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City of Duluth Communications Office

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SUBJECT: Community partners announce Reward Fund Program

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***Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two Spirit People
“Gaagige-Mikwendaagoziwag” Reward Fund Program announced***

[Duluth, MN] The City of Duluth, Native Lives Matter Coalition, and Mending the Sacred Hoop have announced the creation of a Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two Spirit (MMIWg2S) People Reward Fund. The Fund has been titled Gaagige-Mikwendaagoziwag, Ojibwe meaning “You will be remembered forever”. The Fund was formally approved by the Duluth City Council at their January 10 meeting.

Originally inspired by the open case of Sheila St. Clair, the Indigenous-led fund was established to help law enforcement agencies solve violent crimes against Indigenous women, girls, and two spirit peoples.

“The Gaagige-Mikwendaagoziwag Reward Fund bolsters the City’s commitment to ending the MMIWg2S epidemic by filling an important gap to address injustices and promote healing in our region,” Mayor Emily Larson said.

“These efforts demonstrate an Indigenous-led, grassroots community response, and collaborative effort with the City of Duluth in response to the ongoing epidemic of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, Two Spirit People. The reward fund program serves as a model and we anticipate and encourage the future growth of the Program,” said Rene Ann Goodrich, Founder of Native Lives Matter Coalition.

All funds raised will directly benefit the Reward Fund Program. The collaboration has been working together for the past few months. The collaborative will announce how members of the public can donate in the weeks to come. The fund is the first of its kind in the State of Minnesota, and is already being talked about being duplicated in other communities.

“The establishment of the Gaagige-Mikwendaagoziwag Fund represents a historic partnership between the City of Duluth and the Indigenous community in the Twin Ports that will help us find our missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and two spirit people and bring them home,” Katy Eagle, Executive Director of Mending the Sacred Hoop said.

The Duluth Police Department has been a long-time supporter of ending and preventing human trafficking and exploitation.

“We hope to provide an additional incentive for those with information to come forward and aid us with our investigations,” Chief Mike Tusken said. “We want nothing more than to solve these types of cases for the victims, survivors, and their loved ones.”

While the City of Duluth has partnered with the Indigenous community on this effort in the past, city leaders are excited to formalize the education and awareness into action.

“It’s time for all to see what we, as Indigenous peoples, have always known: Indigenous women, girls, and two spirit people are born leaders and matriarchs and we deserve to thrive with dignity, love, and respect,” said Alicia Kozlowski, Community Relations Officer.

More details about the fund will follow in the coming weeks. If you have any information about Sheila St. Clair, the public is encouraged to call the Duluth Police Department’s Violent Crimes Unit at (218) 730-5050.

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