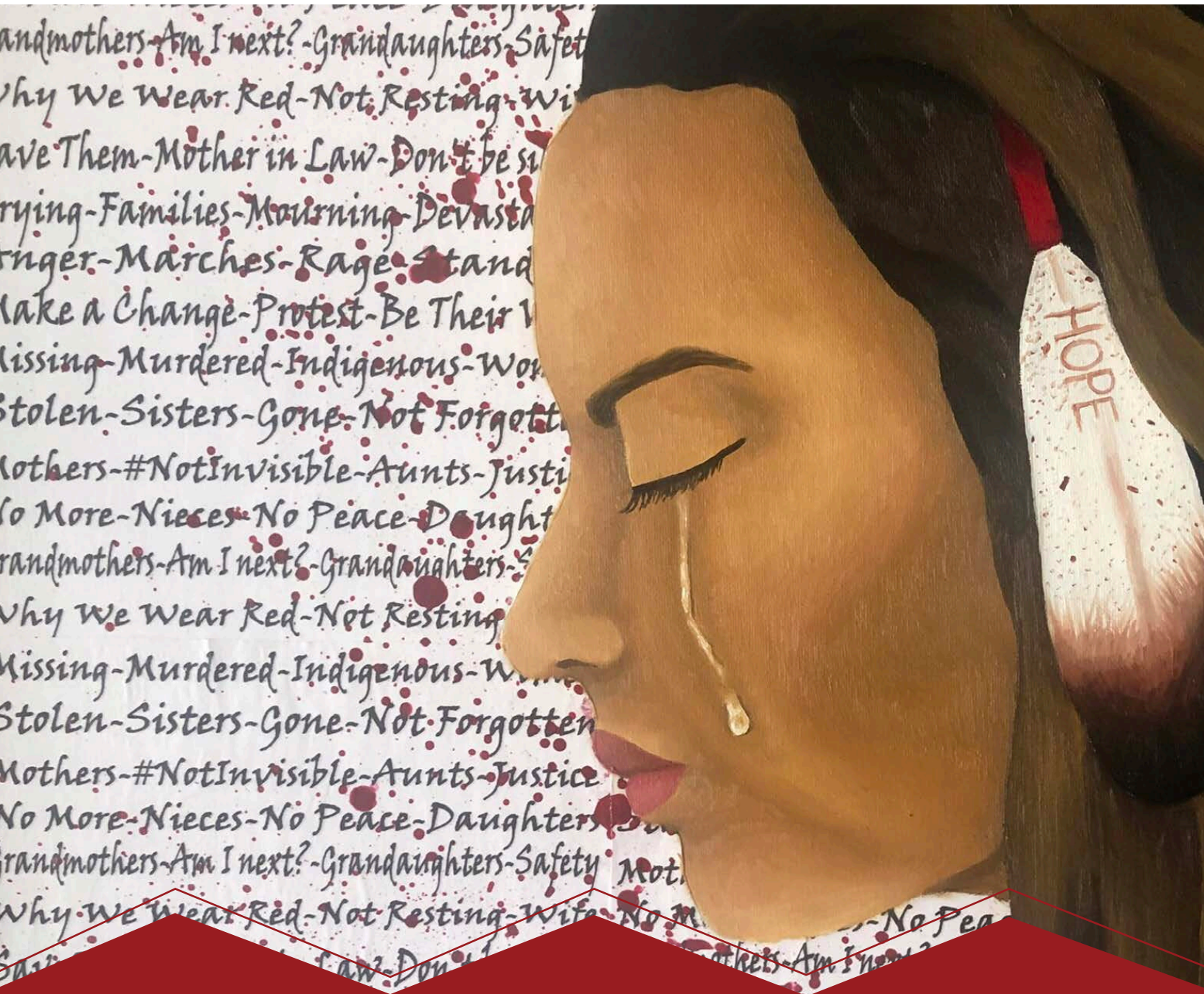




**OF NATIVE
SOVEREIGNTY AND
SAFETY FOR NATIVE
WOMEN**

January 2022 | Volume 18 | Issue 4



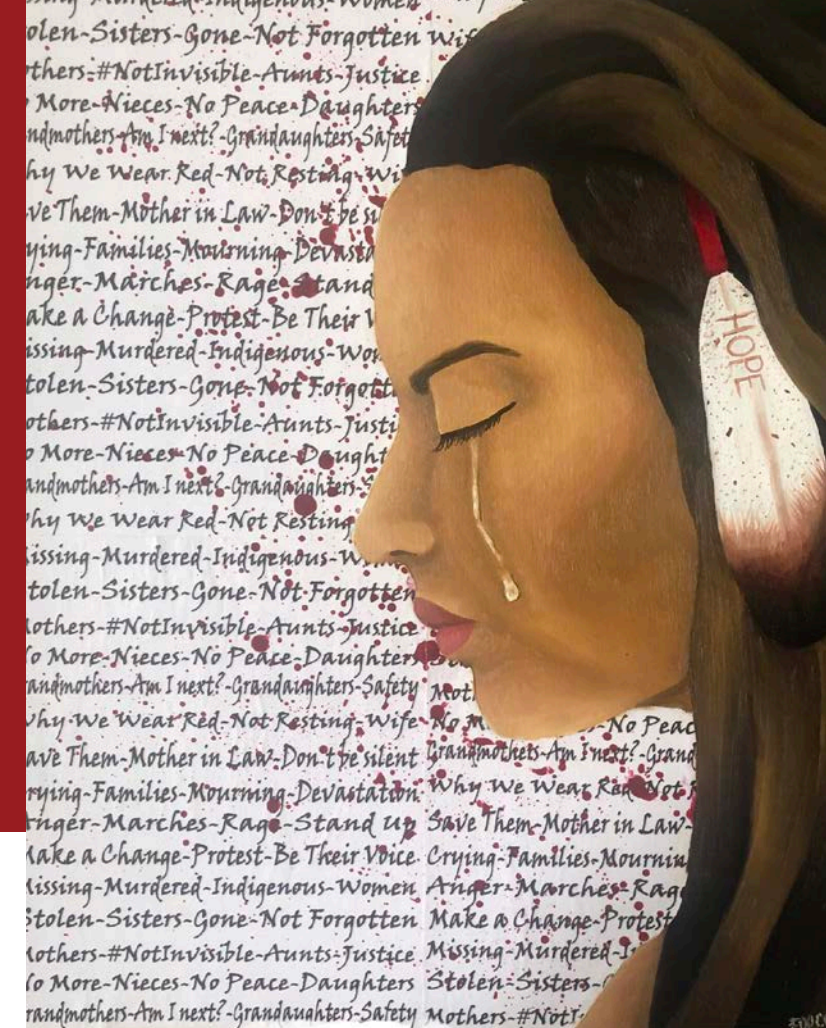
**SPECIAL EDITION ON MISSING AND
MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN**

About the Restoration Special Edition on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women

Dear Friends,

The National Indigenous Women's Resource Center (NIWRC) was created to continue a legacy of organizing to uphold the sacred status and restore safety to Indigenous women. Tillie Black Bear (Sicangu), a founding mother of NIWRC, is considered the grandmother of the Native and non-Native battered women's movement. From the late 1970s until her passage in 2014, Tillie dedicated her life to restoring the safety of Native women by strengthening the sovereignty of Indian Nations. NIWRC continues this organizing based on a shared Indigenous worldview, understanding the foundation of the current spectrum of violence against Native women as ongoing systemic legal barriers imposed over time through colonization.

The crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) is the extension of colonization through the systemic denial of the full authority of Indian Nations to self-government and the withholding of the federal government resources essential to lifesaving services, as well as the fostering of a social tolerance of disrespect and violence toward women. For more than two decades, the establishment of a consistent, grassroots strategy of "increasing safety by strengthening sovereignty" has resulted in landmark changes to federal Indian law and increased resources to provide lifesaving services and protections for Indigenous women. Many of NIWRC's staff and board members organized using this strategy for



Artwork by Danielle Fixico.

implementation of the original Violence Against Women Act in 1995 and during each subsequent reauthorization to win historic victories for Indian Nations and Native women.

With the generous non-federal financial support of The Vadon Foundation, NIWRC is able to pursue and expand an uncensored analysis of the systemic barriers to safety for Native women and organize for foundational change outside government restrictions and oversight.

The NIWRC began its projects funded by The Vadon Foundation in January 2021. Building upon the years of collaborative efforts, our staff facilitated the formation of two distinct national working collectives: a National Partners Work Group on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women made up of six long-standing national sister organizations working to address violence against Indigenous women, and a Family Advisory Group of family members impacted by MMIW to continually inform our advocacy. The National Partners developed a *6-Point Action Plan to Reform Current Systemic Barriers and Restore Safety of Indigenous Women*, including Native Hawaiian Women as the Indigenous

People of the Hawaiian Islands. Each of the 6 points offer foundational direction to address violence against Indigenous women strategically.

Together, we organized the 2021 National Week of Action for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women culminating in the May 5th National Day of Awareness for MMIW. This national organizing was based on a shared Indigenous worldview to explain the spectrum of violence and crisis of MMIW not as the result of single separate acts, but a continuum of violence condoned by the United States through systemic legal and policy barriers directed at the destruction of Indian Nations since contact. This Indigenous worldview also provides a source of inspiration and a collective knowledge that the shared cultural beliefs of respect and spirituality can restore and strengthen the sacred status held by women within their Nations.

The crisis of MMIW is not new; what is new is the national recognition of this crisis by the federal government. This political change is the result of grassroots organizing efforts by the families, advocates, communities, and Indian Nations of MMIW. In this Special Edition of *Restoration*, we highlight joint efforts to honor MMIW and call for justice for Indigenous women to share examples of organizing actions we hope will spread across all communities during the 2022 National Week of Action culminating into the National Day of Awareness for MMIW on May 5th.

Rising and standing together, we can end the crisis of violence against Indigenous women!

In prayer and strength,



Ahéhee',

Lucy Simpson, Esq.
Diné
Executive Director



Mvto,

Cherrah Giles
Muscogee Nation
Board Chair



**OF NATIVE
SOVEREIGNTY AND
SAFETY FOR NATIVE
WOMEN**

Restoration of Native Sovereignty and Safety for Native Women Magazine, 2003-2022

During the reauthorization process of the Violence Against Women Act in 2005, several national organizations came together to take a stand for the safety of Native women: Sacred Circle National Resource Center to End Violence Against Native Women, Clan Star, Inc., the National Congress of American Indians, and the National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence. It was recognized that to fully participate in the national movement to create the changes needed to increase safety for Native women, broad communication was essential. *Restoration of Native Sovereignty and Safety for Native Women* emerged to fulfill this task.

Restoration is a publication dedicated to informing Tribal leadership and communities of emerging issues impacting the safety of American Indian and Alaska Native women. The name of the magazine reflects the grassroots strategy of the Task Force that by strengthening the sovereignty of Indian Nations to hold perpetrators accountable the safety of Native women will be restored. The magazine is a joint project of the National Congress of American Indians Task Force on Violence Against Women and the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center. It is produced and made available during national NCAI conventions and the annual USDOJ Tribal Consultation on VAWA. This MMIW Special Edition of *Restoration* is the first special edition.

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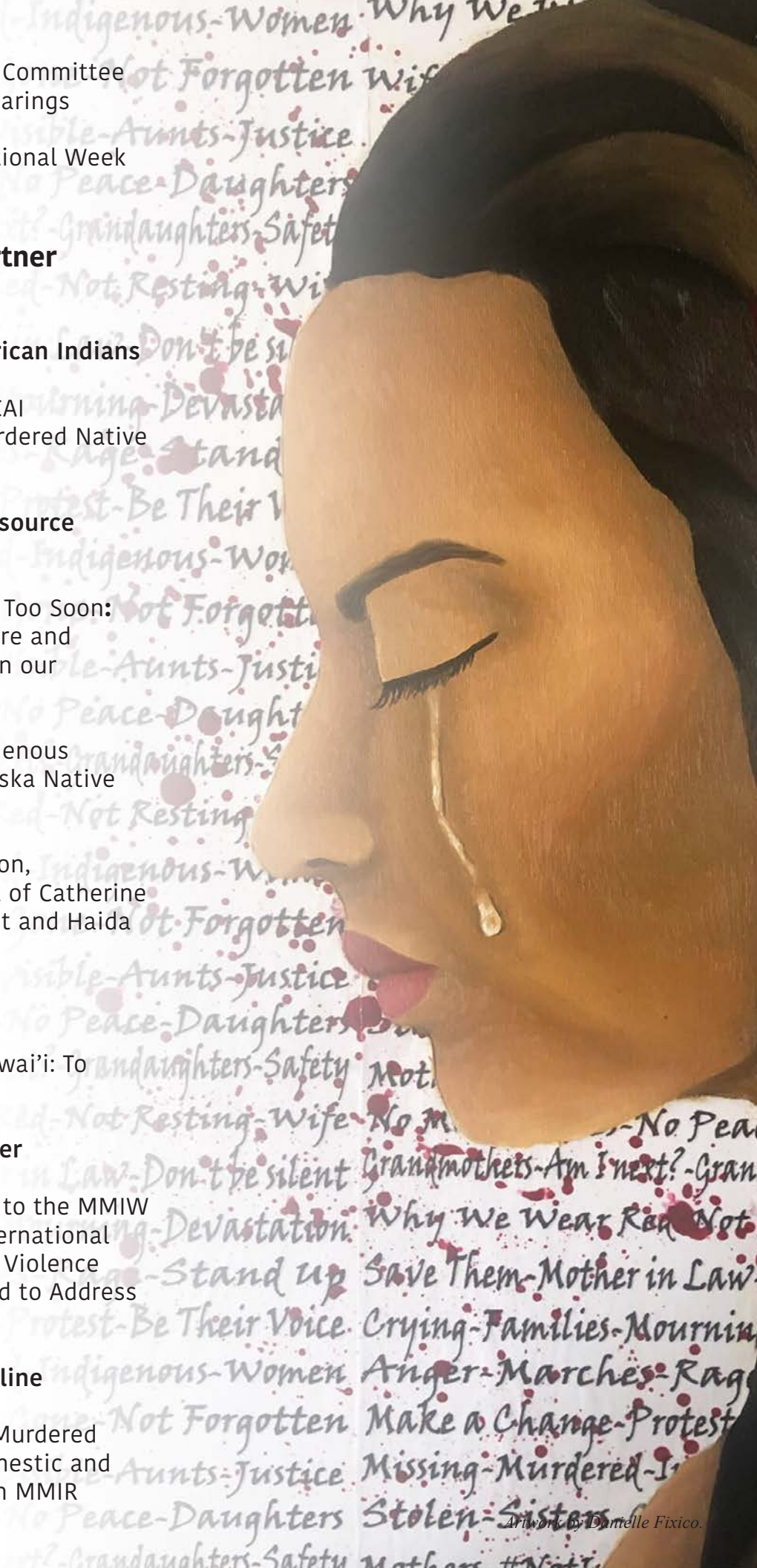
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A CALL TO ACTION



Organizing the 2022 National Week of Action for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women

In response to the family's actions and demands for justice following the disappearance and murder of Hanna Harris at the Northern Cheyenne Reservation in 2013, the Montana Congressional Delegation led the work to pass the first Senate resolution declaring May 5th as the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Native Women and Girls (MMIWG) in 2017.

Despite this declaration on May 5th, 2017, Native women continue to be murdered at alarming rates. In response, Native families and Indigenous communities across Indian country, Alaska, and Hawaii are calling for justice and reforms to dismantle the systemic barriers impacting the safety of Native women and to increase support for protections as defined by Indigenous voices, languages, and teachings. These Indigenous calls for justice and reforms date as far back as first contact by Western governments and are reflected in Indigenous acts of resistance and self-defense throughout history.

Nearly 46 million people worldwide heard the grassroots calls for justice during the National Week of Action for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW), April 29-May 5, 2021. Such an organized groundswell is an important factor in creating the political will to effect social changes that Indigenous women urgently need.

Turning our grief into action, we call upon congressional, state, local, and international policymakers to address the foundational reforms required to address MMIW beyond individual cases.

The crisis of MMIW is the culmination of a spectrum of violence perpetrated disproportionately against Indigenous women—it reflects the intersection of domestic violence, sexual assault, trafficking, and many other crimes. These crimes occur due to a long history of government policies, programs, and laws that create conditions that leave Indigenous women more vulnerable to such crimes than other women.

Join our united call to action and help grow the groundswell of our grassroots movement to hold all systems and sectors of our societies accountable!

We urge the United States, state, and local governments to reaffirm and support Indigenous protective systems as outlined by our national partner collective in our *6-Point Action Plan to Reform Current Systemic Barriers and Restore Safety of Indigenous Women*.

The crisis of violence against Indigenous women and missing and murdered Indigenous women must continue to be brought into the public's awareness to increase the accountability of social, political, economic, and government systems and responses. We call on the mainstream and local media to avoid harm and be culturally sensitive and transparent when building relationships with families impacted by MMIW. Indigenous women and girls deserve to have their humanity preserved when their stories are told in the media, and their families must be treated with the utmost respect and compassion. Missing and murdered Indigenous women and their families deserve justice.

A National Week of Action for Missing and Murdered Native Women and Girls provides a process for public healing and accountability for this crisis and honors those who have gone missing or been murdered. It is essential on the broadest level to acknowledge the historic and ongoing, current human suffering and death that global colonization has brought to Indigenous women. Violence against Indigenous women is preventable.

We call on all those concerned for the safety of Native women to organize at the local, Tribal, state, national, and international levels to support the 2022 National Week of Action culminating in a National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women on May 5, 2022. Systemic changes are needed across all systems and sectors of societies—including the public (governmental), private (business/corporations), nonprofit, educational, health care, and mainstream media sectors.

We must tell policymakers at the federal, state, local, and

international levels and communities around the world that enough is enough. As Tillie Black Bear (Sicangu), grandmother of our movement for safety, said:

“I remember as a little girl laying on top of a slope as a sentry watching for agents to warn our parents and the elders doing ceremony. Our spirituality was made illegal, outlawed.”

