



2021 SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 51

June 24, 2021 - Introduced by Senators SMITH, FELZKOWSKI, AGARD, BEWLEY, CARPENTER, PFAFF, RINGHAND, ROYS, L. TAYLOR and LARSON, cosponsored by Representatives B. MEYERS, MURSAU, SNODGRASS, ANDERSON, ANDRACA, BALDEH, BOWEN, CONLEY, DRAKE, EMERSON, HEBL, HESSELBEIN, HONG, MILROY, NEUBAUER, S. RODRIGUEZ, SHANKLAND, SHELTON, SINICKI, SPREITZER, SUBECK, VINING, VRUWINK, CABRERA, TAUCHEN, STUBBS and CONSIDINE. Referred to Committee on Senate Organization.

1 **Relating to:** designating May 5, 2021, as Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women
2 and Girls Awareness Day in Wisconsin.

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

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

10 Whereas, in 2016, the National Crime Information Center reported nearly
11 6,000 cases of missing American Indian and Alaska Native women and girls, but the
12 U.S. Department of Justice was tracking only about 100 cases; and

13 Whereas, although no reliable data exists on the actual number of missing
14 Indigenous women and girls in the United States, instances of violence continue to

1 be directed against Indigenous women, living both on and off tribal lands, at high
2 rates; and

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

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

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

21 Whereas, some of the missing or murdered Wisconsin Indigenous women we
22 know of include Bad River Ojibwe members Angeline Whitebird-Sweet, murdered
23 in 1989, Charlene Couture, missing since 2009, Sheila St. Clair, missing since 2015,
24 and Tess White, murdered in 2016; Lac du Flambeau Ojibwe members Susan
25 Poupart, murdered in 1990, LaVonne Frank, murdered in 1997, Donna (LaBarge)

1 Peterson, murdered in 2004, and Emily Anne Marie Wayman, murdered in 2010; Ho
2 Chunk members Jennifer Wesho, murdered in 1989, Jacinda Muir, murdered in
3 2015, and Kozee Decorah, murdered in May 2020; Menominee members Lisa
4 Ninham, missing since 1990, Rae Elaine Tourtillott, murdered in 1986, Ingrid
5 Washinawatok, murdered in 1999, Katelyn Kelley, murdered in July 2020, and
6 Stephanie Greenspon, murdered in August 2020; and, Oneida member Lorraine
7 Brown Bear, murdered in 2016; and

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

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

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

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

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(END)