

MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS

lesson plan

Grades: 7 and up. Due to the topics discussed in this lesson (crimes, murders, missing people), it is important to evaluate your students' emotional readiness and whether this is an appropriate lesson for them. The youngest age I have done this lesson with is a mature 6/7 split class.

Subject Area: Canadian History, Indigenous culture, social studies.

What this lesson includes:

- Students will learn what MMIWG is, the different projects that are underway, the symbols that represent the movements.
- Students will learn about 6 Indigenous women/girls who have gone missing or were murdered.
- Students will have the chance to research the CBC database to learn about other missing and murdered Indigenous women.
- Students will have an opportunity to remember and honour missing and murdered Indigenous women using the biography cards.

Note: I made this resource because I found my older students were becoming increasingly curious when they saw red dresses decorating their community, or heard about marches to remember MMIWG. After several conversations with curious and empathetic students, I created this resource as a way to discuss it and learn about it.

Step 1: We need to understand how much our students know about Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG).

- Do they know that Indigenous women have higher rates of violence against them?
- Have they seen red dresses or red hand prints within their community? If so, did they understand what these represented?

Step 2: Go through the handouts together as a class, or if you have older, independent students you may want to get them to read through the information on their own. This is heavy reading, so monitor your students and let them take breaks if they need to.

Step 3: I usually begin the research project at this point, using the profiles I provided and using the CBC database (<https://www.cbc.ca/missingandmurdered/>). I like giving my students the freedom to pick an Indigenous woman to honour. There are 6 biographies provided if you want your students to use these for their research project.

Step 4: The research project is explained in detail below. There are reflection questions which can be answered just using the handouts provided, or can be answered using what students find on the internet. Students will each choose one MMIWG to research and create a short biography for. I have created three options of "biography cards" - the rectangular card, the dress card and the hand card. Pick whichever you like best or let students choose. There are also hand cut outs provided where students can write their woman's name and ancestry as a way to honour and remember them. Printable dresses are included as well if you want these for a display.

Step 5: Display these biography cards, the red hands, the red dresses. May 5th is known as the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, however this project can be done at any time of year.



MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN (MMIWG)



WHAT IS MMIWG?

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) is an epidemic of violence against Indigenous women in Canada and the United States. These women are First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Native American. Community members, families, law enforcement, journalists and activists have been fighting to bring this topic into public knowledge. Indigenous people, and women especially face greater threats of violence.

Intergenerational trauma caused from the residential school system has created cycles of violence for Indigenous families. Every Indigenous person you know has a relative who attended residential school and now lives with that trauma.

Systemic racism is racism that lives within our social systems (schools, police forces, government). Systemic racism has allowed investigations of crimes relating to Indigenous peoples to be treated differently which results in less attention to the case.



MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN (MMIWG)



RATES OF VIOLENCE

From 2001 to 2015, the homicide rate for Indigenous women in Canada was six times as high as the homicide rate for other women. In Nunavut, Yukon, the Northwest Territories, Manitoba, Alberta and Saskatchewan, this over-representation of Indigenous women among homicide victims was even higher.

Indigenous women and girls are disproportionately affected by all forms of violence. Although Indigenous women make up 4% of Canada's female population, 16% of all women murdered in Canada between 1980-2012 were Indigenous.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

A 2014 report by the RCMP, titled "Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women: A National Operational Overview" found that over 1000 Indigenous women were murdered over a span of 30 years. The highest number of cases have been in British Columbia. Notable cases have included 20 women killed along the Highway of Tears, and 49 women who were killed in the Vancouver area by serial killer Robert Pickton.



MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN (MMIWG)



WOMEN'S MEMORIAL MARCH

The first Women's Memorial March was on February 14th, 1992 in Vancouver, BC on the Downtown Eastside. The area where the march took place is notable for having many missing or murdered Indigenous women. The annual march was intended to remember Indigenous women who have been murdered or who have gone missing in order to build support for a national inquiry or program of response.

CANADIAN NATIONAL INQUIRY

From 2016-2019, the Canadian government conducted the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. The inquiry reviewed law enforcement documents, community hearings and testimonies. The final report concluded that the high level of violence directed at Indigenous women and girls is "caused by state actions and inactions rooted in colonialism and colonial ideologies". It also concluded that the crisis is an ongoing "race, identity and gender-based genocide"



MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN (MMIWG)



HOW CAN WE LEARN MORE?

The CBC has a database of missing and murdered women and girls within Canada. The CBC database has over 300 women entered into it and can be sorted by age, province and whether they are missing or murdered. Each woman has a small paragraph about their case or situation. Because many of these victims have not gotten high levels of public awareness or knowledge, it is important to learn about these women and girls and to talk about them. They matter.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

One way we can help is remembering and honouring the lives these women lived. Because their cases are often unheard and many people do not know what happened to them, we can learn about them. As a family member, this means a lot. You never want your family or friends to be forgotten about.

