

Whereas, according to a 2016 report from the National Institute of Justice, 84 percent of American Indian and Alaska Native women have experienced violence in their lifetime, and more than half of whom experienced sexual violence; and

Whereas, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, homicide is the third leading cause of death among American Indian and Alaska Native women between 10 and 24 years of age and the fifth leading cause of death for American Indian and Alaska Native women between 25 and 34 years of age; and

Whereas, in 2016, the National Crime Information Center reported nearly 6,000 cases of missing American Indian and Alaska Native women and girls, but the U.S. Department of Justice was tracking only about 100 cases; and

Whereas, although no reliable data exists on the actual number of missing Indigenous women and girls in the United States, instances of violence continue to
be directed against Indigenous women, living both on and off tribal lands, at high rates; and

Whereas, Wisconsin has been ranked sixth in the nation for sex trafficking according to the Human Trafficking Institute, with urban centers being the hubs in the I-90/94 corridor and international shipping areas, such as the ports of Duluth and Superior, which has led to many Indigenous women and girls to be to exploited by traffickers; and

Whereas, Indigenous women experience racism and prejudice through invisibility, which is driven by a lack of media coverage. Instead of nationwide manhunts, alerts, and round-the-clock news coverage when an affluent white woman goes missing, news coverage can be minimal to nonexistent when an Indigenous woman or girl goes missing. Many missing and murdered Indigenous women remain unnamed and their disappearances unknown or unheard of; and

Whereas, Indigenous women often hesitate or are unable to access help and needed services after experiencing gender-based violence because their unique needs are often not understood or met by mainstream agencies. Structural factors such as racism, stigma, and criminalization of substance use and mental health issues, culturally incongruous shelter policies, siloed programming, and gender inequality interact in complex ways, resulting in inefficient and inadequate services for Indigenous women; and

Whereas, some of the missing or murdered Wisconsin Indigenous women we know of include Bad River Ojibwe members Angeline Whitebird-Sweet, murdered in 1989, Charlene Couture, missing since 2009, Sheila St. Clair, missing since 2015, and Tess White, murdered in 2016; Lac du Flambeau Ojibwe members Susan Poupart, murdered in 1990, LaVonne Frank, murdered in 1997, Donna (LaBarge)
Peterson, murdered in 2004, and Emily Anne Marie Wayman, murdered in 2010; Ho Chunk members Jennifer Wesho, murdered in 1989, Jacinda Muir, murdered in 2015, and Kozee Decorah, murdered in May 2020; Menominee members Lisa Ninham, missing since 1990, Rae Elaine Tourtellott, murdered in 1986, Ingrid Washinawatok, murdered in 1999, Katelyn Kelley, murdered in July 2020, and Stephanie Greenspon, murdered in August 2020; and, Oneida member Lorraine Brown Bear, murdered in 2016; and

Whereas, the Wisconsin Department of Justice formed the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Task Force in 2020 to collect and study data and identify solutions; and

Whereas, we commemorate the lives of missing and murdered American Indian and Alaska Native women and girls whose cases are documented and undocumented in public records and the media and demonstrate solidarity with the families of the victims in light of those tragedies; now be it

Resolved by the senate, the assembly concurring, That the members of the legislature recognize May 5, 2021, as Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Awareness Day in Wisconsin. This is a day we mourn and call attention to the many missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, as well as those who have experienced violence and assault, and resolve to act to prevent further victimization; and

Be it further resolved, That certified copies of this resolution be transmitted to the governor.

(END)