The movement for the safety of Native women emerged in the 1970s as American Indian and Alaska Native sisters acted to help each other seek safety. The movement continues to develop as American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes and Native Hawaiians join together to resist violence perpetrated against women.

Join our united call to action and help grow the groundswell of our grassroots movement to hold all systems and sectors of our societies accountable!

Lucy Simpson (Diné), Executive Director, National Indigenous Women's Resource Center

Juana Majel-Dixon (Pauma-Yuima Band of Luiseno Mission Indians) & Shannon Holsey (Stockbridge-Munsee Community Band of Mohican Indians), Co-Chairs, National Congress of American Indians Task Force on Violence Against Women

Robert T. Coulter (Potawatomi), Executive Director, Indian Law Resource Center

Tami Truett Jerue (Anvik Tribe), Executive Director, Alaska Native Women's Resource Center

Rosemond Keanuenue Pettigrew (Native Hawaiian), President, Board of Directors, Pouhana 'O Nā Wahine

Dawn Stover (Cherokee), Executive Director, Alliance of Tribal Coalitions to End Violence

Lori Jump (Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians), Director, StrongHearts Native Helpline

6-Point Action Plan to Reform Current Systemic Barriers and Restore Safety of Indigenous Women

By the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center, Indian Law Resource Center, Pouhana 'O Nā Wahine, Alaska Native Women's Resource Center, StrongHearts Native Helpline, and the Alliance of Tribal Coalitions to End Violence

Traditionally, like the land, Indigenous women were respected and held sacred within their Indigenous Nations. Colonization eroded this status and dehumanized Indigenous women, destroying original protections within their communities. The current spectrum of violence against Indigenous women is intertwined with systemic barriers embedded within the U.S. federal government. These barriers developed as the U.S. seized the homelands and natural resources of Indigenous peoples, forcibly removed and relocated Indigenous people, and created living conditions where women are vulnerable to violence. To fully address the current crisis of violence against Indigenous women, these systemic barriers must be removed and the sacred status of women restored. To that end, we urge the U.S. government to reaffirm and support Indigenous protective systems by:

- Restoring the full authority of American Indian and Alaska Native Nations to protect Indigenous women, including through the support of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) 2021's expansion of Special Domestic Violence Criminal Jurisdiction for Indian Nations.
- Recognizing and respecting Indigenous responses of Native Hawaiian communities and organizations to protect Indigenous women, including through the support of a Native Hawaiian Resource Center on Domestic Violence.
- Ensuring adequate resources for advocacy and services for Indigenous women, including by support of FVPSA 2021 Tribal funding increases and establishment of a permanent, dedicated funding stream for Tribes in the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA).
- Removing the systemic barriers facing families of MMIW including by supporting implementation of Savanna's Act and Not Invisible Act and the development and adoption of additional MMIW legislation in consultation with Alaska Native and American Indian Nations and Native Hawaiians.
- Implementing a thorough federal response to MMIW by requiring every federal department to develop action plans with meaningful consultation with American Indian Nations, Alaska Native Nations, and Native Hawaiians to address MMIW.
- Recognizing that both land and Indigenous women are sacred and connected, and that both require legislative and policy actions to protect them from extractive industries and corporate interests, such as the passage of the *Save Oak Flat*, HR 1884/S.915.



RISING FOR JUSTICE FOR MMIW

A Call for Foundational and Permanent Change

Attention to the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) is exploding nationally and internationally.

A “crisis” by definition typically shocks the senses. The families and communities of MMIW have felt this shock since contact—the loss, the grieving, and the reality that “help is not coming.”

Has the federal government felt the shock or after-shock and ready to take meaningful action?

While the list of congressional acts and presidential orders reversing bad U.S. federal Indian law has grown, every day is a day too late in the suffering and injustice of Indigenous women.

NIWRC and five national organizations linked by years of our shared mission to end violence against women have issued a *6-Point Action Plan to Reform Current Systemic Barriers and Restore Safety of Indigenous Women*. The plan addresses violence against Indigenous women on a systemic level.

The six points look to systemic barriers rather than instances of individual wrongdoing. They focus on the responsibilities of the government rather than individuals in government positions who fail to respond and support safety for Native women. While individuals must be held accountable, the system itself continues to endanger the lives of generations of Indigenous women.

By changing the rules, the legitimacy of individuals who abuse their authority and do not serve Native women will be exposed and prevented.

The 6-Point Action Plan is a pointed statement that the crisis of MMIW occurs in the context of a spectrum of violence against Indigenous women. A spectrum resting on the laws and policies of the United States toward American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian Nations and peoples. The six points connect to concrete reforms in law and policy that Congress and the Biden-Harris Administration can enact and adopt to reduce the current death toll of Indigenous women.

The increased attention to the calls for justice steadily rising across the country are a source of inspiration that the lives of nieces, sisters, cousins, daughters, mothers, granddaughters, and grandmothers will not be forgotten. The families, communities, and Indigenous Nations of MMIW are marching and calling for justice to hold governments and our society accountable.

“As preparation begins for May 5, 2022, MMIW National Day of Awareness, we encourage local, regional, national, and international actions for justice,” said Rose Quilt (Yakama), Director of Policy and Research, NIWRC. “This Special MMIW Edition of *Restoration Magazine* is meant to support grassroots organizing efforts. It offers the experiences of families of MMIW and dissects the government policies and law failing Native women.”

BY THE NUMBERS

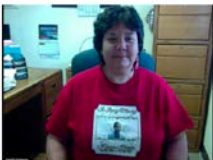
2021 National Week of Action for MMIWG

7 VIRTUAL EVENTS

APRIL 29-MAY 5, 2021



Malinda Limberhand,
Northern Cheyenne Nation



- ▶ A National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Native Women and Girls
- ▶ May 5th is the birthday of my daughter Hanna Harris who went missing on July 4, 2013 and was murdered.
- ▶ Organize for changes needed at the tribal, state, and national level
- ▶ Increase public awareness: wear red, post your efforts on social media
- ▶ Honor our Native women and girls

2,225 ATTENDEES/VIEWS

OF VIRTUAL EVENTS

49,478 WEBSITE VIEWS

OF NIWRC.ORG/MMIWGNATLWEEK21



45.9 MILLION PEOPLE

REACHED

BY #MMIWGACTIONNOW

2022 NATIONAL WEEK OF ACTION

Schedule of Events



▶ Friday, April 29, 2022

- ▶ Launch of the National Week, Traditional Opening, 12 p.m. MDT
- ▶ A National Briefing on the Crisis of MMIW, 1–2:30 p.m. MDT, hosted by the NIWRC

▶ Monday, May 2, 2022

- ▶ Webinar hosted by Pouhana 'O Nā Wahine, 12 p.m. MDT

▶ Tuesday, May 3, 2022

- ▶ Webinar hosted by the Alaska Native Women's Resource Center, 1–2:30 p.m. MDT

▶ Wednesday, May 4, 2022

- ▶ Webinar hosted by Indian Law Resource Center, 11 a.m. MDT
- ▶ Running for Justice, May 4–8: A National Virtual Run hosted by Rising Hearts

▶ Thursday, May 5, 2022

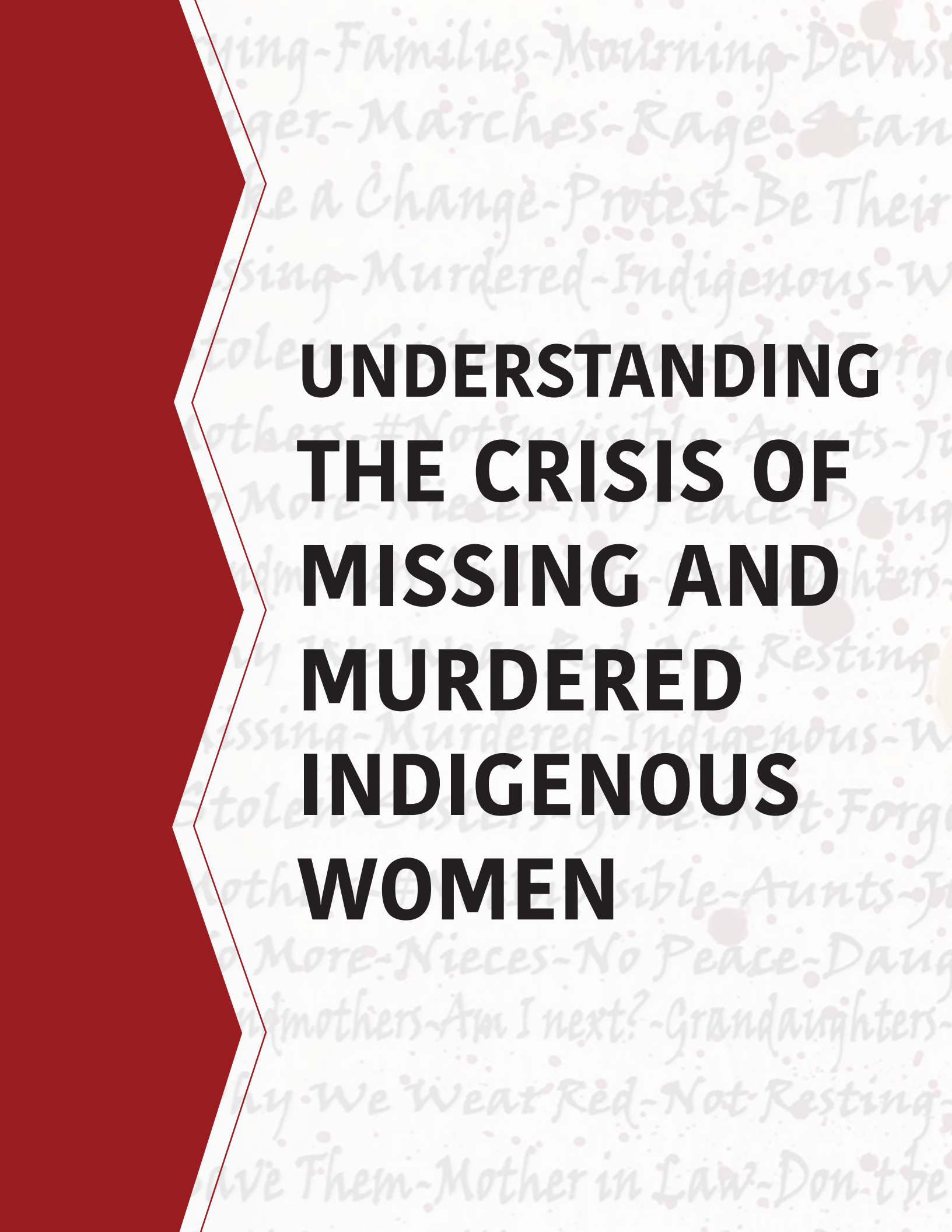
- ▶ #MMIWActionNow Twitter Storm, 10–10:30 a.m. MDT
- ▶ #MMIWActionNow Twitter Chat, 12–1 p.m. MDT
- ▶ Webinar: Uplifting the Voices of MMIW Survivor Families, 1–2:30 p.m. MDT, hosted by NIWRC

- ▶ SHARE the MMIW 'No More Stolen Sisters' poster (inserted in this magazine!) and post a photo of yourself on social media wearing red and/or traditional attire with the poster using #MMIWActionNow, #NoMoreStolenSisters and #MMIW. Download the poster: n8ve.net/TPjCV



STAY TUNED

Subscribe to NIWRC's mailing list for updates on the National Week of Action events: n8ve.net/OnCGW



**UNDERSTANDING
THE CRISIS OF
MISSING AND
MURDERED
INDIGENOUS
WOMEN**



"We grieve the loss of Indigenous women and girls—grandmothers, mothers, sisters, daughters, and granddaughters. To honor them, we pledge to continue organizing for the legal, policy, and social changes needed to stop this violence today and for future generations."

—Lucy Simpson, Diné,
Executive Director, National
Indigenous Women's
Resource Center

Addressing Structural Inequalities Endangering Native Women The Long Fight For Justice Continues

Developed by NIWRC Policy Team
Members Jacqueline “Jax” Agtuca, Rose
Quilt, Amy Sparck, and Paula Julian

Organizing efforts, from the grassroots to a national level, have brought the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women (MMIW) into the public eye. As social justice actions continue to increase across Indian Tribes and Indigenous communities, lawmakers and government departments are being educated and held accountable to make the changes needed.

Survivors, their families, Indian Nations, and the movement for the safety of Native women have created a national groundswell calling for justice. This grassroots movement has also worked to build relations and gain the support of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, and the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples.

In 2022, increased grassroots organizing and community action will continue to call for foundational changes to systemic inequalities that separate Native women and make them a population vulnerable to violence.

The increased attention and political will to make meaningful change on the issue of MMIW is long overdue.



Systemic Inequalities Placing Native Women in Harm's Way

As affirmed in the 1993 Apology to Native Hawaiians and 2009 Apology to Native Peoples, the U.S. recognized that there have been years of official deprecations, ill-conceived policies, and breaking of covenants by the Federal Government regarding Indian Tribes and Native Hawaiians; and apologized for the many instances of violence, maltreatment, and neglect inflicted on Native Peoples.¹ The release in 2018 of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Broken Promises Report also affirmed the need for the government to fulfill its trust responsibility with appropriate allocation of resources for Tribal governments.²

This MMIW crisis is in part what the U.S. apologized for—the lack of resources for Tribes to provide justice and victim services, and the failure of local, state, and federal responses to these crimes. The current crisis of MMIW is intertwined with the long history of colonization and the development of the United States as a country. Efforts at all levels of Tribal, state, and federal

1 <https://bit.ly/2LecLZB>

2 <https://bit.ly/3rfMRnt>

“

Together, we call for prayer and healing for the families in response to this violence. But we also demand meaningful legislative reforms that remove barriers to safety for Indian women by recognizing and strengthening the sovereign ability of all Tribal nations to protect Indian women and their children.

—Lucy Simpson (Diné), Executive Director, NIWRC

”

government are required to begin making the changes needed. In addition, foundational changes are required to address systemic barriers within the economic, social, and political sectors.

To achieve the legal and policy reforms needed at the foundational level of the U.S. government and society require broad public support of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

Calling for Reform of Failed Federal Laws and Policies Denying Access to Justice

Indian Nations and the world community are confronted by many issues needing action to be addressed. Yet, the reality that the lives of Indigenous women and girls are the price paid for inaction has created a groundswell calling for justice for MMIW. Congressional hearings, federal reports, statistics, consultations, and testimonials all confirm the MMIW crisis is real, and current laws and lack of resources prevent Indian Nations from protecting Native women from non-Indian perpetrators.

These laws are racial loopholes benefiting criminals who are non-Indians. Congress has the authority to restore Tribal protections for the safety of Native women and girls. It has the power to authorize and appropriate the resources for Tribal justice systems and the services women and girls need to become and stay safe. It is widely recognized that the responsibility for the MMIW

crisis rests upon Congress in its inability to act as a body and pass laws to make the changes needed to save the lives of women and girls.

For decades federal law has boxed and limited the response of Tribal law enforcement to non-Indian offenders. *“The best we can do is give her a head start.”* *“The best we can do is take him to the reservation boundary.”* *“The best we can do is tell her to move off reservation.”*

How are these responses acceptable? The words “safety” and “justice” should have meaning for Native women and girls.

The movement has and must continue to compel action by Members of Congress. The power to generate change rests in the hands of local organizers.

Recognition and Support for Tribal Authority and Responses

The normalization of violence against Native women occurred over several hundred years as federal law and policies eroded the authority of Tribal governments to protect women, sanctioning efforts by and interests of the military, religious, and corporate institutions that resulted in violence against women. It happened as the fundamental right of Native women to safety as human beings were violated and ignored by the United States.

Government laws and policies shape public perception and the cultural norm of what is unacceptable behavior, defining what is prohibited and criminal. U.S. history since contact established a pattern of laws and policies over time placing Native women in an “unprotected” social status. Many of the laws that led over time to this crisis continue to exist today and must be changed.

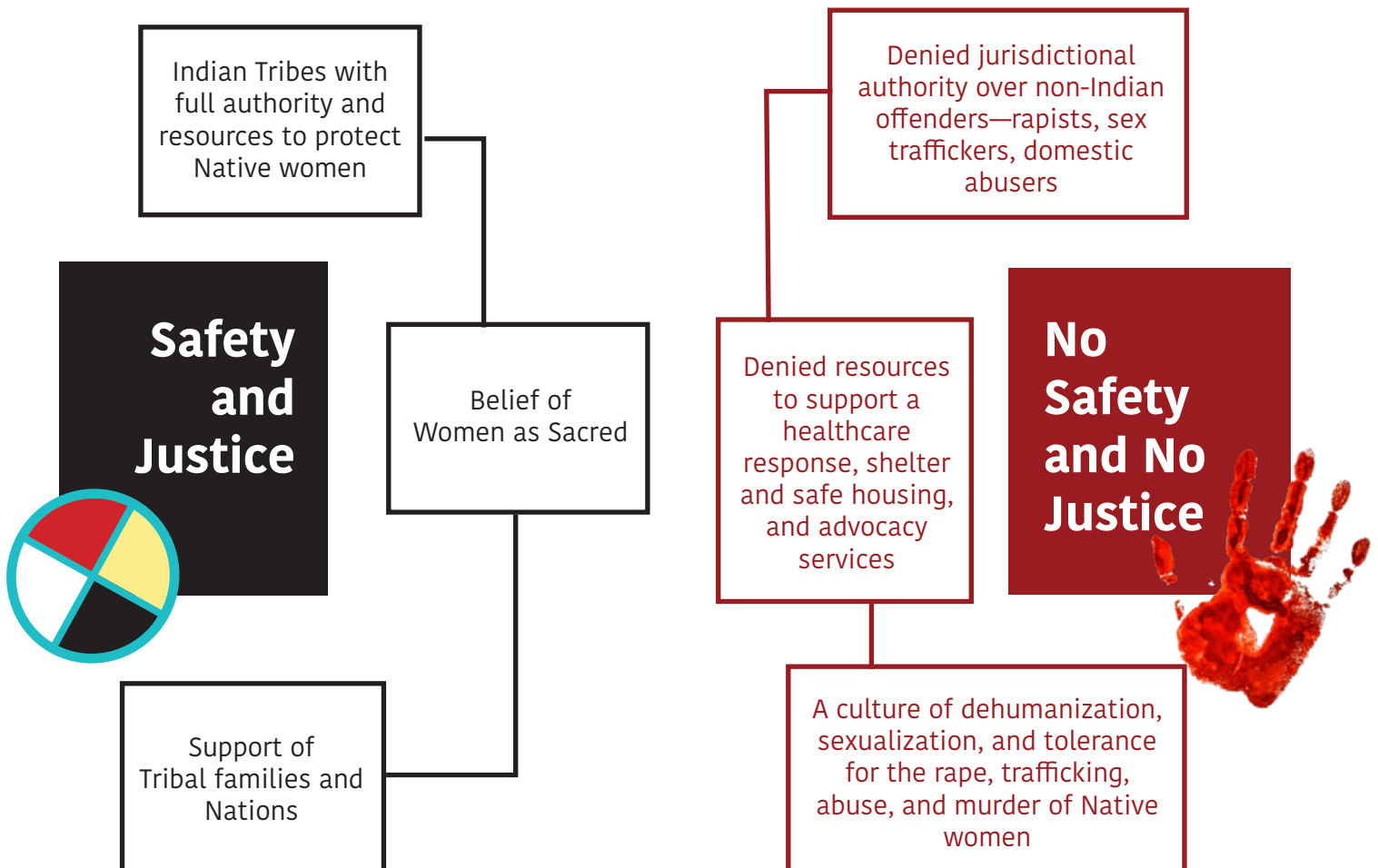
The national movement has joined with congressional champions to propose essential legislative reforms. We call on Congress to move quickly to pass legislation to increase the safety of Indigenous women, and provide the resources and restore the authority to Indian Nations to safeguard their lives. In addition, we call on President Biden to require by executive order that each federal department prioritize Indigenous women’s safety by adopting a new standard of operation, replacing inaction with action to prevent such cases in the future.

