

British Columbia

Campaign raises billboards for missing Indigenous women on Vancouver Island



Electronic signs in Nanoose Bay, B.C., are brainchild of activists Jeannine Lindsay and Carla Voyageur

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A billboard for Angeline Pete of the Quatsino First Nation, who disappeared from North Vancouver, B.C., in 2011. (CHEK News)

Drivers travelling the Island Highway through Nanoose Bay, B.C., will notice two new electronic billboards featuring the faces of Lisa Young and Angeline Pete, two missing Indigenous women from Vancouver Island.

The campaign is the result of efforts by two women from the Comox Valley, Jeannine Lindsay and Carla Voyageur. The two women are the co-founders of the Lil' Red Dress Project, for which they bead red dress pins and earrings.

The proceeds of the items have been funnelled into the billboard project.

Lindsay says they were inspired by a family in Comox Valley who put up billboards for their young girl who had gone missing in the area 25 years ago.

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"There was one [billboard] after another after another and it was really striking and profound," Lindsay said on CBC's *All Points West*.



Lisa Young was just 21 when she went missing from Nanaimo, B.C., in 2002. (CHEK News)

Young was just 21 when she went missing from Nanaimo, B.C., in 2002.

Pete, of the Quatsino First Nation in the Island's northwest, was 28 when she disappeared from North Vancouver, B.C., in 2011.

The national inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls found that Indigenous women and girls are 12 times more likely to be murdered or to go missing than members of any other demographic group in Canada — and 16 times more likely to be slain or to disappear than white women.

Lindsay said many Indigenous families don't have the opportunity to raise funds for a billboard campaign, and so the pair decided to brainstorm on how they could fundraise.

'It's a family effort. It's a community effort'

Voyageur says the response has been promising.

"It's a family effort. It's a community effort and it's even an Island-wide effort," she said, adding that everyone from their partners to their children are involved in the beading and packaging and delivery.

The pair hopes the billboards — which will be up for four months — will result in more tips or information coming into the RCMP.

"Our hope and our dream would be that we could keep them up as long as possible," Lindsay said. "But as we found out with this project, signage is not cheap."

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Lindsay and Voyageur say the families of Lisa Young and Angeline Pete have been very supportive of the project.

"It's been quite an emotional journey to be able to share this with them and have them share with us how emotional and touching it is for them to be able to see their loved ones faces," Voyageur said.

- **'This is what our people need': gathering an alternative to MMIWG national inquiry**

The pair hopes to eventually get more women featured in their campaign, and spread out into the Lower Mainland, something they say will be a huge challenge because of the increased costs.

They also hope it'll inspire other communities.

"We're really hoping that we're building more awareness and maybe it'll bring other people together to start their own awareness campaign," Lindsay said.

For immediate emotional assistance, call 1-844-413-6649. This is a national, toll-free 24/7 crisis call line providing support for anyone who requires emotional assistance related to missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

You can also access long-term health support services such as mental health counselling and community-based cultural services through Indigenous Services Canada.

With files from All Points West