There are campaigns that exist, such as the Red Dress Project that promote MMIWG and advocate for awareness and change. You may have seen red dresses hung around your city or town, or red hands. These are representative of the MMIWG epidemic. May 5th is known as the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.



MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN (MMIWG)



WHAT IS THE RED DRESS PROJECT?

The Red Dress Project is an artistic response to the more than 1000 missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada.

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) is an epidemic of violence against Indigenous women in Canada and the United States. Advocates are trying to raise awareness of MMIWG through organizing marches, building databases of the missing, and helping the community learn about what is happening to these women.

THE RED HAND

A red hand over the mouth has become the symbol of a growing movement, the MMIWG movement. It stands for all the missing sisters whose voices are not heard. It stands for the silence of the media and law enforcement in the midst of this crisis. It stands for the oppression of Indigenous women in North America and promotes the rising up to say #NoMoreStolenSisters.

MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS

Mary Jean Kreiser (Missing)



Mary Jean Kreiser (Saint Saveur), mother of five children, was 49 when she went missing. She was born on Sept. 12, 1938 in Wabasca, Alberta. Her father was of Métis descent, her mother a member of the Bigstone Cree Nation. Kreiser attended residential school at St. Martin's as a child and last lived in Slave Lake. She was reported missing to Edmonton Police and Slave Lake RCMP in October 1987. According to an RCMP release she was last seen at a Petro Canada gas station in Westlock, about 90 km northwest of Edmonton.

Samantha Paul (Murdered)



Samantha Paul, from Kamloops First Nation, was reported missing to the RCMP on September 17th, 2013. She was 26 at the time. Her remains were found in June of 2014 in a remote area near Campbell Lake approximately 20 kilometres southeast of Kamloops, British Columbia. The file is being investigated by the Kamloops RCMP Serious Crime Unit, but there are no serious leads.

Her family has been big advocates for MMIW, and the Chief of her band said the disappearance of Samantha and other Indigenous women is "a national tragedy but, more importantly, it's a national disgrace".

MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS

Tamra Jewel Keepness (Missing)



Tamra Jewel Keepness, 5, was originally from Whitebear First Nation in Saskatchewan. She had a favourite pine tree at the end of her block that she liked to climb. July 5, 2004, was the last time Tamra would be last seen, near her home in Regina, SK. In 2014, the police doubled the reward for information to \$50,000. Every year, the community holds a barbecue in honour of Tamra. The Regina Police Service's Cold Case Unit is in charge of the investigation. Tamra would be in her mid 20's today.

Gloria Mildred Gladue (Murdered)



Gloria Mildred Gladue, 44, was from Bigstone Cree Nation in northern Alberta. She was a mother of seven and grandmother to several children. Her family said she was funny, traditional and known for her great bannock, stew and moose meat. The last time her family heard from her was through a text message sent on Oct. 8, 2015, telling them she loved them and saying goodnight. On June 27, 2018, a man was charged with second-degree murder of Gloria. Since her disappearance the family has been doing their own searches, not believing that the RCMP was doing as much as they could in the search for their mother. In November 2017, her children spoke at the MMIWG inquiry hearings in Edmonton.

MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS

Chantelle Alice Rose Bushie (Missing)



Chantelle Alice Rose Bushie, 16, from Dene Tha' First Nation. She was a mother to one daughter, and could sketch anything you set before her in minutes - she was a talented artist. On Dec. 1, 2007 Chantelle was seen for the last time in Grande Prairie, Alberta. The city's RCMP detachment is investigating the missing persons case. There have been no developments in the investigation and investigators last contacted Chantelle's family in 2012.

Her mother says she is talented at math and art and planned to become a teacher.

Brittany Bearspaw (Murdered)



Brittany Bearspaw, 16, was from Siksika First Nation. She was found dead on the Trans-Canada Highway that runs through Morley, Alta., on New Year's Day in 2006. According to the medical certificate of death in her case, she had been run over by at least two other vehicles as her body was lying on the highway. None of them pulled over to help. The police briefly investigated and never found who killed her.

The RCMP told them that day that Brittany had killed herself, but her parents do not believe that this is what happened. Brittany was in grade 11 and wanted to become a lawyer. Education was her first priority.

MMIWG RESEARCH PROJECT

instructions

Part One: Answer the questions using what you have learned , or using the internet. Try using key terms while doing your research such as: MMIWG, missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada.

Part Two: Choose one Indigenous woman who you will research and learn about for this project. CBC has database you can use in your research. Using the CBC database, you can sort the women by which province they are from, their age, and whether they are missing or murdered.