Each person holds the authority and responsibility **to take action.**

Stand with the mothers, sisters, families, and Nations of the MMIW.

Organize to **increase protections for Native women!**

No Safety. No Justice.



“While history cannot be undone, changes to current federal policies can increase the safety of Native women to save lives. Before the MMIWG crisis can be fully addressed, it must first be acknowledged.”

-Cherrah Giles, Muscogee Nation, NIWRC Board Chairwoman



Understanding the MMIW Crisis Beyond Individual Acts of Violence

The Multifaceted Layers of Colonization

Developed by NIWRC Policy Team members Jacqueline “Jax” Agtuca, Rose Quilt, Amy Sparck, and Paula Julian

The quality of life of the citizens of any nation is bound to the authority and resources of their respective governments to create stable and safe communities.

Indigenous Nations as sovereigns, from the beginning of contact with European countries, held the full authority over their respective lands and peoples as governments. The diminishment of the authority of Indian Nations to a position of dependent nations within the United States is the result of U.S. colonization.

In the specific context of Native women, the original protections and concept of safety has deteriorated over five centuries of U.S. colonial Indian law and policies reflected in the current spectrum of violence and the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women (MMIW). In general, addressing the MMIW crisis requires reforms to the foundational set of laws and policies, creating the social conditions for the violence to reach the depth and breadth we see at present.

“Bad people commit these horrible crimes against Native women, but it is the system that allows it to happen generation after generation.”—Malinda Limberhand, mother of Hanna Harris murdered in 2013 on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation

While violence against Native women is committed by individuals—abusers, rapists, traffickers—it is commonly understood that the federal colonial policies and laws that created the social setting for such crimes. A person’s relationship to a problem often reflects their framework or worldview for understanding it. While living in the same country



Advocate Joann Horn, Yup'ik Eskimo, Village of Kotlik. / Photo courtesy of Joann Horn.

the worldview of Indigenous peoples from non-Indigenous, the colonized versus that of the colonizer, is fundamentally distinct.

Understanding the impact of U.S. colonization on Native women is essential to creating the necessary reforms to address the MMIW crisis because current federal law is based upon the laws and policies of earlier eras of U.S. colonization and continues to govern. The underlying legal foundation of U.S. federal Indian policies while outdated continue to undermine Tribal protections preventing Indian Nations from the full authority to protect Native women.

The essential reforms required to address violence against Native women are more complicated than increased training and resources under federal reforms such as the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). To address violence against Native women at a foundational level requires a deep dive to understand and repeal or amend previous colonial-era laws.

Legal Foundation of Violence Against Native Women and Genocide

Colonialism has many definitions but generally is defined as an act of one nation controlling another for economic gain. “In 1945, some 750 million people lived in territories that were dependent on colonial powers. Today, fewer than 2 million people live under colonial rule in the 17 remaining non-self-governing territories. The wave of decolonization, which changed the face of the planet, was born with the United Nations and represents the world body’s first great success.”¹ The exercise of foreign control of one government over another was generally by force and violence.

The horrors of colonization of Indigenous Nations is not specific to the United States. What separates US colonization from that of other colonizers is the failure to understand and reconcile colonial laws and practices toward Indian Nations, specifically federal laws limiting Tribal protections of women.

The current control of the U.S. government over Indian Nations is tied to the earlier era of colonization by European monarchs, and later the European Nations that emerged. These monarchs, queens, and kings, some with a religious decree, claimed Indigenous lands based on

1 Decolonization, U.N., <https://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/decolonization/index.html>.

their individual rights as monarchs. This claim, known as the Doctrine of Discovery, created a spiritual, political, and legal justification for seizure of lands inhabited by non-Christians. These claims to Indigenous lands lacked the consent of Indigenous Nations and used violence to gain control and convert the colonized to Christianity.

The formation of the United States occurred in the context of international diplomacy and balancing trade and commerce with Indian Nations with the need for alliances against England during the revolutionary war. The view of Indian Tribes as full sovereigns in the context of regulating trade was provided for in the U.S. Constitution in 1787.² Legislation passed during the first Congress asserted control over Indian affairs solely under the national government, not the states.³ The authority to govern—safeguard the lives of women from Indian and non-Indians—within their territories at that time rested exclusively with Indian nations.

From International Diplomacy to Colonialism

The shift from international diplomacy to federal colonialism undermined the right of Indian Nations to self-government and the authority to protect Native women. Current federal Indian law is often referred to as a maze of injustice. It lacks logic and a moral standard because it was created based on the drive of the United States to lay stake to Tribal lands and resources.

In 1817, Congress passed the first statute creating federal jurisdiction over individual Indians in Tribal territory who committed serious crimes against non-Indians. Today, this statute is the basis of the General Crimes Act.⁴ It was followed by the enactment of the Major Crimes Act in 1885, providing federal jurisdiction over seven major crimes committed by Indians against the person or property of Indians or others on an Indian reservation. The seven crimes were expanded over the years to the current sixteen crimes, most of which are recognized as common to the pattern of domestic

2 “To regulate Commerce with foreign Nations, and among the several States, and with the Indian Tribes...” Article I, section 8, clause 3. “Indians not taxed” is listed and removed from the enumeration of state citizens for purposes of Congressional apportionment suggesting Indians were not part of the nation. Article I, section 2, <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript>.

3 Trade and Intercourse Act of 1790, ch. 33, 1 Stat. 137.

4 “Except as otherwise expressly provided by law, the general laws of the United States as to the punishment of offenses committed in any place within the sole and exclusive jurisdiction of the United States, except the District of Columbia, shall extend to the Indian country.” 18 U.S.C § 1152, <https://www.justice.gov/archives/jm/criminal-resource-manual-678-general-crimes-act-18-usc-1152>

The high rates of violence against Native women and lack of accountability for such violence are clearly tied to federal intrusion, vulnerabilities created by such intrusion, and the failure to exercise authority to prosecute perpetrators for the last 500 years.

violence.⁵ Unfortunately, these two statutes from 1817 and 1885 continue as cornerstones of current federal Indian law.

In the context of addressing violence against Native women and specifically cases of MMIW, federal intrusion into the authority of Indian Nations has resulted in perpetrators of crimes facing little, if any, consequences for their actions, including government employees and those charged with responsibilities for federal programs such as boarding schools and healthcare services.

A third federal intrusion into the criminal authority of Indian Tribes was enacted as part of the Termination Era toward Indian Nations through the transfer of federal authority to state governments under Public Law 280.⁶ While passed based on the argument that it would address lawlessness through the handling of criminal cases by the state government it further deprived Native women of access to justice services.

The interpretation of federal criminal statutes further complicated the authority of Indian Nations to hold abusers accountable. Until the implementation of the 2005 Violence Against Women Act the common misinterpretation of the Major Crimes Act was that it divested Tribes of authority of over the enumerated crimes. The same federal colonial framework also led to the misinterpretation of Public Law 280 as creating sole criminal jurisdiction in the state governments over crimes committed within Tribal jurisdiction. Under Attorney General Janet Reno the USDOJ clarified that Indian Tribes retained concurrent jurisdiction over crimes, such

as rape, under both statutes. For decades Indian Nations did not prosecute sexual assault and other cases because of this legal misinterpretation asserted by the federal and state governments.

The USDOJ statistic of 1 of 3 Native women will be raped in her lifetime is just one example of the consequences of the colonial framework denying Indian Nations the authority to protect women. This consistent shift away from the view of international diplomacy found in the Constitution to one of colonial federalism continues to be devastating in the lack of real and perceived protections for Native women.

Federal Colonialism: Denial of Authority and Resources

As affirmed in the 2009 Apology to Native Peoples, the U.S. recognized that there have been years of official depredations, ill-conceived policies, and the breaking of covenants by the Federal Government regarding Indian Tribes; and apologized for the many instances of violence, maltreatment, and neglect inflicted on Native Peoples.⁷

Congressional reports throughout history document the failure of federal policies and recommended changes needed to correct failed colonial approaches. The 1867 Doolittle Report tracing a large majority of Indian Wars to lawless white men.⁸ The 1928 Problem of Indian Administration Report criticizing the Department of Interior's (DOI) implementation of the Dawes Act

5 "Any Indian who commits against the person or property of another Indian or other person any of the following offenses, namely, murder, manslaughter, kidnapping, maiming, a felony under chapter 109A, incest, a felony assault under section 113, an assault against an individual who has not attained the age of 16 years, felony child abuse or neglect, arson, burglary, robbery, and a felony under section 661 of this title within the Indian country, shall be subject to the same law and penalties as all other persons committing any of the above offenses, within the exclusive jurisdiction of the United States." 18 U.S.C. § 1153, <https://www.justice.gov/archives/jm/criminal-resource-manual-679-major-crimes-act-18-usc-1153>
6 <https://www.justice.gov/usao-mn/Public-Law%2083-280>.

7 <https://www.congress.gov/bill/111th-congress/senate-joint-resolution/14/text>.

8 "The committee are of the opinion that in a large majority of cases Indian wars are to be traced to the aggression of lawless white men, always to be found upon the frontier, or boundary line between savage and civilized life.... From whatever cause wars may be brought on, either between different Indian Tribes or between the Indians and the whites, they are very destructive, not only of the lives of the warriors engaged in it, but of the women and children also, often becoming a war of extermination...." Doolittle Report, Condition of the Indians Tribes, 1867 Congressional Report, Senate Report, No. 156, 39th Cong. 2d sess, serial 1279, at. 3-10, http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/dis_textbook.cfm?smtid=3&psid=710.

and overall conditions on reservations and in Indian boarding schools.⁹ The 2003 report, *A Quiet Crisis, Federal Funding and Unmet Needs in Indian Country*, documented unconscionable federal funding levels for Indian Tribes and resulting living conditions.¹⁰ The 2013 Indian Law and Order Commission Report, *A Roadmap For Making Native America Safer*, similarly criticized federal restrictions and recommended restoring Tribal sovereignty.¹¹ Most recently, the release in 2018 of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights *Broken Promises Report* continues to affirm the need for the United States to fulfill its trust responsibility with appropriate allocation of resources.¹²

These and other congressional reports document that the federal government failed to protect Native Americans, their land, and their resources, both personal and cultural. The reports consistently recommended critically needed changes to stop the death toll and human suffering of Indigenous peoples—to decolonize. While occurring over several centuries these reports reflect the failure of the federal colonial approach to Tribal governance, and document the potential strength, if unleashed, of Indian Nations to address the needs of Tribal citizens.

Congressional reports document that the federal government failed to protect Native Americans, their land, and their resources, both personal and cultural. The reports consistently recommended critically needed changes to stop the death toll and human suffering of Indigenous peoples—to decolonize.

9 https://narf.org/nill/documents/merriam/d_merriam_chapter1_summary_of_findings.pdf

10 <https://www.usccr.gov/pubs/na0703/na0204.pdf>.

11 <https://www.aisc.ucla.edu/iloc/report/>

12 <https://www.usccr.gov/pubs/2018/12-20-Broken-Promises.pdf>

The high rates of violence against Native women and lack of accountability for such violence are clearly tied to federal intrusion, vulnerabilities created by such intrusion, and the failure to exercise authority to prosecute perpetrators for the last 500 years. Today, this pattern continues and is reflected in the lack of accountability of perpetrators documented in the minimal prosecutions and federal declinations by United States Attorneys of domestic violence, sexual assault, and trafficking cases.

The 2013 report to Congress by the Indian Law and Order Commission, is one of the most comprehensive assessments ever done of criminal justice systems servicing Native American and Alaska Native Communities. In its report the Commission summarized federal Indian law.

“The Commission has concluded that criminal jurisdiction in Indian country is an indefensible morass of complex, conflicting, and illogical commands, layered in over decades via congressional policies and court decisions and without the consent of Tribal nations.”¹³

The multiple layers of Congressional Acts, Presidential Orders, and Supreme Court rulings have, through the course of history, giving legal color to what the United Nations defines as genocide. In 1946 the United Nations General Assembly recognized genocide as a crime prohibited under international law. The crime of genocide is defined as “*any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: a. Killing members of the group; b. Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; c. Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; d. Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; e. Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.*”¹⁴

While the UN recognition of the crime of genocide did not occur until 1947, the eras of the Indian Wars, removal, boarding schools, termination, forced sterilization, and other federal laws and policies were developed with the intentional destruction of Indian Nations by the United States. Today these past U.S. laws and policies continue to dehumanize Indigenous peoples, specifically women, and support the legal and cultural infrastructure underlying the crisis of MMIW.

13 *A Roadmap, Executive Summary, supra* at xi.

14 <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/genocide.shtml>.

Reconciliation of the United States with Indian Nations

Colonization of the Indigenous Peoples of the world was not isolated to the United States. During the same era, the Canadian government enacted similar laws and policies towards aboriginal peoples, such as its boarding school era. Canada's National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls is one example of a political process to analyze for lessons.¹⁵ One area of particular interest is the concentration of the reconciliation process on government accountability for the murders of Indigenous women and girls. The report from the Inquiry released in May of 2019 said: "Genocide is the sum of the social practices, assumptions, and actions detailed within this report." The Inquiry held 24 hearings across Canada, and at least 2,380 people attended, including the families of those killed or missing. While not complete or a perfect process, it is one far in advance of the United States.

Due to the national movement, the United States has taken some steps to reform colonial-era law and policies to strengthen Indian Nations in their protection of Native women. Since 1995 following the passage of the Violence Against Women Act, Indian Tribes amplified their collective voices to make strong recommendations to government officials. The mandate under the Tribal Title of VAWA 2005 provided for annual consultation between Indian Nations and specific federal departments. Since the first consultation in 2006, Tribal leaders consistently reiterated that to address violence against Native women, full Tribal sovereignty must be restored with adequate resources to implement such authority to fully protect women.

The United States, in the context of a federal colonial framework, justified laws diminishing the Tribal protections provided Native women. Implementation of these laws and policies regarding Indian affairs created the social context for the normalization and acceptance of violence against Native women. The United States has the authority and the resources to end the crisis of violence against Native women and it is essential it reform past laws and policies endangering the lives of Indigenous women and girls.

The crisis of MMIW is a national crime pattern. The complete storyboard for this crime pattern is not two individuals and a crime scene but all the above—the government, culture, and economics—layered upon the lives of Native women and Indian Nations. Understanding the legal and social infrastructure that place Native women in harm's way are essential to changing this crime story of the last 500 years.

It also requires reeducation of mainstream America to understand both the past and present truths of American Indian Nations and the women of those Nations. This two-fold process of legal reform and cultural reeducation can direct the changes required at the national, state, and county levels.

The national movement calling for justice for MMIW is growing and maturing, and the unprecedented support for the annual MMIW National Week of Action is a strong indication it will not turn back. It consists of dedicated people who are willing to take political action to impact the government to correct the past and decolonize.

¹⁵ Canada's Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls: <https://bit.ly/2RLjQjk>.

Read 2021 Proclamation on Missing and Murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives Awareness Day issued by The White House:

bit.ly/31BcyYI

and learn more about The Presidential Task Force on Missing and Murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives, 'Operation Lady Justice':

bit.ly/302jWZL

"As we fight for the further restoration of Tribal jurisdiction and sovereignty in the 2021 reauthorization of VAWA, we know there is more work to do."

**-Mary Kathryn Nagle, Cherokee Nation,
Pipestem & Nagle Law, Counsel to NIWRC**



THE FEDERAL TRUST RESPONSIBILITY AND MMIW

The Failure to Provide a Comprehensive Government Response

By Rose M. “Lashawaat” Quilt,
Yakama, J.D., Director of Policy and
Research, NIWRC

Native women deserve a basic right to human safety.

The United States government has a longstanding federal trust responsibility to assist Indian Tribes concerning the health, safety and welfare of their citizens. As recognized by many international experts, violence against Indigenous women is a serious human rights violation—a violation so significant that it precludes their realization of all other human rights.¹ Yet, for hundreds of years, federal officials have flagrantly disregarded the federal trust responsibility entrusted to them concerning Indian Tribes, leaving Native women unprotected and imperiled. As primary targets since colonization, Indigenous women have faced an ongoing spectrum of horrific violence ranging from domestic and dating violence to murder, trafficking, and rape. Confronted with the highest rates of violence in the Nation, Tribal leaders have continued to decry the federal government’s inability to discharge their duties to uphold their sacred, solemn commitment to Indian people and safeguard the lives of Indian women.

