

Memorial Number: 2025 – 005

Date Submitted: March 31, 2025

Title: Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW)

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- Whereas,** in the United States, violence against American Indian and Alaska Native women has reached devastating levels, with over 5,700 reported missing in 2016 according to FBI data¹, and approximately 4,200 missing and murdered cases remain unsolved according to the Bureau of Indian Affairs²; and
- Whereas,** American Indian and Alaska Native women face disproportionate rates of violence compared to non-Hispanic White women, being three times more likely to experience murder, twice as likely to experience rape, and five times more likely to experience physical violence by an interracial intimate partner, with over 96% of sexual violence perpetrated by non-Indigenous men³; and
- Whereas,** American Indian and Alaska Native families seeking justice face a complex maze of jurisdictional barriers between federal, state, and tribal authorities, with this jurisdictional confusion often serving as justification for inadequate investigation of cases, insufficient data collection, and lack of accountability, particularly affecting Indigenous women in urban areas⁴; and
- Whereas,** the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has committed to addressing injustices against Indigenous peoples through its "Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery" (2016) and "Declaration to American Indian and Alaska Native People" (2021), while also addressing gender-based violence through various Social Statements and Messages; and
- Whereas,** the Women of the ELCA have shown leadership through their work on human trafficking, child protection, and Truth and Healing Movement activities⁵; therefore, be it
- RESOLVED** that the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod in Assembly memorialize the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to direct the churchwide organization to

address the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) through the following actions:

1. To strengthen education on this issue by requesting Augsburg Fortress, ELCA Hunger Appeal, and the ELCA communications and service and justice staff work together to:
 - a. Develop educational resources about the prevalence and origins of this crisis.
 - b. Commemorate MMIW Awareness Day annually on May 5.
 - c. Promote the wearing of red and participation in educational opportunities and advocacy opportunities for missing and murdered Indigenous women.
2. To lament and repent by requesting Augsburg Fortress and the ELCA worship staff work together to:
 - a. Provide prayers of repentance and intercession for congregational and synodical use.
 - b. Plan a public service at the 2028 ELCA Churchwide Assembly of lament and repentance that leads to further actions toward healing people.
3. To advance advocacy and partnership by requesting the ELCA service and justice, witnessing in society, and advocacy staff to:
 - a. Support legislation at state, local, and national levels addressing MMIW.
 - b. Collaborate with governmental, ecclesiastical, and non-profit organizations to increase public awareness and provide concrete ways for congregations to support affected families through prayer, search efforts, and appropriate outreach.

References:

1. FBI National Crime Information Center, <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/249822.pdf>
2. US Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, <https://www.bia.gov/service/mmu/missing-and-murdered-indigenous-people-crisis>
3. FBI National Crime Information Center and the National Congress of the American Indian, <https://www.ncai.org/section/vawa/overview/key-statistics>
4. Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls report of the Urban Indian Health Institute, <https://www.uihi.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Missing-and-Murdered-Indigenous-Women-and-Girls-Report.pdf>

5. ELCA Truth and Healing Movement website:

<https://www.elca.org/our-work/congregations-and-synods/ministries-of-diverse-cultures-and-communities/indigenous-ministries-and-tribal-relations/truth-and-healing-movement>

