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Monday, July 14, 2025

WHERE **YOUR STORY** LIVES

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MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

‘THERE WAS NEVER JUSTICE FOR THEM’



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A dancer wearing a shirt honoring Marquez Deputee Ontiveros, the 8-year-old boy killed in an October shooting in Lame Deer, applies a red handprint to her face in preparation for the third annual Red Hand Special at the Northern Cheyenne Chief’s Powwow on July 4, 2025.

Red Hand Special honors MMIP at Cheyenne powwow

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At the yearly Northern Cheyenne Chief’s Powwow, about 60 dancers entered the arbor for the third annual Red Hand Special — an honor dance hosted by local nonprofit Pretty Eagle Woman Resources to raise awareness and remembrance for the nationwide crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous People, which has impacted many families in southeastern Montana.

After the powwow’s Grand Entry, announcer Tiger Scalping kicked off the Red Hand Special by explaining the

meaning of the red handprint worn on each dancer’s face.

“It stands for something significant,” Scalping said. “They’re wearing it in honor of our lost relatives who were taken tragically and there was never justice for them.”

After opening remarks, dozens of family members entered the arbor holding signs with the names and photos of loved ones who are missing, murdered, or died under suspicious circumstances. In a follow-up interview, Yolanda Fraser, director of Pretty Eagle Woman Resources and event organizer, said the Red Hand

Special creates a healing space for MMIP families and underscores the scale of the crisis in the region.

“We have so many families in Northern Cheyenne and Crow — the numbers are staggering,” Fraser said. “It’s hard to humanize a number.”

For the past six years, Fraser has advocated for justice in the death of her 18-year-old granddaughter Kaysera Stops Pretty Places, whose body was found in Hardin in 2019.

Among those troubling details, Fraser

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Mercer announced as Trump pick for seat on federal bench

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President Donald Trump announced Thursday evening he was nominating Montana state Rep. William “Bill” Mercer, a Billings Republican, for confirmation to a seat on the federal bench in Montana.

“Bill has TREMENDOUS experience, previously serving at the Department of Justice and, as United States Attorney for the District of Montana,” Trump said in a social media post. “He is STRONG and SMART, will fearlessly uphold the Rule of Law, and defend our Constitution on the Federal Bench. Congratulations Bill!”

Mercer, a partner at the law firm Holland & Hart who specializes in environmental and health care litigation, is serving

his fourth and final term in the Montana House of Representatives, a seat he has held since 2019.

He was nominated by President George W. Bush to be the U.S. Attorney for the District of Montana, holding that office from 2001 to 2009. Before that, Mercer was an assistant U.S. attorney in Montana for seven years.

Mercer also served as the U.S. Department of Justice’s principal associate deputy general from 2005 to 2006 and as acting U.S. associate attorney general from 2006 to 2007.

At the Legislature this year, Mercer served as the vice chair of the powerful

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SONNY TAPIA, INDEPENDENT RECORD

Rep. Bill Mercer, R-Billings, listens to applause after his final speech to the House on the last day of the 2025 Montana legislative session on April 30, 2025.