Once you have chosen one woman to learn about, you will fill out your biography card with their information. You will need to know the following information about your woman: their name, age at the time they went missing or were murdered, which nation or Indigenous group they are from, and a special fact about them. The special fact could be anything; were they a mother? What were their goals and dreams? We also want a photograph of the woman you are learning about. If you cannot find a photograph, you could also sketch a picture of them.

Once you have filled out your woman's biography card, you will cut it out to display. Feel free to decorate the biography card, making sure you can still read the words.

Part Three: Fill out a "hand cut out" with your woman's name and their Indigenous ancestry. This can be displayed with their biography. Colour these hands red or decorate it using red to honour the missing and murdered women.



MMIWG RESEARCH PROJECT

questions

Name: _____

1. We have three groups of Indigenous people in Canada, who are they?

2. What is the MMIWG epidemic?

3. What is systemic racism?

4. What are some ways we can honour MMIWG?

MMIWG RESEARCH PROJECT

questions - answer key

Name: _____

1. We have three groups of Indigenous people in Canada, who are they?

The three groups of Indigenous people in Canada are First Nations, Inuit and Metis.

2. What is the MMIWG epidemic?

The MMIWG epidemic is a large problem of Indigenous women going missing and being murdered. Many people including advocates, journalists, police, have been trying to educate the public about these horrific acts. The homicide rate for Indigenous women in Canada was six times as high as the homicide rate for other women.

3. What is systemic racism?

Systemic racism is racism that lives within our social systems (schools, police forces, government). Systemic racism has allowed investigations of crimes relating to Indigenous peoples to be treated differently which results in less attention to the case.

4. What are some ways we can honour MMIWG?

We can honour MMIW by learning their stories and talking about the high rates of violence against Indigenous women in our communities. There are advocacy projects ongoing such as the Red Dress project and there are symbols such as the red hand.

MMIWG RESEARCH PROJECT BIOGRAPHY CARD

HONOURING MISSING AND MURDERED
INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS (MMIWG)

