

National Red Dress Day

About the Artwork

This artwork was created to raise awareness for the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirits (MMIWG2S+) movement, as well as to fundraise for local organizations that support families escaping domestic violence. This initiative is a collaboration between the Indigenous Medical Student Association of Saskatchewan (IMSAS), the Department of Family Medicine, and the University of Saskatchewan.

The overall design was done in collaboration between two University of Saskatchewan Indigenous medical students, Rebecca Seifried and Terri Thunder. The design focuses on community strength and hope.

The handprint is a recognizable and powerful symbol of the MMIWG2S+ movement. It is a call to action to collectively address the crisis impacting Indigenous women and gender-diverse community members, who experience disproportionate violence due to deep-rooted issues such as colonialism and racism, which often result in systemic neglect. Supporting Indigenous communities should involve culturally appropriate approaches that promote community-led solutions for healing.

This handprint signifies both advocacy and resilience, honouring those who cannot speak for themselves. In this design, we showcase Rebecca's own handprint, making it a personal tribute to the fight for justice.

Within the handprint are the northern lights and two figures holding hands. The northern lights represent cultural teachings signifying the spirits of deceased loved ones who are round dancing in the sky. They represent the connection between various generations and the spirit world. The two figures represent an adult and a child, symbolizing the transmission of teachings and worldviews to younger generations. This highlights the crucial role children play in our communities and emphasizes that they are precious gifts.

The use of nehiyawewin (the Cree language) in the design highlights the importance of relationships in our ceremonies and lodges. This particular phrase, drawn from the Ghost Dance lodge, translates to "guide the spirits home." The Ghost Dance lodge is a nighttime ceremony that offers families a space to share traditional foods and dance with the spirits of their loved ones who have passed away. I drew inspiration from my mom's role as a lodge keeper for the Ghost Dance.

The design features buffalo sage, which symbolizes our connection to the land where our ceremonies and lodges are held. The overall intent of the design is to empower individuals and draw from the strength found in our languages, ceremonies, and teachings.



Rebecca Seifried is a second-year medical student. She is a member of the Gakijiwanong Anishinaabe Nation, formerly known as Lac La Croix First Nation, in Ontario. She is currently serving as the Senior Indigenous Health Representative for the Student Medical Society of Saskatchewan and holds a leadership position with the Indigenous Medical Student Association of Saskatchewan. She hand-painted the handprint and provided the buffalo sage drawing used in this design.



Terri Thunder is a third-year medical student from Thunderchild First Nation in Saskatchewan. She previously served as an Indigenous Health representative for the SMSS. Terri has been actively involved in various groups and committees that support Indigenous communities and learners. She provided guidance with initial design ideas and combined the elements into the final design above.