“The murders and disappearance of women and girls in Alaska Native and American Indian communities are connected to the lack of protections from the state and federal government and the failure of the federal government to provide resources to establish a comprehensive response.”—Catherine Moses, Yup’ik, Asa’Carsarmiut Tribe, Mountain Village, Alaska Tribal Administrator

Despite the federal government's trust responsibility to Tribes, both Congress and the Supreme Court have eroded the jurisdictional authority of Indian Nations, infringing on the ability of Tribal governments to fully protect their citizens, including Native women brutalized by domestic, dating and sexual violence, stalking, trafficking and murder.

¹ E/2013/27- E/CN.6/2013/11 Para. 10

THE FEDERAL TRUST RESPONSIBILITY AND INDIAN TRIBES

The federal Indian trust responsibility is a legally enforceable fiduciary obligation under which the United States “has charged itself with moral obligations of the highest responsibility and trust” toward Indian Tribes.¹

Each federal department has a written policy articulating this responsibility. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recognizes the federal trust responsibility in this way:

Since the formation of the Union, the United States (U.S.) has recognized Indian Tribes as sovereign nations. A unique government-to-government relationship exists between Indian Tribes and the Federal Government. This relationship is grounded in the U.S. Constitution, numerous treaties, statutes, Federal case law, regulations and executive orders that establish and define a trust relationship with Indian Tribes. This relationship is derived from the political and legal relationship that Indian Tribes have with the Federal Government and is not based upon race.²

Further, the Bureau of Indian Affairs provides:

The federal Indian trust responsibility is... a legally enforceable fiduciary obligation on the part of the United States to protect Tribal treaty rights, lands, assets, and resources, as well as a duty to carry out the mandates of federal law with respect to American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes and villages. In several cases discussing the trust responsibility, the Supreme Court has used language suggesting that it entails legal duties, moral obligations, and the fulfillment of understandings and expectations that have arisen over the entire course of the relationship between the United States and the federally recognized Tribes.³

1 Seminole Nation v. United States, 1942.

2 See U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Tribal Consultation Policy <https://bit.ly/3cMxbnY>

3 See U.S. Department of Interior at <https://on.doi.gov/3tyA-SUB>

Court decisions make clear that the entire federal government is blanketed by the trust responsibility, and that every federal agency, not just the Bureau of Indian Affairs, must fulfill the trust responsibility in implementing statutes.²

It is a duty, a solemn oath that the United States made with Indian Tribes during the era of treaty-making. It is a duty of protection that our Ancestors understood.

The Federal Trust Responsibility and the Safety of Indian Women

In support of the movement for change and built upon the blood, sweat, and tears of grassroots advocates and Tribal leaders, Congress enacted several pieces of legislation signaling support to Tribal self-determination and the safety of Native women.³ The VAWA 2005 reauthorization included a historic Safety for Indian Women Title, which recognized the unique legal relationship of the United States to Indian Tribes and Native women. Congress created Title IX “to strengthen the capacity of Indian Tribes to exercise their sovereign authority to respond to violent crimes committed against women.”⁴

Moreover, in recognition of its trust obligation, VAWA Title IX, Section 901 provides that “the federal government has a trust responsibility to assist Tribes in safeguarding the lives of Indian women”⁵ (emphasis added). And in the fight for the 2013 VAWA reauthorization, Congress legislated a partial *Oliphant Fix*. Under VAWA 2013, Congress recognized and affirmed the inherent sovereign authority of Indian Tribes to prosecute non-Indians for dating and domestic violence and qualifying protection order violations committed on Tribal lands.⁶ Although the full reach of Tribal jurisdiction was limited by Congress—such as stalking, sexual assault by a stranger or acquaintance, and sex trafficking—VAWA 2013 was a historic

2 See Parravano, 70 F.3d at 546 (“This trust responsibility extends not just to the Interior Department, but attaches to the federal government as a whole.”); Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe of Indians v. U.S. Dept. of Navy, 898 F.2d 1410, 1420 (9th Cir. 1990); Nance v. EPA, 645 F.2d 701, 711 (9th Cir. 1981); N.W. Sea Farms, 931 F. Supp. at 1519 (“This [trust] obligation has been interpreted to impose a fiduciary duty owed in conducting ‘any Federal government action’ which relates to Indian Tribes.” (quoting Nance, 645 F.2d at 711)).

3 The Tribal Law and Order Act and the Reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act 2000, 2005, 2013.

4 Agtuca, Jacqueline, “Safety for Native Women: VAWA and American Indian Tribes” pg. 15 (2015).

5 2005 VAWA § 901 Findings.
6 25 U.S.C. § 1304.



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 courtesy of Rose
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amendment affirming Tribal sovereignty and reaffirming the federal government’s commitment to addressing violence in Tribal communities. VAWA 2013’s limited reaffirmation of Tribal criminal jurisdiction over non-Indians, known as Special Domestic Violence Criminal Jurisdiction (SDVCJ), “fundamentally changed the landscape of Tribal criminal jurisdiction in the modern era.”⁷

Tribal grassroots activism led the movement locally and nationally to not only raise awareness but to also legislate for change regarding the devastating rates of violence committed against Native women. Over the years, a series of studies revealed shocking rates of violence against Native women. A study by the National Institute of Justice under the USDOJ revealed alarming rates of violence,⁸ with findings that show American Indian and Alaska Native women experience severe rates of lifetime violence, including:

- 56.1% who have experienced sexual violence;
- 55.5% who have experienced physical violence by an intimate partner;
- 48.4% who have experienced stalking; and
- 66.4% who have experienced psychological aggression by an intimate partner.⁹

Native women also experience homicide at higher rates

than most of their counterparts. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Native women are murdered at a rate of 4.3% per 100,000 population, while their white counterparts experience homicide at a rate of 1.5%.¹⁰ The CDC also confirmed long held beliefs by Tribal domestic violence advocates: almost half of Native victims were murdered by an intimate partner.

Another study by Urban Indian Health Institute (UIHI) provides that, “no research has been done on rates of such violence among American Indian and Alaska Native women living in urban areas despite the fact that approximately 71% of American Indian and Alaska Natives live in urban areas.”¹¹ As a result of the gaps in data, UIHI focused a study aimed at assessing the number and dynamics of cases of missing and murdered American Indian and Alaska Native women and girls in cities across the United States.¹²

Although these numbers do not tell the whole story, we can glean the effect of the devastatingly complex legal framework and various intersections that Native survivors of violence must confront. It is also in these numbers that we are able to fully grasp the failure of the federal government to completely fulfill its federal trust responsibility to Tribes, families and and most importantly to Native women.

Challenges and Barriers for the Safety of Indian Women and the Federal Trust Responsibility

Despite the federal government's trust responsibility to Tribes, both Congress and the Supreme Court have eroded the jurisdictional authority of Indian Nations, infringing on the ability of Tribal governments to fully protect their citizens, including Native women brutalized by domestic, dating and sexual violence, stalking, trafficking and murder. Many Native women fear they, along with their children, will experience violence throughout their lifetime because of the longstanding barriers to recourse and justice that is their reality.

In addition to longstanding government sanctioned violence and a series of crippling Tribal policies

7 National Congress of American Indians, VAWA 2013’s Special Domestic Violence Criminal Jurisdiction Five-Year Report (March 20, 2018).

8 Department Of Justice, Nat’l Inst. Of Justice, Violence Against American Indian And Alaska Native Women And Men: 2010 Findings From The National Intimate Partner And Sexual Violence Survey 26 (May 2016), <https://bit.ly/3pVHols>

9 *Id.*

10 Petrosky E, Blair JM, Betz CJ, Fowler KA, Jack SP, Lyons BH. Racial and Ethnic Differences in Homicides of Adult Women and the Role of Intimate Partner Violence — United States, 2003–2014. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 2017; 66:741–746.

11 Lucchesi, Annita and Echo-Hawk, Abigail; Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls: A snapshot of data from 71 urban cities in the United States.

12 *Id.*

promoting paternalism, assimilation, relocation, termination and genocide of Indian people and Native women, there remains a set of laws and policies on the books, including but not limited to the Major Crimes Act, Public Law 280, the Indian Civil Rights Act, the Marshall trilogy¹³ and the *Oliphant* decision. These far-reaching legal barriers deeply entrenched in federal Indian law continue to endanger the lives of Native women.

The two main federal statutes governing federal criminal jurisdiction in Indian country are the General Crimes Act, 18 U.S.C. § 1152, and the Major Crimes Act, 18 U.S.C. § 1153. Section 1153 gives the federal government jurisdiction to prosecute certain enumerated offenses, such as murder, manslaughter, sexual abuse, aggravated assault, and child sexual abuse, when committed by Indians in Indian country.¹⁴ Section 1152 gives the federal government exclusive jurisdiction to prosecute most crimes committed by non-Indians against Indian victims in Indian country.¹⁵

Although armed with the jurisdiction to investigate and prosecute crimes committed against Native women, many, if not most U.S. Attorneys charged with doing so, failed to uphold their role in fulfilling this important responsibility. About 65 percent of criminal investigations opened by the FBI in reservations were referred for federal prosecution, according to a 2016 TLO report.¹⁶ Of the 680 investigations that were closed without referral for prosecution, one of the most frequent reasons was due to insufficient evidence to determine whether a crime occurred.¹⁷

“We are going missing, we are being murdered. We are not being taken seriously. I am here to stress to you we are important and we are loved and we are missed. We will no longer be the invisible people in the United States of America, we have worth.”—Kimberly Loring Heavy Runner¹⁸

13 Worcester v. Georgia, 31 U.S. (6 Pet.) 515 (1832); Cherokee Nation v. Georgia, 30 U.S. (5 Pet.) 1 (1831); Johnson v. M’Intosh, 21 U.S. (8 Wheat.) 543 (1823).

14 U.S. Department of Justice: Indian Country Investigations and Prosecutions 2018 Report, <https://bit.ly/3pXGLI4>

15 The exception to this exclusive jurisdiction is set forth in 25 U.S.C. 1304, which recognizes the inherent power of a participating Tribe to exercise special domestic violence criminal jurisdiction.

16 U.S. Department of Justice: Indian Country Investigations and Prosecutions 2016 Report, pg. 10, <https://bit.ly/2YZOZUa>

17 *Id.* at 13.

18 Senate Committee on Indian Affairs. Oversight Hearing on Missing and Murdered: Confronting the Silent Crisis in Indian Country. Dec. 12, 2018. 115th Cong. Washington. 2018. (Testimony of Kimberly Loring Heavy Runner).

When a Native Woman Goes Missing

When a Native woman disappears and goes missing, so much of the “response” is based on numerous questions and challenges including which law enforcement agency has jurisdiction to take an initial report, the response, the search, detainment, the investigation and ultimately prosecution authority. The first 24 hours of any missing person case is a crucial time for law enforcement to organize and conduct an immediate search, but too often, questions of jurisdiction impede a timely law enforcement response. Unfortunately in most cases, the response of law enforcement is non-existent or wholly inappropriate. This can leave the responsibility of a search effort to the family members or Tribal community.

The crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women (MMIW) is a direct result of limitations placed on Tribal authority to prosecute non-Natives for crimes committed on Tribal land including the unconscionable resource disparities regarding public safety. The link to the de-evolution of federal Indian law and policy and failure of the federal trust responsibility cannot be denied. The current legal framework fails to respond to the disappearance and murder of Native women because that same framework was born during an era of termination of Indian Tribes. Tribal leaders often speak of a “broken system,” but the truth is that the legal framework was not designed to protect Native women. Rather, it was built to fail them and further the continuation of paternalistic policies, colonization, and systemic genocide.

The sheer scale of the violence resulting in MMIW with the groundswell of survivor families, advocates and Tribal leaders, and the abysmal failure by the government to adequately address it, partially explains why the MMIW issue has reached national attention and action. That is why Tribal self-determination and sovereignty must continue to be restored with adequate resources provided to implement Tribally based solutions for the protection, safety and healing of their citizens and Native women, who stand as the heart of their nations.



THE RESPONSE OF CONGRESS TO THE MMIW CRISIS

Legislative Reforms from 2019-2020

The U.S. Congressional effort by the delegation from Montana was launched in 2017 after the murder of Hanna Harris on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation and other abductions and murders of Native women. The 2017 Senate Resolution calling for a National Day of Awareness marked the first Congressional recognition of MMIW as a national issue.

Every year since 2017, a resolution recognizing May 5th as a National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Native Women and Girls has passed in the Senate with increased support and awareness of the need to take action.¹ These proclamations and social justice actions on May 5th have resulted in the increasing response from Congress, federal departments, as well as from states and localities.

Savanna's Act and Not Invisible Act Become Law

In 2020, Congress passed the Savanna's Act and Not Invisible Act to address the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) crisis.

Both Savanna's Act and Not Invisible Act are victories for Tribes across the country. Heightened attention to the issue of MMIW helped push these bills across the finish line. Congresswomen Deb Haaland (D-N.M.) and Sharice Davids (D-KS) on the House side and Senators Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV) on the Senate side led the charge alongside Tribal leaders and grassroots advocates who have been calling for and fighting long and hard to get the MMIW crisis recognized and addressed on the federal level.

According to the National Institute of Justice, more than four in five Native Americans and Alaska Natives have experienced violence in their lifetime. In some states, the murder of Indigenous women is at a rate ten times higher than the national average. According to the National Crime Information Center, 5,712 American Indian and Alaska Native women and girls were reported missing as of 2016, but only 116 of those cases were logged with the Department of Justice.

The Savanna's Act is named in honor of Savanna LaFontaine-Greywind, a 22-year old citizen of the Spirit Lake Nation in North Dakota who was pregnant at the time she was viciously murdered in August 2017. The Act aims to improve MMIW data collection and access and directs the Department of Justice to review, revise, and develop law enforcement and justice protocols to address missing and murdered Indigenous peoples.

The Not Invisible Act complements Savanna's Act with its purpose to identify and combat violent crime against Indians or within Indian lands through the creation of an advisory committee on reducing violent crime against Native people. Composed of Tribal leaders, law enforcement, federal partners, service providers, and survivors, the advisory committee will make recommendations to the U.S. Departments of Interior and Justice on increasing the response to violence against Native Americans and Alaska Natives.

It is important to understand the connection between domestic, dating, and sexual violence and the high incidence of missing and murdered Indigenous women in the United States. The high rates of violence against Indigenous peoples, which includes the crisis of missing

¹ <https://bit.ly/3tvN4Ff>



Anchorage 2018 rally to raise awareness of violence against women in Alaska Native communities co-sponsored by Tlingit & Haida. / Photo courtesy of Tlingit & Haida.

and murdered Indigenous women can be attributed to the historical and intergenerational trauma caused by colonization and its ongoing effects in our communities stretching back more than 500 years.

While more legal reforms are required these two bills are a steps forward in beginning to address the impacts of centuries of colonization, historical and intergenerational trauma, we are grateful to members of Congress, Tribal leaders, Native organizations, and the many individuals who supported the Acts from the beginning and tenaciously monitored and advocated for them. The passage of these Acts are important steps in the right direction for our relatives seeking justice for their missing and murdered loved ones and for all our relatives who have experienced violence in their lives.

State Legislative Responses

Legislative reforms are also reflected in actions by city, county, state, and national legislative bodies. From the West Coast to the Great Plains, Southwest and upper Midwest, state lawmakers have acted to address the MMIW crisis. The state legislative reforms center on increasing the response to MMIW by monitoring cases through dedicated state personnel and the creation of local task forces.

In October 2021, NIWRC released the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) State Legislative Tracker, a navigational database designed to help advocates easily search legislation relating to MMIW within their state and across the country. The Tracker is a continuation of the MMIW Monthly Legislative Summary, previously released as part of our monthly legislative update. This tool is an educational

policy resource, compiling current legislation (2020-2022) at the state level focused on addressing the crisis of MMIW. Included are summaries of the legislation, its status, links to relevant news articles, and more. You can access the tracker at niwrc.org/mmiw-state-tracker.

Currently there are over 30 pieces of legislation moving through the process or already signed into law within this legislative session. Numerous states (AK, AZ, CA, NM, MN, MT, ND, NE, OR, SD, UT, WA) have introduced and passed legislation such as establishing an MMIW Task Force, proclamations recognizing May 5th as a National Day of Awareness, authorizing and funding MMIW studies, and more.

STAY CURRENT ON MMIW LEGISLATION

The NIWRC continues to monitor legislative actions by state and federal governments to address the crisis of MMIW and shares important updates and legislative actions through our mailing list. To sign up for the “National Legislative Summary Update,” visit:
bit.ly/2Hh1dzM.

The Not Invisible Act Implementation

How Will Systemic Barriers Foundational to the MMIW Crisis Be Removed? How Will the Changes Needed Become Reality?

By Rose M. “Lashawaat” Quilt, *Yakama*, J.D.,
Director of Policy and Research, NIWRC

October 10, 2020 will be the one-year anniversary of the passage of two bills intended to address the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW)—Savanna’s Act and the Not Invisible Act (NIA).

This legislation was enacted in response to the cries of mothers for justice for their daughters and the calls for action by grieving family members of disappeared and murdered Indigenous sisters. The statutes are in response to the spilled blood and suffering of Indigenous women that continues to be tied to the vulnerabilities of federal Indian law and under-resourcing of Indian nations; and the harsh reality of the spectrum of violence created by centuries of Federal Government policies meant to diminish and destroy Tribal sovereignty.

“We will not be silenced,” said Juana Majel Dixon, Pauma-Yuima Band of Luiseño Indians. “As Tribal leadership, we have a responsibility to raise our voices for those who cannot speak. The Savanna’s and Not Invisible Acts are the result of the families, Tribes, communities, and grassroots movement calling for justice. We must hold the government accountable for meaningful implementation of these two acts.”

