

MMIWG2S ceremony to be held at Alder

By **Sam Odrowski**

A local ceremony is being held on the National Day of Awareness and Action for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two Spirit persons (MMIWG2S) on May 5.

The event starts at 10 a.m. in front of the main entrance to the Alder Street Recreation Centre, and attendees will walk from there to the Medicine Wheel Garden where a smudging ceremony and debrief circle will take place.

“During the debrief circle people can talk about what they've gotten out of doing this walk, and putting these women and girls and the Two Spirit into their thoughts,” said Debbie Egerton, Chair of the Dufferin County Cultural Resource Circle (DCCRC) board.

“We have, amazingly enough, people who come out who will talk about their own experiences with the murdered and missing Indigenous women, girls, and Two Spirit. So, it's a good opportunity for people to get personal story.”

Dufferin Child and Family Services has partnered with DCCRC to host the event and members of the OPP will be in attendance as well.

The MMIWG2S movement in Canada stemmed from a national inquiry that found persistent and deliberate human rights and Indigenous rights violations and abuses are behind Canada's disproportionate rates of violence among Indigenous women, girls, and Two Spirit people.

Indigenous women and girls make up 16 per cent of all female homicide victims and 11 per cent of missing women, while they only account for 4.3 per cent of the population in Canada. Overall, they are three times more likely than non-Indigenous women to be victims of violence.

Egerton told the Citizen, the DCCRC event on May 5 is a great opportunity for people to reflect and learn about MMIWG2S.

Through the event, she said she hopes awareness is increased in the community and people will hold the Canadian government to account.

“I'd like to see more people writing letters,” Egerton remarked. “We need to get the politicians, we need to talk to the Solicitor General, and we need to get these guys to understand this needs to become a priority. We cannot just sit back and wait for stuff to happen.”

Egerton said she'd encourage people to come out to the event and get involved “it is open to everybody.”

“I think if you're wanting to really understand what the issue is about, being part of events like this is so important,” she noted.

“These events are all about bringing awareness to the issue, and the only way you're going to understand the issue is to be a part of an event where you can meet the people who have stories to share. Then you can see that it's not just some whim, there are actual people involved in this.”

“That's how we're all going to gather and become one is we're all working towards building bridges, and we need to do this together. It's how we're going to help our Indigenous communities heal,” Egerton added.

The event will begin at the entrance of the Alder Recreation Centre at 10 a.m. on May 5.