of the actual numbers.

BREAKING
Women's Lives & Livelihoods
BARRIERS

THE
HISTORY
CENTER
in Tompkins County