Photo of woman

Woman's Name: _____

Age (at time): _____

Nation/Ancestry: _____

Special Fact: _____

MMIWG RESEARCH PROJECT BIOGRAPHY DRESS

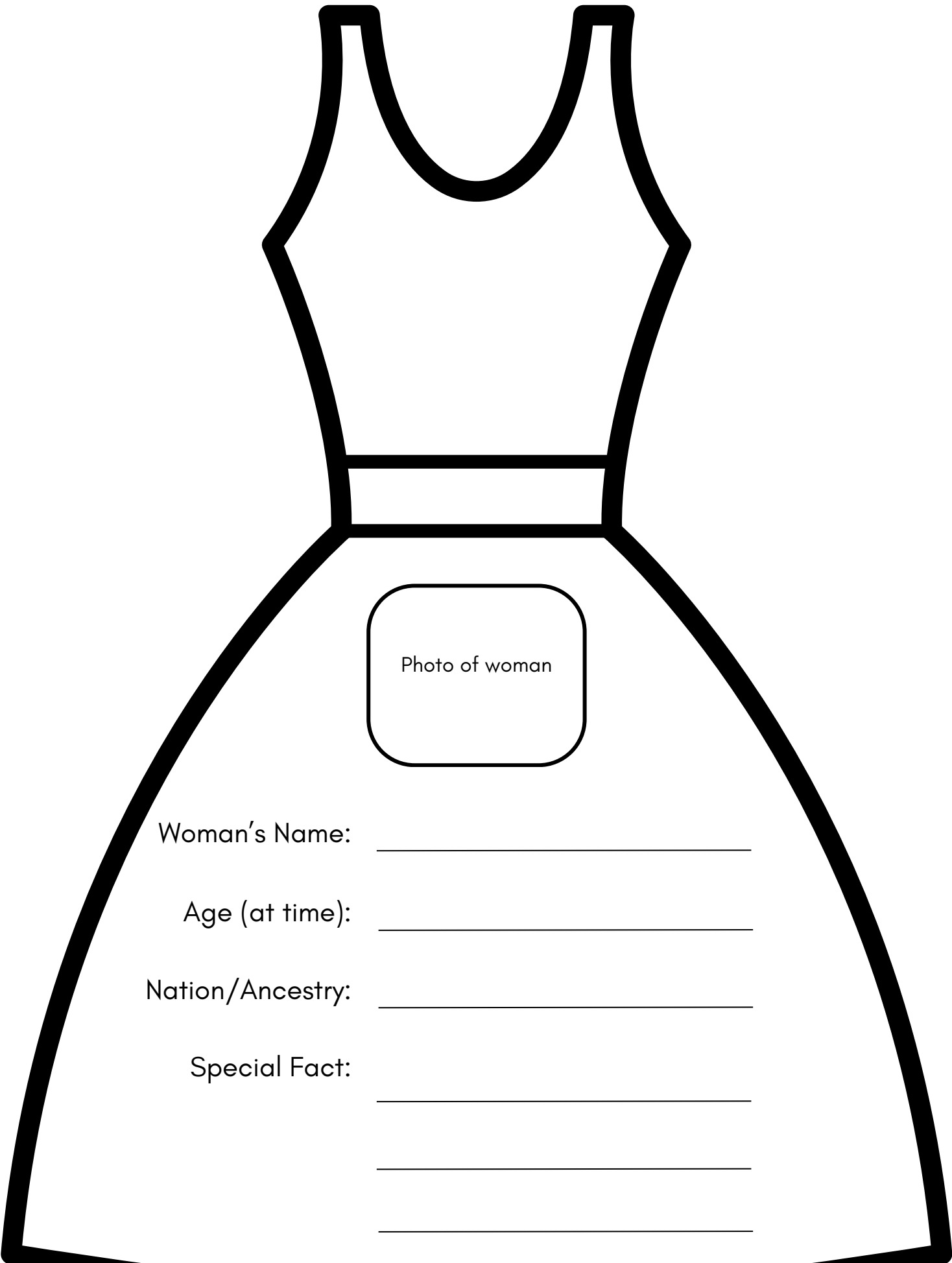


Photo of woman

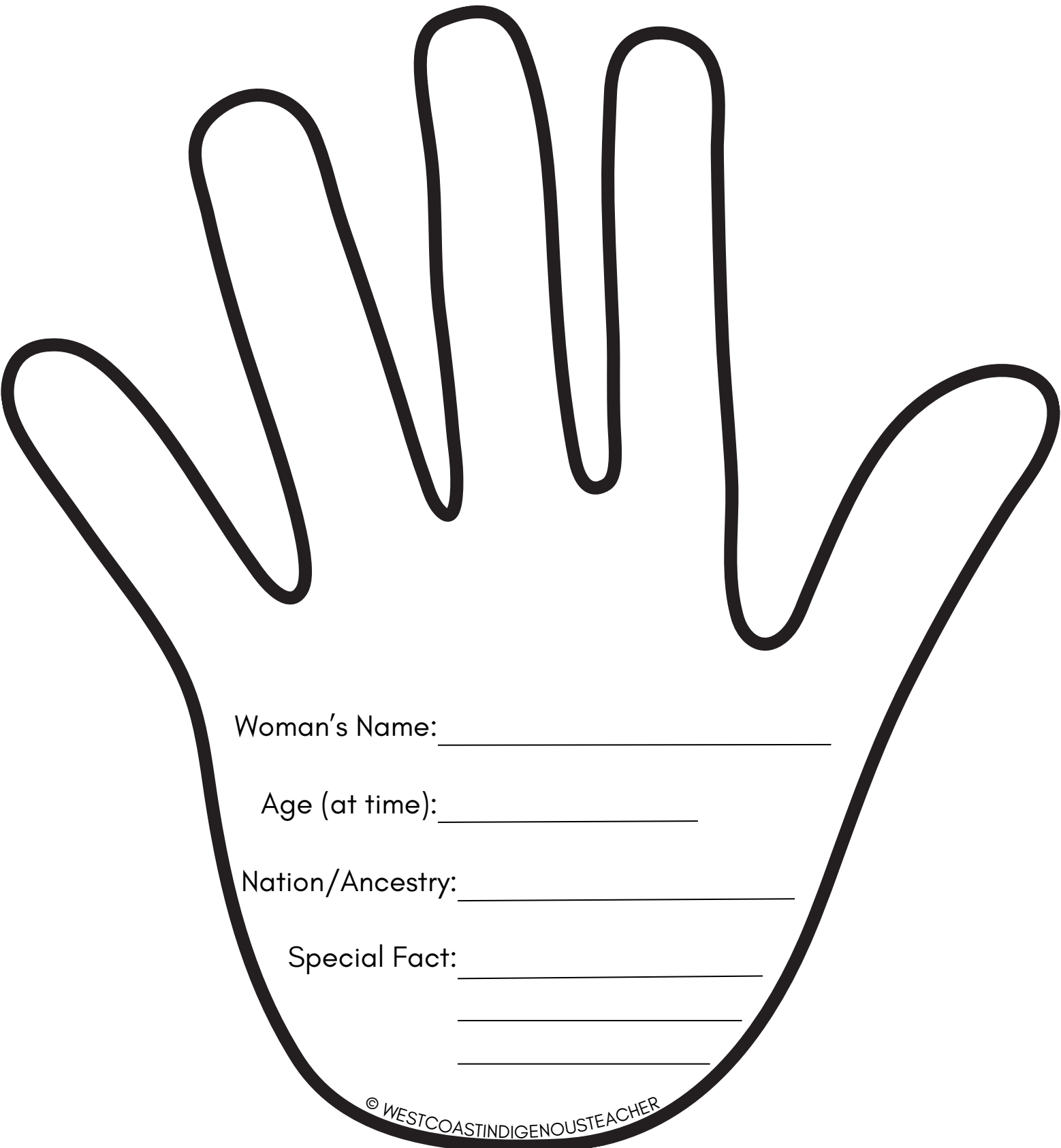
Woman's Name: _____

Age (at time): _____

Nation/Ancestry: _____

Special Fact:

