



# Nak'azdli Whut'en

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## FOR NEWS RELEASE

May 5, 2025

### **Nak'azdli Whut'en Community Gathers to Honour Red Dress Day and Raise Awareness for MMIWG2S+**

Fort St. James, BC – On May 5, 2025, members of the Nak'azdli Whut'en First Nation and the broader Fort St. James community gathered in solemn reflection and unity to mark Red Dress Day, a National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit people (MMIWG2S+).

Also in attendance were members of the Nak'azdli Whut'en First Nation, Fireweed Collective Society, RCMP representatives from Vancouver, marking their second year participating in Nak'azdli's Red Dress Day and representatives from the RCMP Fort St. James Detachment, including Samuel Bond and Debbie Pocock, who led the procession. Their participation reflected ongoing efforts to raise awareness and deepen relationships with First Nations communities including Nak'azdli Whut'en, Yekooche First Nation, Tl'azt'en Nation, Binche Whut'en, and Takla Lake First Nation.

The event began with a ceremony at 10:00 AM in Cottonwood Park, where community members adorned themselves in red, painted red handprints on their faces, and stood together in remembrance. Councillor Nolan Sagalon opened the event with remarks emphasizing the significance of honouring those taken too soon, and the ongoing need for justice, visibility, and healing.

After the opening, participants joined in a memorial walk from Cottonwood Park to Spirit Square, accompanied by the Dakelh song and traditional drumming, echoing through the streets as a moving tribute to the spirits of the missing and murdered. The walk symbolized not only remembrance but also the collective strength and resilience of Indigenous communities. As the group arrived at Spirit Square, the presence of a female eagle perched

quietly on a nearby branch offered a spiritual moment, which many in the community took as a sign of guidance and protection.



"Mila and Kierra of Fireweed Collective Society Lead Memorial Walk on Nak'azdli Red Dress Day – Fort St. James, May 5, 2025"

At Spirit Square, representatives from the Vancouver RCMP, including Ron Palta, Wayne Clary, and Craig Mitchell, addressed attendees, expressing appreciation for the gathering. "This event is incredibly informative and meaningful," Wayne said. "It brings communities together, not only to mourn but to raise awareness and seek justice. We are honoured to be invited and to listen to the voices of families and survivors. These stories guide us in our work and deepen our understanding of the ongoing impacts of violence."

Lauretta Prince, the event's organizer solemnly read the list of MMIWG2S+ victims from the Nak'azdli Whut'en community, giving voice to each name and acknowledging the lives behind them. An open mic session invited family members and attendees to share stories, memories, and calls to action. Their words, filled with emotion and courage, brought the crowd to silence and reflection.

As the day concluded, everyone joined in a healing circle, standing together in prayer and collective drumming. The drumbeats carried messages of grief, strength, and spiritual connection. The Nak'azdli Health Department also provided mental health support and counselling services on-site, ensuring that those impacted by the day's emotional weight had a space for care and healing.

Red Dress Day remains a powerful reminder of the ongoing impacts of violence against Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people. Nak'azdli Whut'en reaffirms its commitment to supporting families, advocating for justice, and creating spaces for healing and remembrance.



"Drumming Team at Nak'azdli Whut'en Red Dress Day, Fort St. James – May 5th, 2025"





"Healing Circle at Nak'azdli Whut'en Red Dress Day in Fort St. James, May 5th, 2025"



"Nak'azdli Whut'en Red Dress Day Event – Fort St. James, May 5, 2025"

