

## **MMIW + G – Heart Spirits Prince Albert MMIW Project Project Description**

The primary goal of this project is to release the names of missing and murdered Indigenous Women and Girls from the confines of an acronym. They are women and girls of all ages each of with a history, family and a story. This project aims to shift our collective mindset by influencing emotions through the making of 1200 clay hearts - a real, physical reminder of the women and girls whose family's hearts have been broken.

I was frustrated with the turmoil that the MMIWG National Inquiry faced, nearly since its beginning in September 2016. During the barrage of news stories at the outset I was struck by constant references to the MMIW and I realized, as an average Canadian, I was losing touch with this important issue. Hundreds of missing & murdered women & girls were being reduced to an anonymous list, an acronym with little context. Canadians were losing touch with their own humanity and they didn't even know it was happening. This project represents one woman trying to make her mark for a hopeful future.

I chose the number of hearts for this project because 1200 is a significant number and it coincides closely with an RCMP 2014 National Overview which put the total of missing & murdered to 1181, an all-time high. Each heart is to be named for a missing or murdered woman with the few extras to represent those who have not been counted on any list or database.

When heart imagery began creeping into my work, I met the impulse with a deep curiosity about the heart as a symbol. Upon researching how this shape has cemented itself as a cultural icon, I became fascinated with humanity's connection to it. The symbol has become ubiquitous, permeating every facet of society becoming absorbed into our unconscious. The shape is entrenched in our psyche as a significant expression of a shared understanding; a feeling without words. Hearts remind us of who we love and why.

Carlton & St. Mary's Highschool's both signed on to the project immediately. Through print, radio, & social media the wider community of Prince Albert became interested. The project hosted local businesses, groups from Gabriel Dumont Institute, Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technology, YWCA, Social Workers and Nurses. Several elementary school classes were bussed in to participate. To conduct the workshops with participants of varying ability, heart shape forms were cut from Styrofoam and mounted on 8" X 8" wareboards.

Throughout the making phase of the project local elder Liz Settee attended workshops, facilitated sharing circles, smudged the work spaces and blessed the project. Liz Settee's presence is important to the integrity of the project.