MMIWG RESEARCH PROJECT BIOGRAPHY HAND



Woman's Name: _____

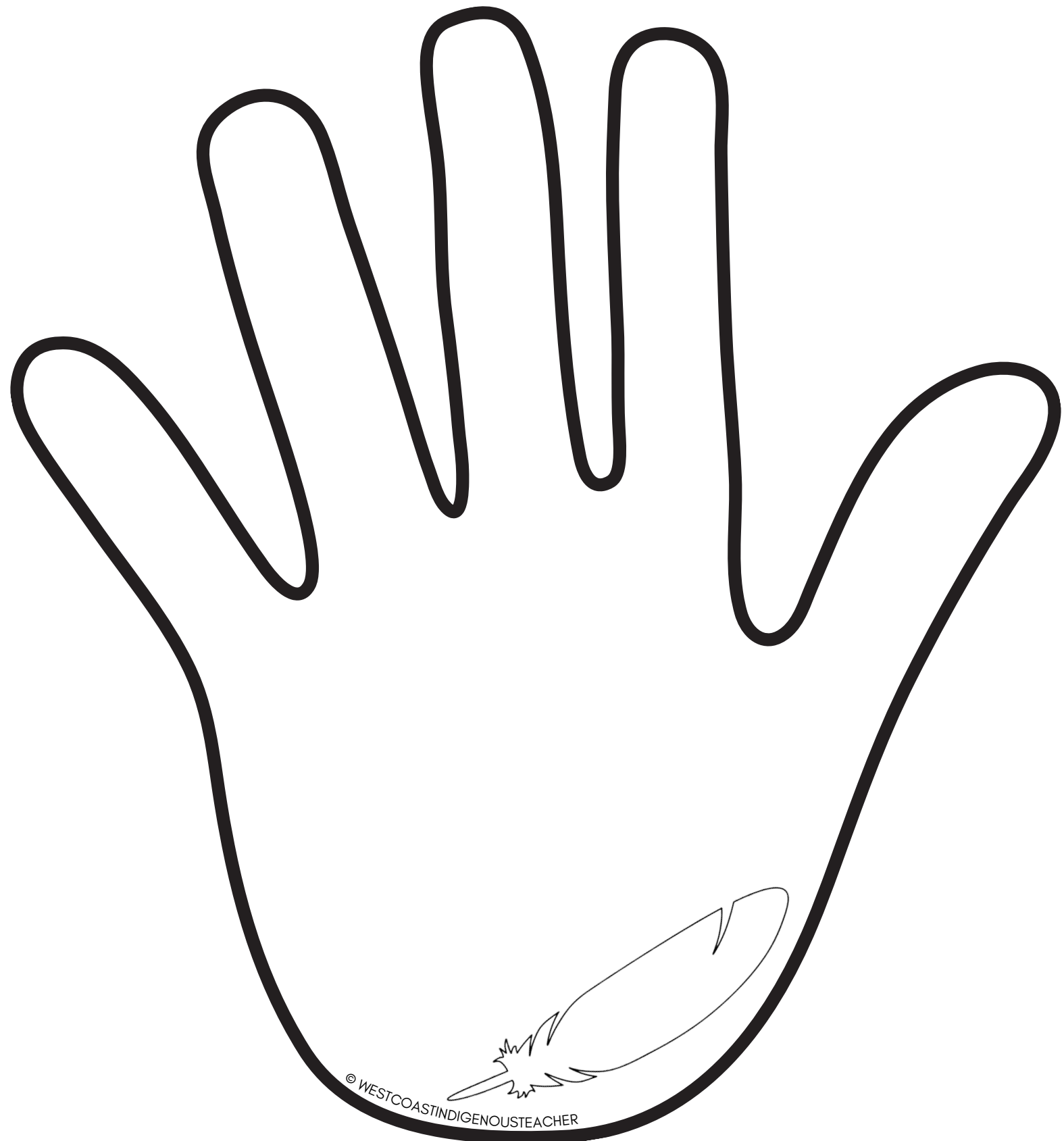
Age (at time): _____

Nation/Ancestry: _____

Special Fact: _____

HONOURING MMIWG

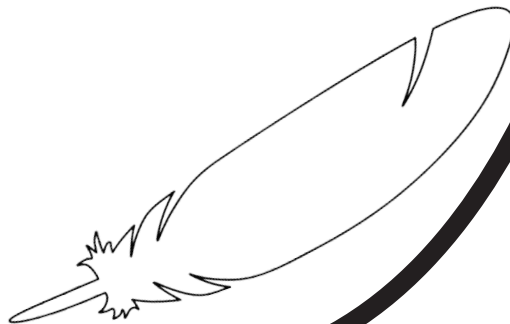
Print your missing or murdered Indigenous women's name on the hand along with the Indigenous group they are part of. Cut out the hand, decorate it and display it to honour and remember those women who have gone missing or been murdered.