Savanna’s Act is named in honor of Savanna LaFontaine-Greywind, a 22-year-old pregnant citizen of the Spirit Lake Nation in North Dakota who was viciously murdered in August 2017. The Act aims to improve MMIW data collection and accessibility and



*Silhouette image of Indigenous woman. /
Photo courtesy of Neh-Da-Ness Greene.*

directs the Department of Justice to review, revise, and develop law enforcement and justice protocols to address missing and murdered Indigenous peoples. The NIA complements the Savanna’s Act, with its purpose to identify and combat violent crime against Indians within Indian lands by creating an advisory commission on reducing violent crime against Native people.

Participation of Families and Advocacy Organization in the NIA Commission

“The grassroots organized to make the issue of MMIW a national priority,” said Carmen O’Leary, Director, Native Women Society of the Great Plains and NIWRC Board Member. “Clearly, the barriers that exist cannot be solely fixed by the current system, or we would not have the crisis of Native women going missing and being murdered. The success of the Not Invisible Act is tied to the active involvement and support of the families, advocates, and Tribes who have worked to hold federal law enforcement agencies accountable.”

The success of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) 2005 mandated consultation holds valuable lessons, including the important connection of Tribal advocates and the grassroots movement to end the spectrum of violence against Native women. These brave women have informed the government to create systemic changes found in VAWA, the Tribal Law and Order Act (TLOA), and the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA).

Families, advocacy organizations, Tribes, and communities understand the roadblocks and systemic barriers that must be removed. Accordingly, grassroots advocates and families worked hard to ensure their representation on the NIA Commission as a statutory mandate.

The NIA establishes an advisory committee of Tribal and federal stakeholders to make recommendations to the Department of Interior (DOI) and Department of Justice (DOJ) on actions the Federal Government can take to identify, coordinate, and combat violent crime on Indian lands and against Indians including disappearances, homicide, violent crime and trafficking. In addition, the NIA mandates the participation of two family members of murdered Indian people and two family members of missing Indian people, and not fewer than three Tribal advocacy organizations focused on violence against women and children. Unfortunately, serving on the commission is not compensated.

“We recommended at the NIA Consultation that the family members and non-federal Tribal organizations be compensated for their time,” said Majel-Dixon. “How does the DOI and DOJ think family members will participate? Take leave from their jobs? Sacrifice family income to pay the expenses they will incur while serving on the Commission? It is incomprehensible that the government thinks the family and the advocacy organization can sit on the commission without compensation. Covering travel expenses falls short of the federal responsibility under the NIA.”

The DOI and DOJ must coordinate to identify resources specifically to compensate Tribal members for the significant time expected as commission members. The family and Tribal members of the commission should not be based on who can afford to sit on the commission.

“What about the women?”—Tillie Black Bear

MORE ABOUT NIA COMMISSION

The U.S. Department of the Interior is responsible for implementing the Not Invisible Act (NIA) to address the MMIWG crisis in the United States, which includes the establishment of the NIA Commission. Stay updated on activities by the NIA Commission, including Tribal consultation details, recommendations, and membership nominations, at n8ve.net/9PCSi.

Since the NIA was signed into law, a growing concern has centered on confusion about the focus of the NIA and its connection to the crisis of MMIW.

It is essential to understand the connection between domestic, dating, sexual, and trafficking violence and the high incidence of missing and murdered Indigenous women in the United States. This spectrum of violence is specific to Native women. DOJ research shows the disproportionate rate of violence committed against Native women including the lethality and severity, which often requires increased medical care, more so than other populations victimized by violence.

Will the NIA Commission acknowledge this reality? Will the DOI facilitate a process to deepen its understanding of the barriers that must be removed to specifically address MMIW? If so, this process requires addressing the comprehensive needs of Native women who suffer domestic and sexual violence and further offer support for culturally appropriate advocacy services for Native women. The process of healing is unique to each survivor. But it is crucial that as Native women access services on their journey to healing, that it is recognized that they were victimized not only because they are women, but because they are Native women. For that same reason, prevention efforts must also be culturally based.

To achieve meaningful recommendations, the commission must begin, be guided by, and end with a central focus on the entire spectrum of violence faced by Indigenous women. The commission must listen to family members, advocates and Tribes to attain significant law and policy reforms needed to address the MMIW crisis.

While these two bills are a step forward in addressing the crisis of MMIW, the NIA Commission offers the

It is crucial that as Native women access services on their journey to healing, that it is recognized that they were victimized not only because they are women, but because they are Native women. For that same reason, prevention efforts must also be culturally based.

possibility of real change. This possibility is not absolute, a given, or guaranteed. It will be a difficult road, with ongoing challenges to overcome the systemic view of minimizing violence against Native women—because they are Native and because they are women.

Not Invisible Act Consultation

In efforts to engage Tribal and stakeholder input, the DOI hosted a consultation about the implementation of the Not Invisible Act. However, with short notice, little coordination with Indian Tribes and a scheduling conflict with the Family Youth and Services Bureau (FYSB) Tribal Consultation, Tribal leaders and stakeholders had to scramble to prepare and participate amidst the ongoing pandemic.

“The Tribal response to the NIA consultation is not a mystery. It had short notice, but more importantly, the development of the consultations did not actively involve the Tribal stakeholders. Going forward, this must change,” said Majel-Dixon.

In 2005, like the 2020 NIA, Tribal grassroots advocates organized with their Tribal Leaders to inform and influence congressional champions and federal departments about violence against Native women. Again, meaningful government-to-government consultation served as an essential link to the successful and full implementation of the VAWA Tribal provisions.

Like the federal response to MMIW, the response to domestic violence, sexual assault, and trafficking reflects a system-wide failure beyond that of individual employees. It is clear that meaningful consultation is essential. The inclusion of consultation and mandated

Tribal representation in the VAWA and NIA is not a coincidence. The purpose of VAWA and NIA are linked because the crisis of MMIW is the predictable outcome of the lack of protections afforded Indigenous women since contact.

“Since the passage of the Tribal Title of the VAWA 2005, the consultation process has matured,” said Majel-Dixon. “There are pre-consultation scoping calls about scheduling, site selection, selection of the facilitator, agenda, and other items. We also created a 120-day notification mandate to ensure a meaningful consultation process. As a result, the process allows for preparation, attendance, and robust engagement of Tribal leaders.”

The NIA Commission Has the Potential to Create Systemic Changes Needed

Both Savanna’s Act and the Not Invisible Act are victories for Tribes across the country. Increased attention to the issue of MMIW helped push the bills across the finish line. Secretary Haaland, in her former congressional capacity and Representative Sharice Davids (D-KS) on the House side and Senators Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV) on the Senate side led the charge alongside Tribal leaders and long-time grassroots advocates who organized tirelessly to get the MMIW crisis recognized and addressed at the federal level.

Building on that momentum, the NIA can become a historic step forward to address and remove systemic barriers Indigenous women face in the United States. As Rose Borkowski, a Yup’ik elder and lifelong advocate for Native women, often said during her life, “Nothing is impossible, everything is possible.”

“We must end the silence of the injustice of missing and murdered Native women and girls and organize for accountability to bring healing to our communities. Our women and girls have been kidnapped, trafficked, and murdered since other governments, the Spanish, Mexican, and U.S., have come onto our homelands.”

—Wendy Schlater, *La Jolla Band of Luiseño Indians*,
NIWRC Board Treasurer



NATIVE

END THE INJUSTICE
OF MISSING AND
MURDERED
NATIVE WOMEN

The Failed Response of State Justice Agencies to Investigate and Prosecute MMIW Cases

A Pattern and Practice in Violation of the U.S. Civil Rights Act



MMIW awareness posters at Justice for Kaysera rally at Big Horn County Courthouse in Montana on August 27, 2021. / Photo courtesy of NIWRC.

By NIWRC Team Members Rose M. “Lashawaat” Quilt, Paula Julian, Kerri Coffey, Amy Sparck, and Jacqueline “Jax” Agtuca

Disrespect from lack of awareness or compassion for grieving families is clearly wrong. In the case of Indigenous women and their families, it is also a violation of protected rights.

In 1978, when Congress passed the American Indian Religious Freedom Act and earlier the U.S. Civil Rights Act of 1964, it was not intended to “specifically” address the context of today’s crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW). Yet, the spirit and protections provided under these laws are applicable and offer guidance on the current systemic barriers confronting family members of murdered Indigenous women.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964

“Simple justice requires that public funds, to which all taxpayers of all races [colors, and national origins] contribute, not be spent in any fashion which encourages, entrenches, subsidizes or results in racial [color or national origin] discrimination.”—President John F. Kennedy, 1963¹

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. In addition, the Act gave federal law enforcement agencies the power to prevent racial and sexual discrimination in the use of public facilities and the delivery of services.

The families of MMIW have long-standing complaints about the failed response and denial of justice-related services by federal and state/local law enforcement agencies to the disappearance and/or murder of their loved one. This failed response represents a pattern or practice of local, state, and federal agencies not responding to cases of violence against American Indian women, as the number of suspicious deaths of American Indian women and girls that go uninvestigated—despite an inordinate amount of evidence that a homicide has occurred—is staggering.

In numerous cases, medical examiners, coroners, and prosecutors have wrongfully reported the cause of death of American Indian women as undetermined, possible suicide, or hypothermia in order to quickly close the case. Families have complained that the failure to properly investigate MMIW cases is based upon racial discrimination against Indian women. In many cases, the remains are cremated before a full investigation can occur, at times without the family's consent.

For decades, families of MMIW have been rebuffed by the federal and state/local justice responders despite

¹ <https://n8ve.net/a8z5V>

Tribal calls for justice, vigils, marches, and testimony before the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, of the overwhelming number of cases the following provide glaring examples of the disregard for the lives of Native women:

- January 2020: Kaysera Stops Pretty Places' grandmother was told she died from a drug overdose, only to have the toxicology report come back with no indication of drug usage. Before a legitimate criminal investigation could be undertaken, the County Coroner cremated Kaysera's body against her family's permission
- June 2017: Ashley Loring Heavy Runner's sister Kimberly Loring Heavy Runner testified in 2018 before the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs concerning the failed law enforcement response.
- February 2015: Allison Highwolf's mother was told by one police officer, "Just because your daughter died, the world doesn't revolve around you."
- July 2013: Malinda Limberhand, mother of Hanna Harris, was told, "You can search for Hanna yourself. She has probably gone to Sturgis with a biker."²
- August 2006: June Lefthand, mother of Victoria Eagleman, was told, "Vickie is off partying."³

The Civil Rights Act is known for high-profile cases concerning the U.S. Department of Justice (USDOJ), such

² Restoration, Vol. 16, June 2019. <https://n8ve.net/tK1Er>
³ Restoration, Vol. VII, March 2008.

In May 2012, the U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division opened an investigation into three law enforcement entities in Missoula, Montana. A year later, they issued findings for the Missoula Police Department and University of Montana Office of Public Safety that identified a pattern or practice of failing to adequately respond to and investigate allegations of sexual assault against women. Again, in February 2014, their findings of the Missoula County Attorney's Office identified a pattern or practice of failing to ensure unbiased, effective investigation and prosecution of reports of sexual assault by women.



In August 2019, 18-year-old Kaysera Stops Pretty Places (Crow) was murdered in Big Horn County, Montana. Two years have passed since her murder, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Big Horn County Sheriff's Office, and the Montana Department of Justice have done nothing to undertake a criminal investigation into her death. / Photo courtesy of Dr. Grace Bulltail.

as the investigations into the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor committed by local law enforcement. It has much broader applicability. Just as local law enforcement agencies have exhibited discrimination by systemically and routinely targeting people of color with unlawful acts of violence, local law enforcement agencies across the United States have exhibited a systemic and routine practice of not investigating or prosecuting the individuals who continue to murder American Indian women and girls.

Civil rights laws apply to essentially any entity that receives federal financial assistance and encompasses the program or activity funded to any degree by federal financial assistance. The budget for the state of Montana in 2021, for example, where there are numerous complaints of discriminatory practices and denial of services by the families of murdered Indigenous women, is \$16 billion in total, of which nearly \$9.25 billion comes from the United States Treasury.⁴

"No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance."⁵

⁴ <https://n8ve.net/QwVVa>

⁵ Section 601 of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (codified at 42

Ceremony and traditions have meaning in the lives of those who have passed and their loved ones who remain in this world. The inherent right to believe, express, and exercise traditional religions is connected to the ceremonies and traditional rites of passage and departure of a loved one from this world.

In the context of the U.S. Department of Justice (USDOJ), Congress created additional nondiscrimination provisions for specific federal grant programs. For example, the state of Montana receives numerous grants from the Office of Justice Programs and Office on Violence Against Women for justice-related services, such as the Violence Against Women Act, Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grants, and numerous other federal grant programs.

USDOJ Investigation of Missoula Law Enforcement Agencies

One example of the broader applicability of the Civil Rights Act is the 2014 USDOJ findings resulting from a 2013-2015 investigation of the Missoula Police Department, Missoula County Attorney's Office, and University of Montana Office of Public Safety. In May 2012, the USDOJ Civil Rights Division opened an investigation of these three law enforcement entities in Missoula. It focused on gender bias in the handling of sexual assault complaints.

In May 2013, the division issued findings letters for the Missoula Police Department and University of Montana Office of Public Safety, identifying a pattern or practice of failing to adequately respond to and investigate allegations of sexual assault against women. In February 2014, the division issued a separate findings letter to the Missoula County Attorney's Office, identifying a pattern or practice of failing to ensure unbiased, effective investigation and prosecution of reports of sexual assault by women.

“A police department cannot truly protect women in its community without being prepared to respond to reports of sexual assault effectively and without bias,” said Roy L. Austin Jr., Deputy Assistant Attorney General for the

Civil Rights Division. “Equal access to the protection of police and the courts is a matter of basic justice.”⁶

Many states, like Montana, receive federal financial assistance and have a legal obligation to comply with civil rights requirements above and beyond those that otherwise would apply.

Failing to respond, investigate, and prosecute suspects in cases of American Indian women because of racial bias reflects a pattern or practice of denial of equal services.

American Indian Religious Freedom Act

The American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA) affirmed freedom of religion is an inherent fundamental right guaranteed to all Americans by the First Amendment to the United States constitution.

The AIRFA provided that the religious practices of American Indians are an integral part of their culture and formed the basis of Native identity. Accordingly, it mandated that the federal government protect and preserve American Indians' inherent freedom to believe, express and exercise their traditional religions.

One concern of many families of murdered Indigenous women is the reality that county coroners have cremated the remains of their loved one without, and in most instances, against their consent (for instance, the case of Kaysera Stops Pretty Places, Crow Tribe).

In other circumstances, mothers or next of kin are not allowed to view the remains of their loved one. (Allison Highwolf, Northern Cheyenne)

And in other cases, the cremated remains are mailed back to grieving families.

U.S.C. 2000d), DOJ implementing regulation: Subparts C and D of 28 C.F.R. Part 42.

⁶ <https://n8ve.net/wFpyF>

One concern of many families of murdered Indigenous women is the reality that county coroners have cremated the remains of their loved one without, and in most instances, against their consent as in the case of Kaysera Stops Pretty Places (Crow Tribe). In other circumstances, mothers or next of kin are not allowed to view the remains of their loved one, as was the case for Allison Highwolf (Northern Cheyenne).



Participants and supporters gather for Justice for Kaysera 5K walk/run at Crow Agency in Montana on September 11, 2021. / Photo courtesy of NIWRC.

What is the connection to the American Indian Religious Freedom Act in the case of a murdered Indigenous woman?

“On and after August 11th, 1978, it shall be the policy of the United States to protect and preserve for American Indians their inherent right of freedom to believe, express, and exercise the traditional religions of the American Indian, Eskimo, Aleut, and Native Hawaiians, including but not limited to access to sites, use and possession of sacred objects, and the freedom to worship through ceremonial and traditional rites.” 42 U.S.C. § 1996 (2011).

Ceremony and traditions have meaning in the lives of those who have passed and their loved ones who remain in this world. The inherent right to believe, express, and exercise traditional religions is connected to the ceremonies and traditional rites of passage and departure of a loved one from this world.

How one enters and leaves this world are two points in the life of a human being that are encompassed in the

beliefs of the specific people and their ways of life.

The concept of women as sacred is ignored and violated when her family’s beliefs, ceremonies, and wishes for a Native woman’s burial are not considered and observed.

How a family completes the ceremonial rites of passage and grieving process in recognition of the loss of a loved one is damaged, and in some cases, destroyed.

The very spirit of the AIRFA is violated in the ongoing disregard of families for handling the remains of their murdered loved one. Such violations and disregard for AIRFA cannot continue. While AIRFA contains no penalty provisions, the impact of the mishandling of the remains on the ceremonial and traditional rites of the woman and her family must be acknowledged and prevented in the future.

In 1978, the AIRFA created a path forward by including a policy mandate for federal departments. Section 2 states: “The president shall direct the various Federal departments, agencies, and other instrumentalities



MMIW awareness T-shirts at Justice for Kaysera rally at Big Horn County Courthouse in Montana on August 27, 2021. / NIWRC.



MMIW awareness posters at Justice for Kaysera rally at Big Horn County Courthouse in Montana on August 27, 2021. / NIWRC.



At August 27 Justice for Kaysera rally at Big Horn County Courthouse in Montana, a MMIW awareness poster calls for attention on the suspicious death of Henny Scott, a 14-year-old girl who was found murdered on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation on December 28, 2018. / NIWRC.

complicit in this denial of religious freedoms must be held accountable.

When States and Counties Fail

The USDOJ has a responsibility to investigate state/local agencies with a pattern or practice of inadequately responding to cases of MMIW based on a demonstrated pattern of discrimination against American Indian women and girls.

Indigenous women who are abused, trafficked, abducted, or murdered within the jurisdictional authority of a state or county have a legal right to the full range of justice-related services.

The USDOJ is the arm of government with the authority to investigate, prosecute, and correct this failure by state/local governments and violations of the Civil Rights Act. It also has the authority to enforce the numerous anti-discrimination mandates of funding under other congressional acts administered by the Department.

