



SPIRIT LAKE TRIBE

PRESS RELEASE

Press Release: Addressing the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Crisis in North Dakota

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Fort Totten, ND—April 25, 2025 – As we approach Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) Awareness Day on May 5th, 2025, the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous peoples resonates deeply with North Dakota's tribal nations, including the Spirit Lake Tribe. In response to the severity of this crisis, the focus has evolved to include Missing and Murdered Indigenous Peoples (MMIP), reflecting a broader spectrum of those affected. This day serves as a crucial call to action, spotlighting the urgent need for legal reforms and resources to combat violence against Indigenous communities.

Tribal nations such as the Spirit Lake Tribe have learned that while support from state and federal resources is vital to resolving missing person cases, they cannot always be relied upon. Instead, they must assist one another in all ways possible, reinforcing the importance of inter-Tribal solidarity in the face of adversity.

Discussing the Renzo Bull Head Disappearance and the Inter-Tribal Response

The ongoing search for Renzo Bull Head, a 20-year-old student from the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, has mobilized nearly 100 dedicated volunteers from various tribes and regions. Renzo was last seen on March 16, 2025, walking across a railroad bridge near Mandan, ND. All tribal nations within the state of North Dakota and others from South Dakota and Minnesota have dispatched experienced staff and equipment, including drones and boats, to aid in the search, along with other non-profit organizations.

The Spirit Lake Tribe has played a vital role in these efforts, demonstrating a commitment to supporting not only Renzo's family but also remembering their own missing members, Isaac Hunt and Jemini Posey, who have been absent for over a year. Kooper Longie, Woodlake District Council Representative, stated, "In times of uncertainty, deploying our resources to assist in the search for Renzo Bull Head is not just a decision—it's a commitment to clarity in chaos. We believe it is our responsibility to provide support."

As the search enters its sixth week, Renzo's family continues to plead for compassion and assistance. His mother, Diedra Leaf, shared, "Every time the phone rings, I am thinking it is going to be someone telling me that they found our son or with news about our son."

Current Missing Indigenous People in North Dakota

According to the North Dakota Attorney General's Office, there are currently 14 Indigenous individuals reported missing in the state. Alarming, five of these cases have emerged during the six weeks since Renzo Bull Head disappeared. This concerning trend highlights a broader crisis, as the families of these missing individuals face the profound emotional toll of uncertainty.

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Current State Legislation

In response to the rising number of missing and murdered Indigenous peoples, the North Dakota Legislature has advanced House Bill 1199, which aims to establish a state-funded task force dedicated to this crisis. Rep. Jayme Davis emphasized, "This bill is about ensuring that when an Indigenous person goes missing, every available resource is mobilized to bring them home safely."

Furthermore, the proposed "Feather Alert" system, which was passed by the North Dakota Senate on April 23, 2025, aims to enhance public awareness when Indigenous individuals go missing, illuminating the need for more robust responses to these cases. Tribal Chairwoman Lonna Jackson-Street added, "The Feather Alert system is essential for empowering our communities to respond swiftly to missing persons cases. We cannot afford to wait when lives are at stake."

Spirit Lake's Renewed Effort to Find Their Two Missing Tribal Members

Currently, the Spirit Lake Tribe is reigniting its efforts to locate their own missing members—Isaac Hunt and Jemini Posey. The Tribe is offering a \$20,000 reward for information leading to their recovery. Chairwoman Lonna Jackson-Street remarked, "These are our people, and we want the families to know that we stand with them in their search. Every effort counts, and we are committed to utilizing all available resources to find Jemini and Isaac."

The Spirit Lake Tribe's initiative to intensify search efforts is fueled by the collaboration seen and offered in the inter-Tribal response for Renzo and their commitment to their tribal communities. This solidarity serves as a reminder of the collective responsibility borne by all tribes to protect their own. As Chairwoman Jackson-Street stated poignantly, "Finding Jemini and Isaac is not just a mission; it is a pledge to our families and our communities. We stand together in support of their loved ones and will do everything within our power to bring resolve for their families."

Isaac Hunt's aunt, Phyllis, stated, "We are grateful for the tribal council's response and commitment to assist. Right now, it's a critical time to start searching. We've covered a lot of areas last year, and time is of the essence. We need the right resources to aid us with search efforts."

Tribal Departments such as Victim's Assistance are also planning to assist with the search efforts, reinforcing their commitment to the community. Victim's Assistance Director, Jolene CrossWhite, shared, "We are mobilizing our resources to support these families and ensure that we respond swiftly. Collaboration is key to finding our loved ones."

Conclusion

The Missing and Murdered Indigenous Crisis demands urgent attention and action from all sectors of society. As we reflect on the stories of the missing, including Renzo Bull Head, Isaac Hunt, and Jemini Posey, let us reaffirm our commitment to standing together, advocating for justice, and ensuring that no family has to endure the pain of uncertainty alone.

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For media inquiries, please contact:
Vicki M. Alberts, Public Relations
Email: VickiA@spiritalakenation.com
Phone: 701-381-8499