

# Missing AND Murdered Females

**R**ed dress art installations are drawing attention to countless North American Indigenous women, girls and “two-spirit people” who have disappeared or been found murdered over the last 40 years. Here are just two recent installations that were in the Escarpment area.

Both installations were inspired by Jaime Black, a Métis artist who founded the REDress Project in 2010 to inspire other artists to use the colour red to draw attention to missing and murdered Indigenous women. Red is thought to be the only colour that spirits can see.

“The Promenade of Pain” floated in Burlington’s Spencer Smith Park from Oct. 3 to 16, 2020, and was created by Burlington artist Amber Ruthart, a First Nations member of White Bear Clan.

“Whether they flutter in the wind or drape eerily still, the dresses are not what haunts you but rather the absence of those who wore them,” notes Angela Paparizo, manager of arts and culture with the City of Burlington.

Red dresses signify the mysterious loss of Indigenous women, girls and others.



◀ A girl's-sized dress represents the harm done to the youngest of females.

▼ Red ribbons tied around White Pines with reconstructed longhouses in the background at Crawford Lake.



### **“Red Ribbons”**

“We had many consultations with our grandmothers, spiritual healers, elders and knowledge holders who told us that hanging the red dresses brings the spirits of the women back,” says Sherry Saevil, an Indigenous educator with Halton Catholic District School Board, who helped organize an installation at Crawford Lake near Milton.

Instead of hanging red dresses, they invited visitors to tie red cloth around a White Pine, a symbol of peace, and take a moment of silence. This installation was held from Oct. 4 to Nov. 25, 2020.

“It is important for the general public to know about the colonial violence against our women,” adds Sherry, “and to stand in solidarity to end this violence. Why do Indigenous women and girls go missing on a daily basis without police intervention and public outcry to demand that this must stop?”

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▲ Red dresses flutter in "The Promenade of Pain" installation in Burlington's Spencer Smith Park.