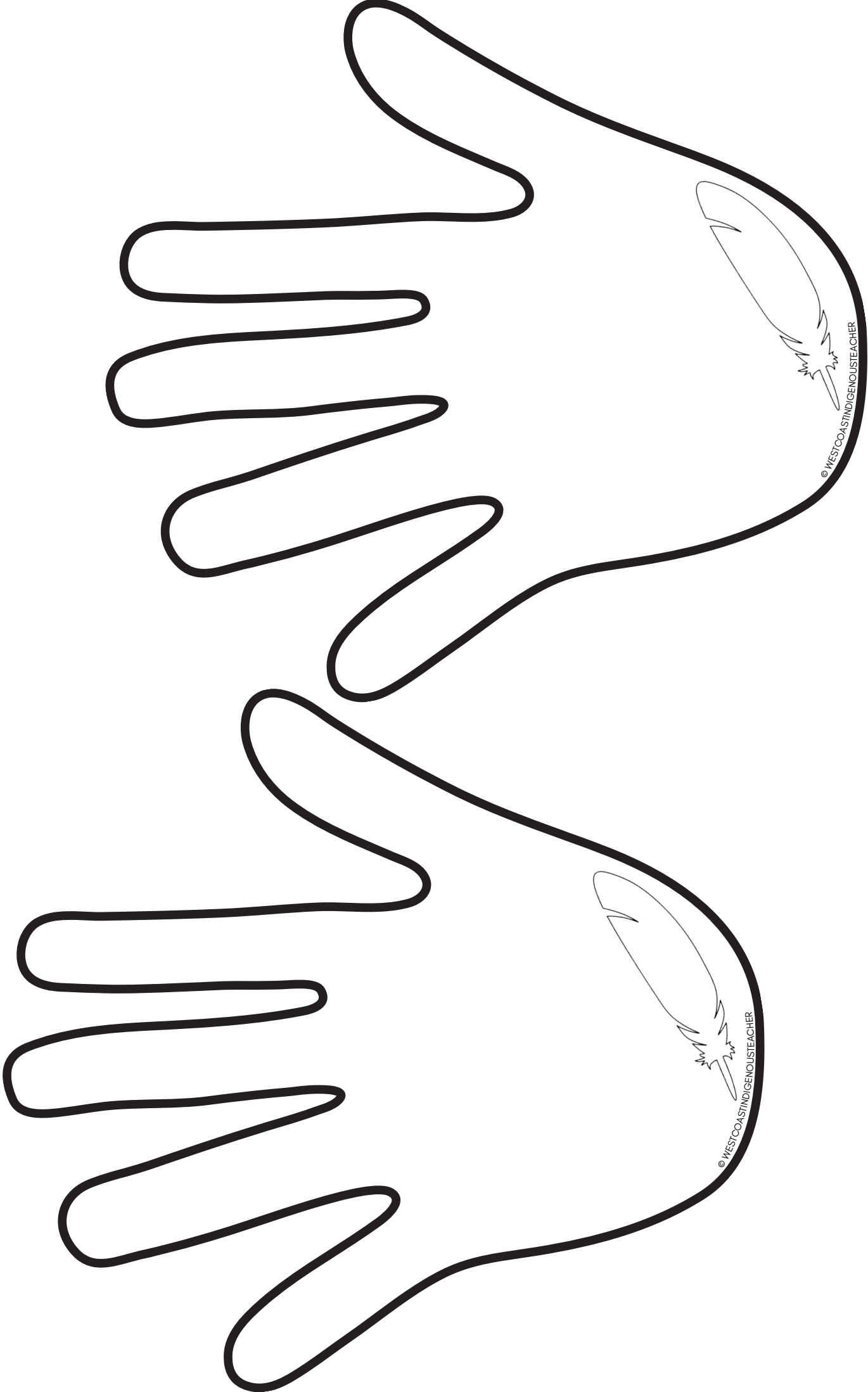


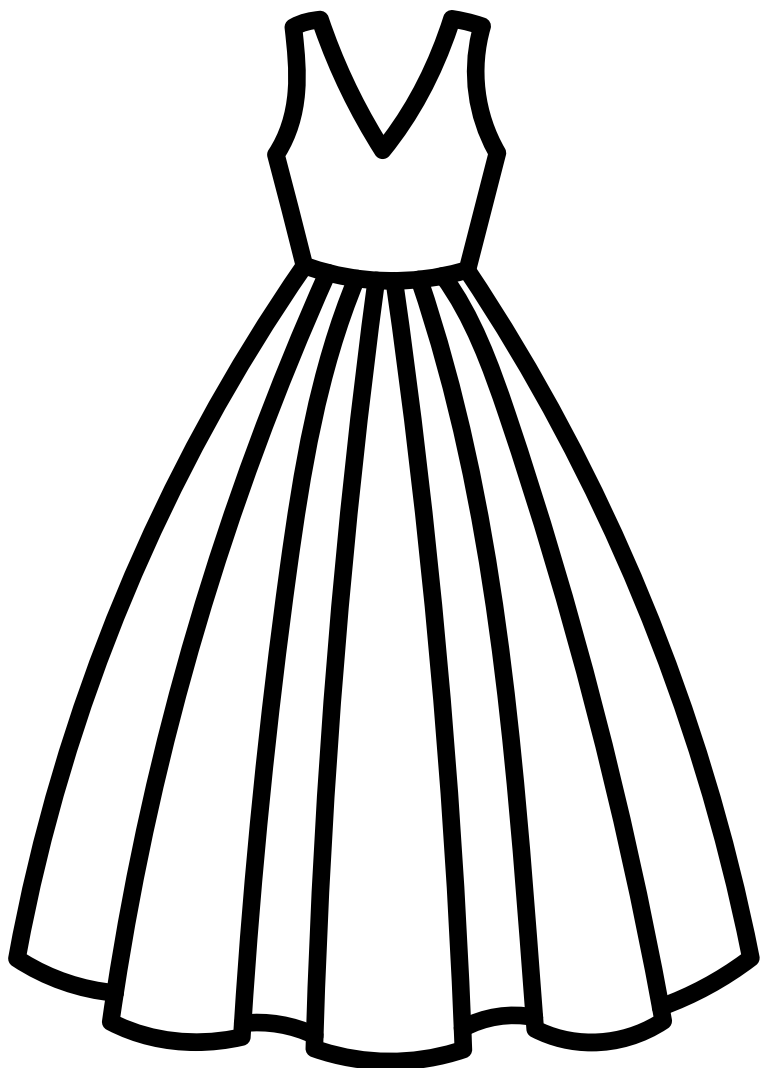
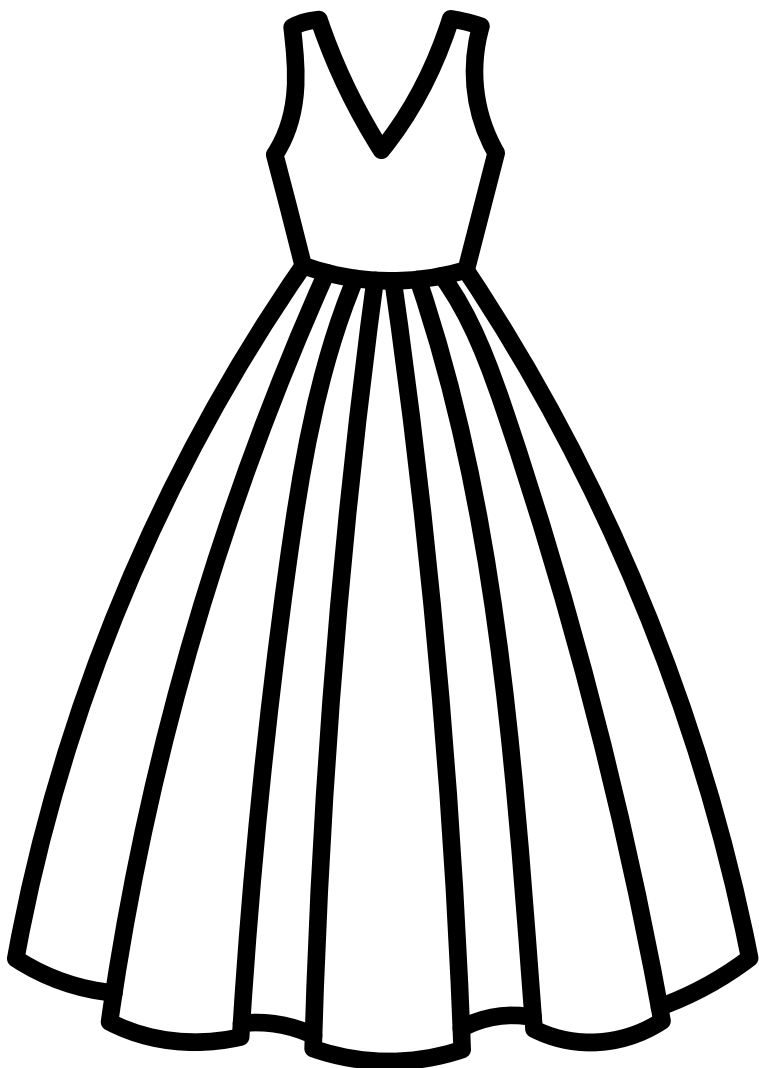
