

**Manitou Conference Minute for Right Relations:
Update: The Inquiry into Murdered & Missing Indigenous Women**

Two years ago I stood outside at a 'Sisters in Spirit' vigil to remember murdered and missing Indigenous women. Red dresses hung fluttering in the trees and others were held up by those honouring their sisters, mothers, daughters and friends. Those dresses represent the nearly 1,200 Indigenous women in Canada who have been murdered or gone missing in the last 30 years — 225 in 2014 alone, according to the RCMP.

Metis artist Jaime Black said she started the Redress Project with hopes of “drawing attention to the gendered and racialized nature of violent crimes against Aboriginal women, and to evoke a presence through the marking of absence.” A permanent exhibit of the Project hangs at the Canadian Museum of Human Rights overlooking Winnipeg’s Red River, where the body of 15 year old Tina Fontaine was found in a bag in 2014.

In 2016, after many calls for an Inquiry, including the voice of The United Church of Canada, the Federal Government launched a national, independent, public Inquiry into murdered and missing Indigenous Women.

Unfortunately, the Inquiry has had a difficult beginning. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission also had a difficult start but that was overcome, resulting ultimately in an historic and ground-breaking Report, leading individuals and communities toward healing, and Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, on a journey toward reconciliation.

How can we support the Inquiry as people of faith? We can pray for renewed strength and determination for the families and friends of the murdered and missing women, as they wait to tell their stories. We can pray as well for the Inquiry process and the Commissioners, so that healing, reconciliation and decolonization can happen. We can attend a Sisters in Spirit Vigil on October 4; Check on-line for a vigil near you; go to: www.october4th.ca Never underestimate what prayer and your presence can do!

*Written by Rev Teresa Jones on behalf of the Manitou Conference
Living into Right Relations Committee*