It is urgent that the new missing and murdered unit at the Department of Interior develop guidelines and informational materials, including:

- Guidelines for state/local and federal departments, including training, charged with responsibility for handling the remains of murdered Indigenous women, including offices of the coroner.
- A fact sheet on the legal process and rights of family members of murdered Indigenous women after her remains are found.
- Guidelines for federal departments, including training, in responding to missing and murdered Indigenous women cases, including that her family's wishes must inform the process. Given the urgent nature of the crisis of MMIW, every missing case must be given priority as a potential homicide.

responsible for administering relevant laws to evaluate their policies and procedures in consultation with Native traditional religious leaders in order to determine appropriate changes necessary to protect and preserve Native American religious cultural rights and practices. Twelve months after approval of this resolution, the President shall report back to the Congress the results of his evaluation, including any changes which were made in administrative policies and procedures, and any recommendations he may have for legislative action.

In June 2021, six national organizations issued a 6-Point Action Plan to respond to MMIW. Point five of the action plan is consistent with the spirit of the AIRFA and calls for federal action: "Implementing a thorough federal response to MMIW by requiring every federal department to develop action plans with meaningful consultation with American Indian Nations and Native Hawaiians to address MMIW."⁷

The local, state, and federal agencies that failed these women in life are also failing and desecrating them after their deaths. Those departments and agencies

⁷ Restoration, June 2021, p. 49. <https://n8ve.net/3Ea11>

Artwork by
Danielle
Fixico.

NIWRC MMIW State Legislative Tracker

By Zinaida Carroll,
IT Support and
Communications
Assistant, NIWRC

The new Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) State Legislative Tracker is a navigational database offered by NIWRC to assist the national movement in monitoring and understanding pending local legislation addressing the crisis of MMIW.

“The NIWRC is pleased to launch the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) State Legislative Tracker,” said Lucy Simpson (Diné), Executive Director, NIWRC. “As the grassroots movement continues to organize locally and nationally, there is an increase in legislative reforms to respond to this crisis. We hope the Tracker will support these efforts for social justice to monitor state legislation.”

The MMIW State Legislative Tracker is a continuation of the MMIW Monthly Legislative Summary, previously released as part of our monthly legislative update. Now in the form of a navigational database tracker, it is a tool to support Tribal grassroots leaders, the family and community members of MMIW, grassroots advocates, and state and local legislators to easily search legislation relating to MMIW within their state and across the country.

“There are currently over 30 pieces of legislation related to MMIW at the state level moving through the process or already signed into law within this legislative session,” Simpson said.

This educational policy tracker is a compilation of current legislation (2020-2022) at the state level focused on addressing the crisis of MMIW. While the tracker

does not promote, advocate, or provide analysis on any specific MMIW legislation, it does include summaries of the legislation, its status, links to relevant news articles, and more. You can access the tracker at niwrc.org/mmiw-state-tracker.

How To Use the Tracker

The Tracker is ordered alphabetically by state. In each state with MMIW legislation, you can find the bill number, status, important dates, the bill title, a summary of the bill, links to the full text and summary, and relevant news articles. Simply scroll up and down to move through the different pieces of legislation, and left to right to learn more about a piece of legislation.

- To read more information about a piece of legislation: click on the double arrow icon in the right corner of each cell to expand.

STATE	Count	Bill No.	Bill Title	Summary of Bill (Or Section relat...	Summary	Text	
AZ	2	SB1819	Budget procedures; budget reconciliation; 2021-2022.	This budget procedure/budget reconciliation includes language that extends the Arizona study ...	https://apps.azleg.gov/Bill/Status/Bill/Overview/...	https://ext/Status/Bill/Overview/...	
		2	SB1823	General Appropriations Act; 2021-2022	Study Committee on Missing and ...	https://apps.azleg.gov/Bill/Status/Bill/Overview/...	https://ext/Status/Bill/Overview/...

- Search for legislation: use the magnifying glass in the top right corner of the Tracker to search for your state or a bill (using the bill number or title). For example, if you are from Arizona, search “AZ”.
- Use the filter tool: click on the icon with three lines in the top left corner if you want to limit the type of legislation you are looking for. For example, if you are only looking for bills that have passed, choose “Status” is “Passed”.

STATE	Bill No.	Where	Status	is	Passed	st Action	Date Pass
AZ							

Help Update MMIW Legislative Tracker

If you have any information or updates about legislation relating to MMIW in your area, fill out this form: bit.ly/3mVdFuy



**VOICES OF
THE FAMILIES
OF MMIW**

DEMAND JUSTICE



#JusticeForKaysera



**NATIONAL
INDIGENOUS**
WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTER

WHO SPEAKS

When Media Coverage Fails the Voiceless, It's On Us to Speak our Truth about MMIWG

By Dr. Grace Bulltail, Aunt of 18-Year Old
Kaysera Stops Pretty Places Who Went
Missing and Was Murdered in August 2019

This past November during Native American Heritage Month, I saw various attempts by the mainstream media at making contemporary Native Americans visible. This programming has included our stories of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls (MMIWG). Perhaps this is the only time media executives feel this coverage is relevant. More likely, it is an attempt at acknowledging coverage of missing non-white women has been limited after the uproar of disproportionate coverage following the disappearance of Gabby Petito.

Whatever the reason, our families have been waiting way too long. It is not a coincidence that these news articles and TV features happened to materialize in time. We had filmed them over a year ago, and like most projects, we contribute our energy and time, yet we never know if they will see the light of day.

I am speaking of a documentary that we were contacted about over two years ago, filmed last summer and I only learned it was going to air because of a press release. I have set Google Alerts for my niece's name, Kaysera Stops Pretty Places, as a way to find any media coverage. One alert was sent about the documentary that was set to air within the next weeks on the Oxygen network, "timely" as the press release stated. 'Really?,' I thought to myself, 'You all have only sat on this project for over a year.' The documentary featured interviews with several MMIWG family members including Kaysera's grandmother and cousin. I had been filmed over video call, but my footage was not included. I did not particularly mind because the production team had wanted me to agree to exclusivity and not share Kaysera's story with any other television project.

Similarly, a few months after Kaysera was murdered, a Vice News crew was in contact with me and my family. Each of these media teams asks for multiple meetings and phone calls asking you to walk them through the circumstances of the disappearance and death of our girl, then asking again to repeat the story to another member of their team. They would ask to be put in touch with more family members to speak with them. These are hours and hours of our time, energy, and heartbreak that we share to get our girls' story told.

When any filming happens, it is totally up to the media team's schedule, and we are responsible for finding days to accommodate their schedules. As someone who works out-of-state, I made efforts to schedule my trips to Montana around the media teams, but it has not worked out. The Vice News segment also ran nearly a year after it was filmed. We kept waiting for it, seemingly finally airing during a slow news cycle.

Here is another point of frustration with the way the media understands our families: we do not fit your typical victim narrative. Our Native families are not a monolith. Media primarily wants to hear from the mother of the stolen loved one. They ask to speak to her to recount some of the most personal details. In Native communities, what we know is that we should not put this advocacy onus on the mother alone. Each family's dynamics are complex. It requires several family members to run social media pages, answer emails, respond to media inquiries, organize protests, run justice campaigns, file complaints, make FOIA requests, seek legal advice, consult medical and forensic experts, and join advocacy efforts. Each of these activities takes several iterations. I have to make

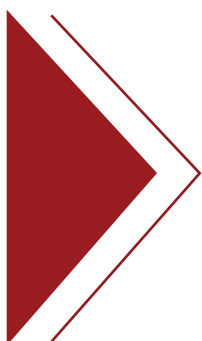
FOR US?

multiple follow up calls with each of these people that say they will check and get back to me. No one ever gets back to us. Advocating for justice for a missing or murdered loved one takes a team—luckily those of us family members doing this work have support from key advocates.

On the other hand, there are countless mothers I see trying everything they can on their own. Media is uninterested because apparently their cases are too complex, are older “cold” cases, the victims are not young enough, or are not the “ideal blameless victim” or surviving family.

Sadly, something that I have noticed is that there is a window for coverage of our stories. If we don’t yell loud enough, we don’t make it through that narrow passage, but whose fault is this—certainly not ours. It is of those controlling this timeframe and how fast we have to run and how high we have to jump to gather enough escape velocity.

It is not our job to make our cases sensationalized enough for you, the media or the public, to organize an event for you to cover in rural Montana, as many media outlets had wanted. I spent countless hours over several months telling a New York Times reporter about Kaysera’s story only for him to reduce her case to a few sentences in his article. Apparently, our heartbreak is not enough yet we continue to give and give and give from it.



**More information
about Kaysera’s
story is available
at bit.ly/34hAvml.**

“

**We are the experts.
We have done all the work.**

”

I have little faith in our MMIW stories being told in a meaningful way by the mainstream media. Our cases are often oversimplified, and basic details are not completely understood by media hosts, even former prosecutors, coming into our communities. And worse, I have noticed several TV shows or documentaries interview an “expert” who is not familiar with our cases or has not done anything to assist with our case in any way. “Experts” who make concluding remarks on the unsolvable fate of our cases. Watching the Oxygen Network documentary, I yelled at the television, “Oh really? What investigation have you done? What original assessment and analysis have you done?” This basically assigns the credit for our work to these “experts” making careless assumptions and conclusions about our loved ones’ cases.

Our own research and analysis does not need to be validated by some “expert” for it to be told on television.

We are the experts.

We have done all the work.

If our stories are going to be told, it needs to be in our voice. Our truths do not have to be filtered through experts to be palatable to mainstream audiences. That is not why we share our stories. We are going through horrific experiences; this is our reality.



JUSTICE FOR KAYSERA

**Sovereign Bodies Institute,
NIWRC, and Pipestem Law
Unite In Call For Justice For
Kaysera Stops Pretty Places**

Adapted from “Justice For Kaysera”,
Restoration Issue 17.3 | November 2020

Kaysera’s Story

On August 14, 2019, Kaysera Stops Pretty Places (Crow/Northern Cheyenne) celebrated her 18th birthday. She played basketball and football, ran cross country, and performed in several school theatre productions. She had dreams of becoming an actress and a performer. She had a lot to look forward to.

Ten days later, on August 24, 2019, she went missing in a suburban neighborhood of Hardin, Montana, less than a half mile off of the Crow Reservation. Her body

was found in the same neighborhood where she was last seen alive, on the morning of August 29, 2019. Law enforcement, however, did not inform the family that Kaysera’s body had been found until September 11—almost two weeks later.

Since September 11, 2019, the family has worked diligently to collect and share evidence regarding Kaysera’s murder and the suspicious circumstances surrounding her tragic death. The family has shared significant evidence and tips with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Big Horn County Sheriff’s Office, and the Montana Department of Justice. So far, all three of these agencies have done absolutely nothing.



Community members gather to raise awareness of Kaysera Stops Pretty Places' story. / Photos courtesy of Justice for Kaysera Facebook page.

#JusticeforKaysera

This summer, the family of Kaysera Stops Pretty Places, the Sovereign Bodies Institute, the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center, and attorneys at Pipestem & Nagle Law launched a three-week campaign—#JusticeForKaysera—in honor of Kaysera's memory and to demand justice for her and her family.

"We have been ignored," said Dr. Grace Bulltail, Kaysera's auntie. "We have written letters, requested meetings, made phone calls, provided witness statements—we have done all that we can possibly imagine to convince law enforcement to investigate the murder of my niece."

Each day from August 24—the day Kaysera went missing—through September 11—the day her body was found, fellow survivors, Tribal leaders, advocates, and allies joined in events including webinars, Twitter storms, or sending letters to policymakers in honor of Kaysera's memory or to call for justice for her and her family. The campaign ended on September 11, the day that the Big Horn County Sheriff's Office finally notified the family they had found Kaysera's body.

"The goal of these events were first and foremost to honor the life and memory of my niece, Kaysera," Bulltail said. "She would have been 19 this year, and those responsible for ending her life must be brought to justice. On the one year anniversary of her murder, my hope and prayer is that our call for justice for Kaysera will shed a light on the injustices that our Native families face not just in Big Horn County, but all across the United States."

HIGHLIGHTS

2019 #JusticeForKaysera Campaign

Vigils and Ceremonies

- August 24: Family Vigil held in Hardin, MT
- August 29: Memorial and closing prayer with the family in Hardin, MT.
- September 11: Prayer Ceremony held in Hardin, MT.

Webinars

- 3 webinars hosted by Kaysera's Family
 - 1) Background and updates on Kaysera's case, ft. Mary Kathryn Nagle and Dr. Grace Bulltail
 - 2) MMIW in Media, ft. journalists Connie Walker and Luella Brien
 - 3) MMIW Policy and Advocacy in Big Horn County, ft. Kandi Mossett White of Indigenous Environmental Network
- 1 webinar hosted by SBI
MMIWG issues featuring Annita Lucchesi, Dr. Grace Bulltail, and other advocates

Letters

Advocates were invited to send letters to officials who failed to bring Justice to Kaysera and her family:

- Big Horn County Sherriff, Laurence Big Hair
- Owner of Buillis Mortuary, Terry Bullis
- Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)
- Operation Lady Justice Task Force
- Montana Senator Jon Tester
- Montana Senator Steve Daines
- Montana Governor Steve Bullock

Twitter Storms

NIWRC hosted 3 Twitter Storms for #JusticeForKaysera

“The goal of these events were first and foremost to honor the life and memory of my niece, Kaysera. My hope and prayer is that our call for justice for Kaysera will shed a light on the injustices that our Native families face not just in Big Horn County, but all across the United States.”

**—Dr. Grace Bulltail,
Aunt of Kaysera Stops
Pretty Places**

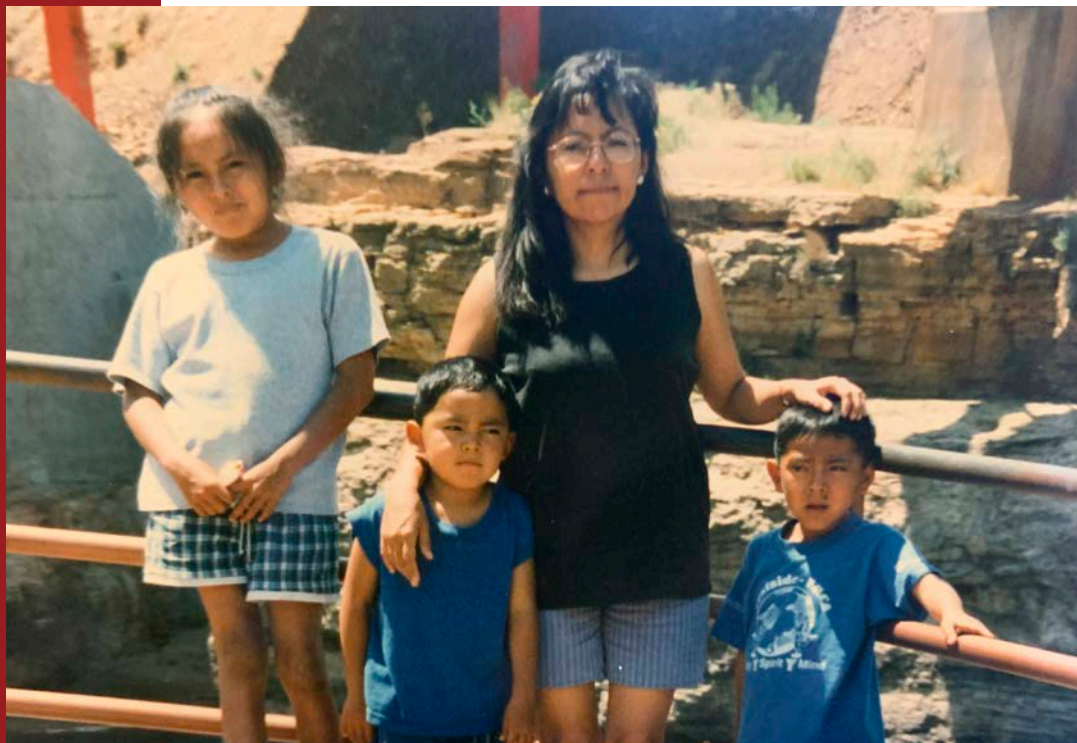


JUSTICE
FOR
MISSING
AND
MURDERED
INDIGENOUS
WOMEN

JUSTICE
FOR
KAYSERA
STOPS
Pretty @ Places

JUSTICE FOR LAVERDA

Our Mother: Gone, but Never Forgotten



*Laverda Sorrell and her children at Salt River Canyon. /
Photo courtesy of Tiffany Sorrell.*

My paternal grandfather is The Water Flow Together Clan. Ahéhee' (thank you), for giving me the space to share my mother, Laverda Sorrell's story. It took me a long time to even talk about our mom and what happened to our family.

On July 4, 2002, my younger brothers and I drove to the Navajo Nation fairgrounds in Window Rock to enjoy the carnival and festivities of the Navajo Nation Fair. Our parents followed us there where we all went our separate ways noting that we would have to make curfew. Little did I know that this would be the last day that we would ever see our mother.

My younger brother Nicholas Sorrell decided to stay with his cousins leaving my baby brother, David Sorrell, and I to return home together. Being a teenager, I lost track of time and was worried that we would be in trouble for being late. I remember speaking with my father, Edison Sorrell, to let him know that we were on our way home. After rushing home, we found it unusual that no one was home. Confused, we continued our night and lit some fireworks before bed.

The next morning when we asked where our mom was, Edison said, 'She left to be with that man.' My parents were having marital problems and were planning to get a divorce. He (Edison) always told my mom to leave, but he would not allow her to take us with her. Although she

Carrying Her Love Forward and Praying for Her Return Home So We Can Honor Her Life and Sacredness

By Tiffany Sorrell, *Diné*, Daughter of Laverda Sorrell, Missing Since 2002; Edited by Rose M. "Lashawaat" Quilt, *Yakama*, Director of Policy and Research, NIWRC

Yá'át'ée'h shik'éei dóo shidine'é. Shí éi Tiffany Sorrell yínishyé'. Tábaqahí nishlį́ Kinlichíí'nii bá shíshchíín. Ma'iideeshgiizhnii dashicheii. Tó'aheedlíínii dashinalí. Hello, my relatives and my people. My name is Tiffany Sorrell. I am Water's Edge Clan. Born for The Red House People Clan. My maternal grandfather is Coyote Pass.