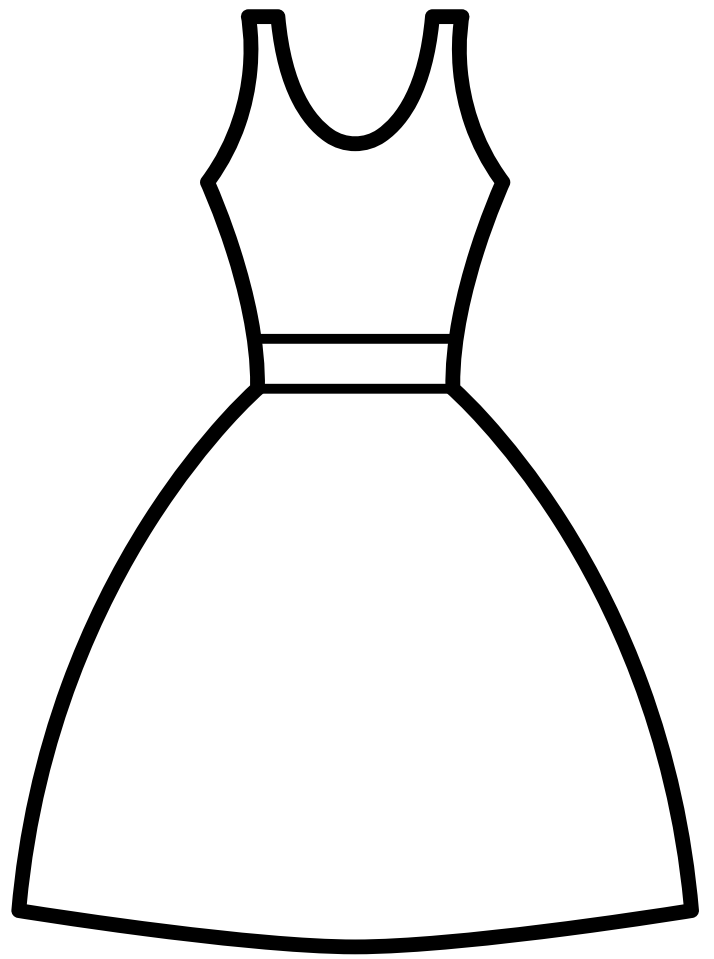
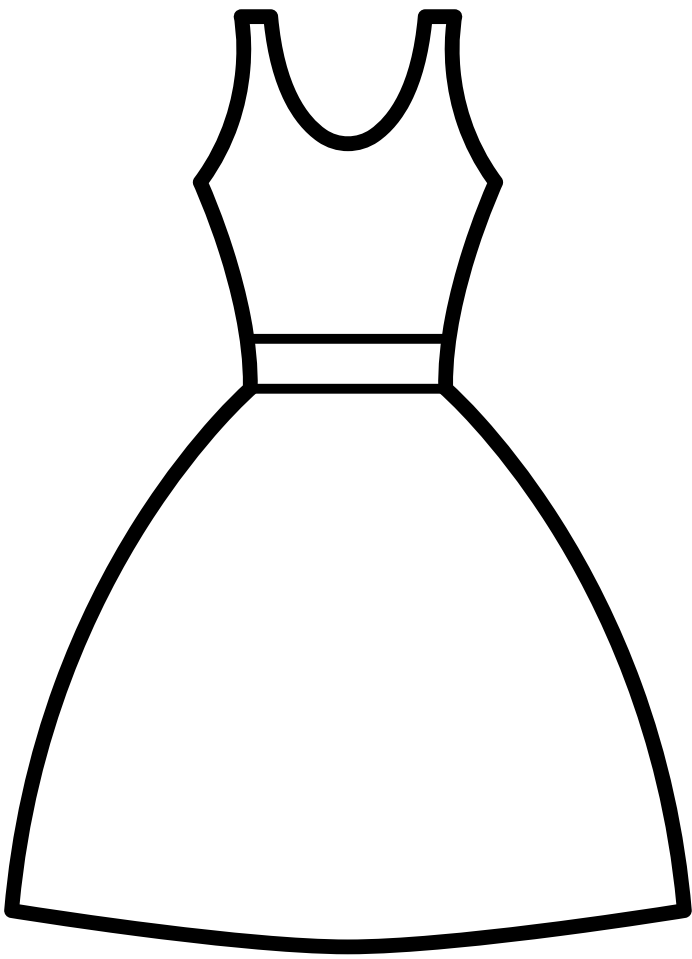
Example

Brittany Bearspaw

Siksika First Nation







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