

## Eagles soar above Vancouver march for murdered and missing women

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Eagles soared above the skies of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside during the 19th annual march held this afternoon (February 14) to commemorate murdered and missing women, many of whom are First Nations women.

The circling flight of the winged creatures throughout most of the event elicited cheers from the multitude of people who showed up to honour the memories of these women.

Aboriginal activist **Jennifer Allan** explained to the *Straight* that the appearance of the eagles symbolize that prayers for the women who fell victims to violence will be brought up to the gods above.

In a previous interview, First Nations activist **Gladys Radek** noted that Olympic security officials initially opposed the holding the march. Radek also recalled that police were told that the event would push through whether they like it or not.

At the side of the Carnegie Community Centre on Hastings Street, community activist **Don Larson** and his colleagues handed out soup and bread. Larson also brought 125 pink carnations to give to women, telling the *Straight* that he's been doing this for the last 17 years. "The flowers are for the ladies and it's Valentine's Day," he said.

Loretta, a five-month-old baby, was probably the youngest in the crowd. She was carried in a front pouch by her mother **Debbie Krull**, a Cree Native who has been attending the march for a number of years.

An almost tearful Krull told the *Straight* that the event is part of a "healing process" for her, but she did not elaborate.

Chilean Canadian **Magnolia Villalobos** came with her granddaughter in a stroller. A women's rights and labour advocate, Villalobos told the *Straight* that it's shame that no public inquiry has been called to look into deeper issues surrounding the killing and disappearance of women.

Elected federal and provincial politicians were also in attendance. NDP Vancouver-Kensington MLA **Mable Elmore** recalled to the *Straight* that the yearly march, which she started attending since the 1990s, formed part of her initial education as an activist.

The march started from the corner of Main and Hastings Street toward the north, passing by Gastown, and returning to its point of origin.

First Nations activist **Kat Norris** told the *Straight* that this year's march looks like the largest ever.

Estimates of the crowd greatly varied, with a police officer saying it was in the range between 500 to 1,000, "but no more than 1,000".

An Olympic legal observer said there could have been 5,000 people. One participant offered another number:

3,000. At the beginning of the march, the parade stretched more than two city blocks.

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