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# #DoIMatterNow Campaign Promotes Indigenous-Muslim Solidarity in Canada

The campaign was launched to promote solidarity between indigenous and Muslim women in CanadaÑ two groups at the brunt end of just-defeated Canadian Prime Minister Stephen HarperÕs most controversial policiesÑin response to the PMÕs rhetoric and policies against wearing veils.

SAMEER RAO | OCT 20, 2015 4:29PM ET



Colorlines Screenshot of Lena Amaruq Aittauq's Facebook profile pic that helped launch the #DoIMatterNow campaign, taken from Twitter on October 20, 2015. Colorlines Screenshot

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As Canada elected the Liberal Party into political offices nationwide during yesterdayÕs historic federal election, a campaign aimed at current-Prime Minister Stephen HarperÕs policies regarding Muslim women took off on social media.

One of HarperÕs most controversial policies involved opposing the wearing of niqabs, or veils, by Muslim women during citizenship ceremonies. Harper, the Conservative Party leader and longtime Canadian Prime Minister unseated by yesterdayÕs elections (although he will continue to lead until Liberal PM-elect Justin Trudeau takes over), and his policy became a lightning rod for debate about the presence of Islam in Canada and stoked fears that are more widely-attributed to the United States than multicultural Canada.

The #DoIMatterNow campaign was started by Inuit women who donned makeshift niqabs and took pictures decrying the systematic disenfranchisement of Native people while expressing solidarity with Muslim women affected by HarperÕs policies. As explained by the campaignÕs manifesto (cited by VICE), it aimed to both build solidarity and draw attention to long-standing systemic issues affecting indigenous Canadian women, including the high rates of unresolved kidnappings and murders:

> Indigenous women are fighting for the right to be safe and in control of our own bodies, and instead of launching an inquiry to uncover the systemic racism that caused an epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous women, Harper attacks our Muslim sisters for what they choose to wear. É PM Harper, itÕs my body, my clothing, and MY decision. You will not distract me from issues that actually matter to me as a Canadian. In solidarity with our Muslim sisters.

The campaign picked up on social media, with many indigenous women addressing the lack of attention paid to violence against their communities:

> Indigenous women in Canada standing in solidarity with Muslims womenÕs rights to wear what they want #DoIMatterNow pic.twitter.com/Lq6L6lERGh
>
> Ñ tay (@fifth_unison) October 19, 2015

> Hey HarperÉ This is my daughterÉ Is she on your radar now? #doimatternow #cndpoli #MMIW pic.twitter.com/sSoTaGvgKl
>
> Ñ Beverly Sembsmoen (@BMSembsmoen) October 10, 2015

Despite the potential for accusations of appropriation, the campaign has been embraced by many Muslim Canadian women. One Muslim resident of Montreal spoke to VICE about the campaign, which she participated in:

> ÒSometimes you have to shock to draw attention,Ó she says. ÒAnd we have to bring in another point of view. WeÕre talking about niqabs, but not murdered and missing Indigenous women? Yet the woman in a niqab is just asking to be left alone.Ó

Earlier this month, Harper told VICE that he wouldnÕt open a national inquiry on missing and murdered indigenous women, saying that many murders were solved and that criminal justice resources needed to address all womenÑan answer that

#DoIMatterNow activist Janet Brewster deemed insufficient:

> ÒWe are currently living with high rates of murder, high rates of disappearances, and multiple for some families,Ó she says. ÒMy aunt was murdered in 2004 and I have a cousin whoÕs been missing since 2010. Our trauma isnÕt in the past, our worry isnÕt in the past, the time is now.Ó

(H/t VICE, VICE)

**Tags**

#DoIMatterNow Canada Disappearings First Nations Gendered Violence Indigenous Canadians Inuit Murder Muslims Niqab Solidarity Stephen Harper

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