I hope that by sharing our story, that other families can learn from our experience and push law enforcement and systems to take these crimes seriously from the very beginning because as surviving family members, we deserve answers and justice.

–Tiffany Sorrell



was unhappy in her marriage, through the arguing and holes being punched in the wall by my father, she stayed for us. We knew that she would not abandon us.

The days following July 4 were a whirlwind. My aunts (my mother's sisters) had not heard from my mother for days which was completely out of character. It was not until I woke up to a couple of police officers in my room inquiring about my mother's disappearance, that I realized something was not right. Edison said that he dropped her off at her office at 11 p.m. on the night of July 4, 2002, and the man she was having an affair with picked her up. His account sounded very odd as this was not the usual pattern we had observed as children. When my parents fought, my mom usually went to her sister's house who lived just a mile from my mom's workplace.

Sadly, while trying to understand what happened to our mother along with the devastation and fear we felt, we also had to endure hurtful words by our own father. He attacked her character by telling us that she chose to leave us. We were also told that we didn't really know her. That she had a drinking problem. That she was having an affair. All these statements tore through our hearts and did not align with the mom that we knew and loved.

Our lives were forever shattered, not just for us children, but for our grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins on my mom's side. As her children, our worlds completely

changed that fateful night of July 4, and we've each been deeply affected in very different ways. It has been a loss so great that it has impacted the way we have learned to cope as adults. Being the eldest and only daughter, I had a lot of responsibility on my shoulders. Growing up, my mother always told me to take care of my brothers. My youngest brother still slept with her at night. For many nights after she went missing, I tried my best to console my baby brother as he repeatedly asked when mom was coming home. Life did not stop, and we had to continue with school, work, and everyday life including struggles, hardships on top of the sorrow that we carried in our hearts. As the days, months and years went by, I inevitably took on the mother role for my brothers. I would take my brothers to school, pick them up, go to their parent-teacher conferences, feed them, help them with their homework, and obtain summertime employment to buy them school clothes and necessities.

My mom really was the glue that held our family together. Without her, we all fell apart. As adults we've done our best to slowly piece things back together. Today, we are now able to look back and clearly see the gaslighting and victim-blaming that took place. When she disappeared, there were so many mistakes and missteps that took place with the investigation and law enforcement. Despite evidence presented, the law enforcement officers would not follow-up to further investigate. We also weren't united as a family which made it difficult to collectively pursue the investigation

and truly advocate on her behalf. The investigation of my mom's disappearance forced me to face many things, including all the trauma and heartache that I had buried for many years. Although it has been tough reliving the events of that night, it really has also been a healing journey. As a family, once broken, we have united in advocacy for my mother.

Through this incredibly hard journey, not only in seeking answers and justice, my brothers and I also want her true character to be remembered and honored. She unquestionably was a loving mother, sister, and friend. I always remember her warmth and that our home was always open and welcoming to our family and friends for countless holidays, birthdays and Super Bowl gatherings. My mother did not abandon us. She would never abandon us. She loved us and loved her family deeply and unconditionally.

I hope that by sharing our story, that other families can learn from our experience and push law enforcement and systems to take these crimes seriously from the very beginning because as surviving family members, we deserve answers and justice. Do not allow the authorities to ignore or devalue your loved one or place any fault on the victim for the harm that befell them. I hope that sharing her story will help push the investigation forward and reveal what truly happened the night of her disappearance. No child should have to endure what we went through as children.

In keeping with my mother's words and teachings, we've grown to be independent and strong knowing our mother is watching over us and guiding us. Our grief continues because we miss her physical presence to see us through our many trials and tribulations and miss her beautiful smile in celebrating our successes and accomplishments. Today, she now has two beautiful granddaughters who carry her love and light. I wish she could have been here for all of it. But for now, and always, we, as her children, carry her love forward and pray for her return home so that we may lay her to rest in a way that honors her life and sacredness.

Ahéhee'.



*(Top) Tiffany Sorrell at her PhD graduation with Laverda's granddaughters Daveena (left) and Demetria (right).
(Bottom) David Sorrell at Odysea with his daughters. /
Photos courtesy of Tiffany Sorrell.*

A billboard for a missing person case. On the left, it says "\$10,000 REWARD MISSING PERSON" in red and white. In the center is a portrait of Laverda Guy Sorrell. On the right, it says "Laverda Guy Sorrell" in red, "July 4, 2002 - Fort Defiance, AZ" in white, "Call the F.B.I. at 866-373-2130" in white, "Gallup Office #MMIWGActionNow" in white, and "Artwork by Danielle Fixico" in small white text. There is also a logo for the National Indigenous Missing Women's Fund (NIMWF) on the right side of the billboard.

\$10,000
REWARD
MISSING
PERSON

Laverda Guy Sorrell
July 4, 2002 - Fort Defiance, AZ
Call the F.B.I. at
866-373-2130
Gallup Office
#MMIWGActionNow
Artwork by Danielle Fixico

NIMWF
NATIONAL
INDIGENOUS
MISSING WOMEN'S FUND



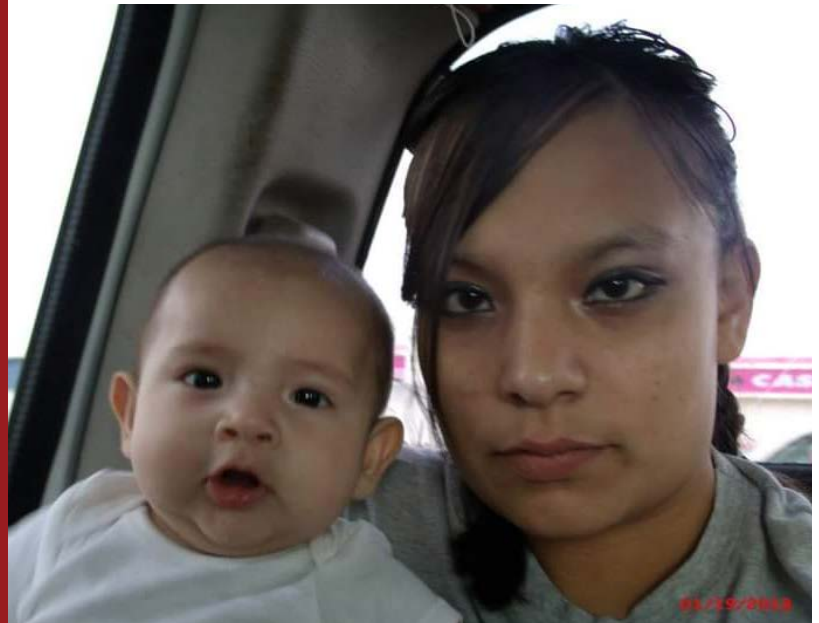
“I do this work to honor and seek justice for my sister Laverda and all missing and murdered Indigenous women.”

—Charles Guy, Brother of Laverda Sorrell

JUSTICE FOR HANNA

A Conversation with Malinda Limberhand

Speaking with the Mother of Hanna Harris, Who Went Missing and Was Murdered in 2013 on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation



Hanna Harris and her son in 2012. / Photo courtesy of Malinda Limberhand.

aware of the full spectrum of violence that perpetuates the MMIWG crisis.

“When Hanna went missing, there were 21 missing girls just from our reservation. It was a real eye opener.”

Malinda learned that Hanna was just one of hundreds of Native women and girls on or near reservations that are reported missing every year, and one of thousands of MMIWG cases across the country.¹

Being the mother of a MMIWG and raising her daughter’s son has led to many thoughts and talks about what could have been for Hanna as a near 30-year-old woman today: Malinda thinks Hanna would have been a Special Education teacher, and Hanna’s son thinks he would have a brother or sister by now. Then the truth sets in and Malinda cautions her grandson to know the difference between wishes and reality. That there is no way for them to know how Hanna’s life could have been might be a reality best not to dwell on; but knowing what a good person and mother that she was is a reality worth thinking about.

“We cannot be silent. We must work for justice for MMIWG.”

For family survivors of MMIWG, their lives often circle the same pattern of contemplating ‘*would have*’, ‘*could have*’, ‘*should have*’ for their loved ones. While the words are mere notions, their cycles of thought are powerful enough to consume the energy of even the most

By Amy Sparck, *Cup’ik of Chevak*, Policy Specialist, NIWRC

Malinda Limberhand of the Northern Cheyenne Tribe, a member of NIWRC’s MMIW Family Advisory Group, took time to talk with *Restoration* about how families of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) come to terms with advocacy, and how they live with unexpected loss, love and grief as their family prepares to enter a decade of life without Hanna.

Though Malinda and generations of her family were raised with knowledge about violence against Native women in their homelands, it wasn’t until her 21-year old daughter Hanna Harris (herself a new mother to a 10-month old) went missing from the Northern Cheyenne reservation on July 4, 2013 and her body found four days later, that Malinda became tragically

¹ <https://dojmt.gov/mmip-home/data-analysis>



Hanna's sister, Rose Harris (left) and Hanna's mother, Malinda Limberhand (right) at walk for justice. May 5, 2018. / Photo courtesy of Malinda Limberhand.

vigorous advocate. “There’s nothing we can do about my daughter being gone. All we can focus on is how we can raise awareness and make the changes to increase protection of Native women. That’s why resources, family and support are critical.”

Becoming an advocate has not been an easy journey—especially for families that observe their traditional faith—because advocacy means making the significant decision to speak of a loved one who has traveled on, but knowing how important Hanna was to her family is what drives Malinda to organize for other families of MMIWG.

Malinda’s grassroots advocacy helped to establish the May 5th National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls observed on Hanna’s birthday. The National Day of Awareness is now observed in the U.S. and Canada and increasingly around the world. Malinda’s advocacy was also essential to the increased awareness leading up to the passage of Hanna’s Act and a slate of bills in Montana to improve coordinated law enforcement including joint outreach, response, data management, reports, investigation, and training to address MMIWG.

“My heart is in it.”

After almost a decade of advocacy, Malinda has come to recognize patterns that help her to support other mothers and families dealing with MMIWG. In November 2021, she advised a mother that reached out to her about her missing girl.

“She didn’t know what to do. I remembered how that felt and I didn’t want her to feel like she was all alone. I helped her understand how to file a Missing Person’s Report. I talked to her about how to make a Missing Poster, and then immediately share the poster via social media. The advice helped her.” The mother found her daughter the next day—the day a search was planned, that thankfully did not have to happen.

Malinda’s heart is happy for families that find their loved one, but she believes more needs to be done for the families whose loved ones are missing or murdered. “My family got legal closure and we were able to lay Hanna to rest in ceremony, but not all families are able to do the same.”

Malinda’s deep family love and personal faith in the Northern Cheyenne tradition, and the church helped her



From left to right: Malinda Limberhand, Hanna Harris, and Hanna's sister, Rose Harris in 2012. / Photo courtesy of Malinda Limberhand.



When I reported my daughter missing, the chief of police told me, 'She's probably scared to come home.' I was told I could search for Hanna myself. We did the search and found Hanna, but it was too late. Having a dedicated resource in the Department of Justice and a requirement that law enforcement takes a missing person report could have helped my daughter.

-Malinda Limberhand



get through depression after Hanna's death and court proceedings. "It helped me. Everyone needs a place to get help or to talk about feelings." There ought to be support and resources for others, particularly for those that may not have the same close family, community or spiritual connection, or for those suffering the loss of loved ones alone.

Grief is always present for families of MMIWG, thus resources and support are always important. In October 2021, Malinda and her family suffered a devastating bout of grief when they received a Victim Notification letter from the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) regarding the impending transfer and early release of a prisoner involved in Hanna's murder back into their community. Malinda's whole family was overwhelmed with questions, anger and grief. "I realized that despite my experience as a national advocate, there are times when I just don't know what to do."

This is where Malinda feels the importance of the

national movement to her life and considers herself lucky. "I participate in a MMIWG Family Advisory Group developed by NIWRC in 2021. It creates a space for me to talk about my grief and learn about actual DOJ Tribal contacts in Montana, instead of a national call center. My family also received support from our community here at Lame Deer to develop Tribal solutions for our family and the Tribe's safety and well-being. This sort of support and resources should be available for all families at all points when they're seeking safety, justice, and closure for their missing and murdered loved ones."

When asked what Hanna would think about her mother becoming a national advocate, Malinda responded:

"I prefer not to think for Hanna, but I am touched that my grandson, Hanna's son, and family are proud of my advocacy. I do this work helping others with love and compassion to keep other families, even one, from going through what we went through. Just like I know Hanna would have done."



A MOTHER'S JOURNEY FOR JUSTICE

For Her Daughter and All MMIWG and Their Families

By Malinda Limberhand, *Northern Cheyenne*, Mother of Hanna Harris Who Went Missing and Was Murdered in July 2013

I want to thank all of you for honoring MMIWG. Each one of you through your actions are taking action to say enough-is-enough. Together we are raising our voices calling for justice for our Native women and girls. We are saying to the world that the lives of Native women and girls are important.

Hanna went missing on July 4, 2013. Like in so many cases of missing Native women the system was slow to respond. We as her family, friends, and community had to conduct the search for Hanna. And this is what happens across Indian Tribes when a Native woman or girl goes missing or disappears.

This failed response is not acceptable and must change.

The National Week of Action and May 5th Day of Awareness are so important to telling our story. We are telling the world Native women do matter. We are telling the world the disappearance of a Native woman or girl must be responded to and not ignored.

As a mother of a Native woman who became one of the “Missing and Murdered” I am committed to organizing to make these changes happen.

I do this for my daughter and all our missing and murdered Native women.

This is not a new problem. It is an old problem. Traditionally Native women were respected. Today we face levels of violence greater than any other group of women. This violence touches every family. Every Tribe has Native women who are missing or have been murdered.

Since Hanna went missing and was found murdered I have become very aware of how large a problem we face as Native women and as Tribes. The Department of Justice has found that in some Tribal communities, American Indian women face murder rates that are more than 10 times the national average.

“

I do this for my daughter and all our missing and murdered Native women.

-Malinda Limberhand

”

Hanna was just 21 years old when she went missing. Her future was stolen, and her beautiful son denied his mother. Like Hanna murdered Native women will not live to see their potential or dreams come true. Their Tribes will not see their talents and contributions.

As a mother, nothing will replace the loss of my daughter, but by organizing to support the National Day of Awareness, and creating the changes needed I know it will help others. And Hanna and so many others will not be forgotten.

To end this problem, we must understand it.

Many Native women go missing or are murdered by a rapist, abuser, sex trafficker, or as in the movie “Wind River” oil rig workers. These men rape, abuse, beat, and murder Native women because we are seen as “unprotected.” They know nothing will be done?

Acceptance of violence against Indian women is not new. It goes back to the Indian wars and the boarding schools when violence was used by the government. It also goes back to an old standard of not doing anything when an Indian woman was raped, beaten or murdered. It is an old problem we continue to live with today.

Bad people commit these horrible crimes against Native women but it is the system that allows it to happen generation after generation. This needs to stop. The system must change.



From left to right: Nadine Weaselbear, representative Rynalea Whiteman Pena and Malinda Limberhand / Photo courtesy of Malinda Limberhand.

The National Week of Action ending in a National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Native Women and Girls will help shed light on this horrible reality.

Our movement is growing. To all those supporting missing and murdered Native women around the world I say thank you! I ask you to wear red to honor our missing and murdered Native women and girls! Post your actions on social media! Tell the world of these crimes!

Together we must stand for justice and safety for our daughters, granddaughters, sisters, mothers, grandmothers! We must stand for all Native women and girls!



“Bad people commit these horrible crimes against Native women but it is the system that allows it to happen generation after generation. This needs to stop. The system must change.”

–Malinda Limberhand, Northern Cheyenne,
Mother of Hanna Harris

JUSTICE FOR DAISY MAE

By Patricia Whitefoot,
Sister of 29-year-old Daisy
Mae Heath, *Yakama Nation
and Warm Springs Tribe*,
Who Went Missing in 1987

Shix patchway, inmima tiinma. Inknash wanikshash Twapat, kuu pashtinwitkiy Patricia Whitefoot. Kwalaaninam ashanisha National Indigenous Women's Resource Center. (Good day, my friends and relatives across Indian Country. My Indian name is Twapat, (name of my great-great grandmother) and my English name is Patricia Whitefoot. My heart is happy on this day in fulfilling the vision of the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center in remembrance of our loved ones. I am a life-long resident of White Swan, WA, on the Yakama Indian Reservation in South Central Washington. As citizens of the Yakama Nation, our family has lived and continues our migratory way of life in the vast Columbia River basin of the Northwest. In following the traditional ways of our ancestors, we are able to sustain our livelihood, where family roots are deeply embedded.

In early fall of 1987, our youngest sister, Daisy Mae Heath, age 29, (*Yakama Nation/Warm Springs Tribe*) was reported missing. Daisy was the youngest of six sisters, who was raised by our maternal grandparents, along with extended family. As a ranching family raised in Medicine Valley along the Cascade Mountains, we were nurtured in our Indigenous way of life. Daisy Mae and another younger sister, Beverly, who later passed away, lived with me and supported me in rearing my children and also helping with our many nieces and nephews.

As a lively young woman, it wasn't unusual for Daisy to leave for extended periods to spend time with friends or family on the Yakama and the Warm Springs Reservation in Oregon. Daisy would travel to the Columbia River bordering Washington and Oregon to visit and fish with



A photo of Daisy Mae Heath (Yakama Nation and Warm Springs Tribe). / Photo courtesy of Patricia Whitefoot.

family. Or she would travel to play basketball or softball in the Northwest, where she excelled in sports as an All-Star and MVP player. As an energetic and fiercely determined young woman, Daisy was able to fend for herself, if needed. On October 29, 1987, Daisy Mae was reported missing. She has been missing over 30 years. During this time, there were other women from our rural community of White Swan who were murdered or went missing.

As legislation is considered at the state and federal level, it's imperative that our family voices are shared, heard and respected, particularly as it pertains to our families and loved ones who endure this crisis daily for years in silence. As families of missing and murdered women, we simply seek calm and peace, a sense of justice, and healing of our hearts.

**Listen to Patricia
Whitefoot's Women
Are Sacred Talk
on missing Native
women:
n8ve.net/mmq5d**





"As legislation is considered at the state and federal level, it's imperative that our family voices are shared, heard and respected, particularly as it pertains to our families and loved ones who endure this crisis daily for years in silence."

– Patricia Whitefoot, Yakama Nation and Warm Springs Tribe, Sister of Daisy Mae Heath, Who Has Been Missing Since 1987



**ORGANIZING
ACTIONS
FOR JUSTICE**

BUILDING A NATIONAL MOVEMENT TO RESTORE SAFETY FOR INDIGENOUS WOMEN

Organizing Actions for Justice



Strong Hearted Native Women's Coalition working with Indian tribes to remember MMIW. San Diego, California. / Photo Courtesy of Paula Julian, NIWRC.

Inaction is the fuel beneath the surface of the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women (MMIW). Government inaction to remove the systemic barriers to safety provide a revolving door for abusers and predators to swing into and exit Indigenous communities with impunity.

To shift gears from ‘inaction’ to ‘action’, the national movement is calling for government accountability and an end to the social tolerance of violence against Indigenous women, their disappearances, and murders.

This story is told in the words of so many people when they talk about domestic violence, rape, and abuse of Indigenous women and say ‘I thought it was normal.’ It is a culture This normalization of violence reflects the social tolerance in the United States that continues to justify colonization of Indigenous nations and peoples. The families, communities, and Indian Nations impacted by MMIW have lifted these injustices over the last decade to create a new understanding and spotlight on these injustices.

Since 2020, the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in a large way, slowed efforts on national issues of grave concern, including advocacy for MMIW. In light of the social restrictions, we are asked as a movement: how do we continue to impact the government to improve the

response to the crisis of missing and murdered Native women and girls? Silence is not an option, and while in-person gatherings and events are direct and close, physical contact remains a risk.

Amid a chaotic government response, the nationwide actions in support of the May 5th National Day of Awareness in 2021 occurred during a time of social restrictions, shelter-in-place orders, and curfews, all while thousands were diagnosed with the virus and many ultimately losing their life to the disease.

“With the health and well-being of our community members in mind, particularly our elders and relatives at high risk of complications of the disease, NIWRC adjusted its organizing for the May 5th National Day of Awareness for MMIW to a virtual campaign,” said Lucy Simpson, Diné, Executive Director of the National Indigenous Women’s Resource Center. “The new normal requires us to use our collective creativity to do things differently, to create a plan, and politically impact the federal response to address MMIW.”

Rising for Change During a Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly amplified existing inequalities confronting Indian Tribes and Indigenous women, layers of inequality causing grave concern for those struggling to find safety from abuse.

For many, the health crisis highlights the importance of rallying together as a movement to honor MMIW and demand justice. While large in-person community actions may not happen, the possibilities of virtual organizing are unlimited.

Thousands of online and in-person events in May 2020 and May 2021 included vigils, walks for justice, hill briefings, media outreach, social media activities including Twitter storms and Facebook events, national webinars, and actions by artists. The color red was worn as a national symbol in honor of MMIW during events around the world.

These efforts are strong statements calling for change and provide access for people to participate in the national movement calling for safety and justice for Indigenous women. We share the wide variety of actions through the voices and stories of those who organized these inspirational campaigns for justice for MMIW.

“I want to thank all of you for honoring MMIWG. Each one of you is taking a stand to say enough is enough. Together we are raising our voices calling for justice for our Native women and girls. We are saying to the world that the lives of Native women and girls are important, and the MMIW crisis must be a priority.”—Malinda Limberhand, Mother of Hanna Harris

2022 National Week of Action for MMIW

When a mother, daughter, or sister goes missing, community action is needed immediately. We must replace ‘inaction’ and ‘silence’ with the understanding of the urgency to act—reporting to law enforcement, not accepting the “no action” response, and demanding a “yes crisis-mode” response.

The United States implemented inhumane governmental policies toward Indian Nations, Native Hawaiians, and Indigenous women. The foundation of the crisis of MMIW is like two sides of a coin, with official government laws and policies of depredations representing one side, and tolerance and inaction the other. The movement for justice for MMIW challenges the violence against Indigenous women and the systemic barriers that allows this crisis to continue.

The justice marches, vigils, press conferences, and demands for change taking place across the continent reflect the emergence of a new standard—holding the government accountable for the criminals, government employees, and the public, who prey on Native women and girls with impunity. Increased educational awareness is needed. We encourage you to organize conferences, community runs, and art displays; produce songs, videos and films; and inform your legislative bodies so they support and pass resolutions honoring MMIW to create the changes needed. We further encourage you to wear red and explain to those around you, to the world, why. The list of movement actions taking place is long; it is as varied as the people demanding change across the nation.

While large organized actions are essential, individual actions provide a social statement of the depth of MMIW. These actions relay to the world the reality that MMIW touches all Indian Nations and Indigenous peoples. In making these personal statements, the loved one is honored, and we hope the family and community are supported. *Restoration* showcases the following MMIW actions to lift, thank, and encourage everyone to participate in the 2022 National Week of Action culminating in the May 5th National Day of Awareness for MMIW.

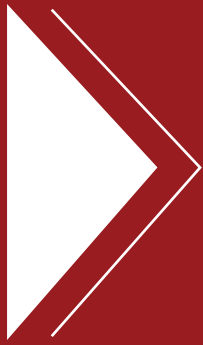
“By organizing for changes to federal laws and policies, we remove the foundation of tolerance for violence against Native women. By demanding justice for our missing and murdered sisters, we compel this government to prioritize and take responsibility for the crisis it has created through its laws and policies.”

—Rose M. “Lashawaat” Quilt, Yakama, J.D., Director of Policy and Research, NIWRC

#MMIWG

May 5, 2022 | Organize Actions for Justice!





MEMORIAL WALKS AND RALLIES

Calling for Justice for MMIW 2006-2021



October 2006, Memorial Walk for Victoria Eagleman, Lower Brule Indian Reservation

Members of the Lower Brule Indian community and South Dakota Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault hosted a memorial walk from the culvert where Victoria Eagleman was found to the Lower Brule Community Hall. As the walkers passed, time seemed to stand still. Hearing the drum, Indian people left their homes to join the walk, singing Vickie her honor song. The October walk for justice was one of the first to spotlight the issue of MMIW as a national priority. Victoria Eagleman's murder remains unsolved despite decades of national calls for justice.

October 26, 2016, Four Directions Walk, Pine Ridge Indian Reservation

The family members of Jessie Renae Waters, murdered in April 2015, are pictured carrying a banner and silent witness in her honor during the October domestic violence awareness walk. More than 120 people gathered and walked from the four directions to an intersection on the reservation to bring awareness about murdered and missing Native women and domestic violence. Members of four families whose daughters, mothers, or sisters were either murdered or went missing led the walkers from the east, west, south, and north. The red silhouettes of women are used as a national symbol to represent women who lost their lives to acts of domestic violence.



2013 Hanna Harris Rally and 2018 Walk, Lame Deer, Montana

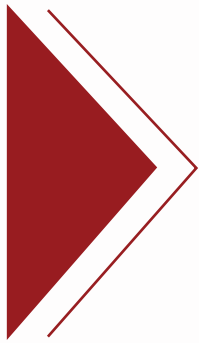
Malinda Limberhand organized for the third year a walk honoring her daughter Hanna Harris and all MMIWG. members of the Northern Cheyenne Tribe.

Malinda said to walkers during the rally, “Today’s walk and the other walks being held are so important to telling our story. We are telling the world Native women do matter. We are telling the world the disappearance of a Native woman or girl must be responded to and not ignored.” (Top photo).

April 20, 2018, Justice Rally Juneau, Alaska

At the 83rd Annual Tribal Assembly of the Central Council Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, marchers carried “Stop Violence Against Women” signs and the images of two young women, Mackenzie Howard and Jade Williams. Both young women who were found deceased in the last decade were from the Native Village of Kake. Their cases remain unsolved despite public outcry for justice. (Second photo from top).





RUNNING FOR JUSTICE FOR MMIR

Creating Space for Missing and Murdered Relatives, Their Families, and Those Taken by COVID-19

By Jordan Marie Brings Three White Horses Daniel, *Kul Wicasa Oyate*, Rising Hearts

Jordan Marie Brings Three White Horses Daniel runs in marathons throughout the year. / Photo courtesy of Jordan Marie Daniel.

relatives and community members where our work has intersected in some way.

In May 2020, an opportunity came to mind during the pandemic—an uncertain and scary time for so many, especially in Indian Country. We were experiencing so much loss (which we were all too familiar with in our history on these lands) and have lost so many since the shutdowns to present day. One thing I realized, is that our missing and murdered Indigenous relatives were still being taken from their families and from our communities, during a pandemic. May 5th was coming up and I wanted to use this day to create space for our relatives who have been taken, their families, and those taken by COVID-19.

I have been using my running platform since April 2019 at the Boston Marathon to run in prayer for our missing and murdered Indigenous relatives, to raise awareness, uplift those in this advocacy space and the families,

Hi Relatives!

It's Jordan Marie Brings Three White Horses Daniel here! I'm Lakota, a proud Indigenous woman, the founder and organizer of Rising Hearts. I wear many hats that include being a Project Manager at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), Professional runner, Filmmaker (Producer & Director), Consultant, community organizer, and the most important hat of all—being a mother and creating sacred life with their journey from the stars to come earth side to join us in early 2022.

All of the heart work I do, is in some way, shape or form, rooted in community and finding ways to bring us together while creating a better future for our next generations. This has led to meeting so many inspiring

and help fundraise to support their fight for justice and the heart work. Then, my relationship in working with the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center (NIWRC) began as I wanted to raise funds on May 5, 2020, during the pandemic to donate towards their advocacy and support they give to our relatives. As you may have seen before, this led me to run 2 miles every hour on the hour, from sunrise to sunset on May 5th on my treadmill. I shared who I ran for, resources, and a call to action to support the organizations I was donating to. After a long day and some extra days to recover, this led to myself, my organization Rising Hearts, and NIWRC collaborating over the next year.

Here we are in 2021, and almost welcoming 2022—and both of our organizations have sat on panels together, Rising Hearts attended the virtual 2021 Women Are Sacred conference and sponsored 10 individuals to attend, as well as had NIWRC be a beneficiary for our virtual 2021 Running For Justice 5k, 10k, and Half Marathon where we were able to donate just over \$30,000 towards their efforts. Then we organized two more virtual runs for Justice for Kaysera (and her family) in September 2021 and Carrying Our Medicines in November 2021 to celebrate NIWRC's 10-year anniversary.

This work is what makes me feel most connected to those that inspire me, to learn from those that are leading these efforts to make me a better relative and organizer, and to brainstorm new ideas on how to uplift this fight for our women, children, relatives, and next generations. And it's the special connections like this, all rooted in supporting our community and increasing visibility of what we are doing and calling for support and accountability in what we are fighting for.

Now, Rising Hearts is planning events for the National Week of Action. The events include a virtual run 'Running For Justice' on May 5-8 for 2022; an in-person event on Tongva lands/Los Angeles, CA on May 8; and, Instagram Live conversations and Rising Hearts virtual panels to continue awareness and calls to actions.

Just know, you can make an impact, whether big or small, anywhere and anytime. There are plenty of ways to be creative to help raise awareness, help fundraise, help amplify, and as long as the community, the cause and those who are no longer here are centered, it will make a difference. We hope you join us!

Mitakuye Oyasin, all my relations.

ABOUT RISING HEARTS

OUR MISSION

Rising Hearts is an Indigenous led grassroots organization committed to the heart work in elevating Indigenous voices, promoting, and supporting intersectional collaborative efforts across all movements in cultivating community with the goals of racial, social, climate and economic justice. Our primary focuses are to inform, elevate, mobilize, and organize through strategic and targeted advocacy and programming, establishing collaborative partnerships to help create a better, safer future, and environment for all relatives who inhabit this planet - past, present, and future.

OUR VISION

A socially, economically, and environmentally just world where all who inhabit her are safe and empowered to thrive while realizing our collective potential.

VISIT ONLINE

risinghearts.org





NATIONAL VIGILS

Honoring Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women



2018 MMIW Vigil at National Museum of the American Indian, Washington D.C. / Photo courtesy of NIWRC.

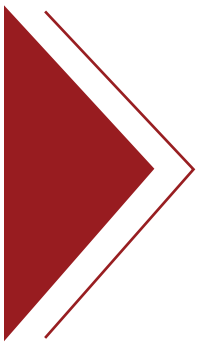
Families of missing and murdered Indigenous women, their communities, advocates, Tribal leaders, and Tribal coalitions organize vigils to honor and call for justice for their loved ones.

On September 11, 2018, a national vigil was held in the U.S. Capitol at the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian to honor Native women and girls who are missing or who have been murdered. The candlelight vigil included a shawl ceremony, a drum circle, and heartfelt prayers. The event was intended as a moment of healing, one where advocates and leaders could come together and pray for a solution to this crisis that many of their communities must constantly confront.

“The National Indigenous Women’s Resource Center organized the vigil in the hope that it will continue to be replicated across Tribal communities and will mobilize grassroots Tribal advocates, Tribal leaders,

members of Congress, and staffers towards drafting and implementing legislation that addresses the full breadth of violence against Native women,” said Lucy Simpson, Diné, Executive Director, NIWRC. “It is essential that Congress find a way to assist Tribes in the protection of Native women and girls. Tribes, as sovereigns, are in the best position to care for their people and this care must include the ability to prosecute non-Natives for violence committed on Tribal land.”

Speakers at the event included: Representative Gwen Moore (D-WI), NCAI Task Force Co-Chair Juana Majel Dixon, former NIWRC Senior Native Affairs Advisor Caroline LaPorte, Mary Kathryn Nagle of Pipestem & Nagle Law, NIWRC Board Members Leanne Guy and Carmen O’Leary, and Florence Choyou, the mother of Hopi woman Monica Choyou who was murdered in 2009.



LOCAL VIGILS

A Local Vigil for Savanna LaFontaine-Greywind

On August 19, 2017, Savanna LaFontaine-Greywind, 22, went missing. Her body was discovered in the Red River outside Fargo, North Dakota, eight days later. She was eight months pregnant at the time of her disappearance and her newborn baby was discovered during a search of a neighbor's apartment.

Tribal leaders, joined by several hundred people, held a vigil for Savanna on the steps of the North Dakota State Capitol in Bismarck on September 16, 2017. Similar actions in support of Savanna have occurred across Tribal nations and communities calling for justice and reforms to address the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women.



Photo by Antonia L. Ybarra.

People from Sioux City, Iowa and surrounding communities led many actions to honor Savanna including organizing local events. On August 31, 2017, a group of over 60 people came together in remembrance of Savanna and all missing and murdered Indigenous women. The group consisted of many Tribal communities and non-Indian allies.

“We started with a prayer, and two songs from the grandfather big drum,” said Marisa Miakonda Cummings, organizer and Sioux City community member. “The first song was a southern song in UmoNhoN, and the second song a northern song in Nakota. This represents the diversity across Indian Country and the communities at the event. We had several youth attend the event, including many young women eager to offer help. We had tobacco and a red cloth available for participants to offer prayers. We then walked the red cloth to the river and offered her our prayers. The reason the prayers were offered to the water, is because Savanna was found in water and water sustained her baby in her womb. We stood at the river with our candles while a beautiful song was sung that spoke to our relatives in the stars. We had a female relative speak to women who died defending their children having a very special place in the spirit world.”

This remembrance event for Savanna LaFontaine-Greywind included various speakers from the community who shared their stories related to violence against Native women. The speakers included the following: Marisa Miakonda Cummings, UmoNhoN, organizer and Sioux City community member; Gloria Grant Gone, UmoNhoN elder, Michael O'Connor, Yankton Sioux and Sioux City community member; Sasha Rivers, Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska, Sioux City community member; Samuel Grant, UmoNhoN and Sioux City community member; and Marguerite Morris, UmoNhoN, Sioux City community member. Singers included Samuel Grant, UmoNhoN; and Canku Wakandgi, Ihanktonwan Nakota.

TODAY I WEAR RED

Local Organizing for the First National Day of Awareness for MMIW

On May 5, 2017, Native women and allies across the United States and internationally organized to take action for MMIWG. The actions culminated a two-year organizing effort joined by more than 200 organizations to create a National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Native Women and Girls.

“Resolution 60 passed the Senate by unanimous consent on May 3, 2017 two days before the day chosen as the National Day of Awareness in the United States. May 5th was selected by the Montana delegation because it is the birthday of Hanna Harris who went missing in 2013 on the fourth of July weekend here in Lame Deer,” said Lucy Simpson, NIWRC Executive Director. “We are excited at the tremendous response to honor missing and murdered Native women and girls, the increased awareness, and organizing taking place.”

Individuals and organizations continue to organize each year to raise awareness for MMIWG on May 5th. Read some of the highlights from the first National Day of Awareness across the country.

Lame Deer, Montana

In Lame Deer, MT, on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation, a walk for the National Day of Awareness was organized by Malinda Limberhand, mother of Hanna Harris, and family. Hanna’s extended family, Senator Steve Daines, the Tribal liaison for Senator Jon Tester, Tribal leadership, community members, and advocates joined the walk. The NIWRC national office is located in Lame Deer and NIWRC was honored to join the walkers and provide the meal afterwards for all participants.

—Lucy Simpson, NIWRC Executive Director

Today is a meaningful day to commemorate Hanna’s life and the lives of others in Indian communities with similar stories, many of which go untold and unreported. We stand together as a nation, in solidarity to say this epidemic of missing and murdered Native women and girls must stop.

—Steve Daines, Montana Senator



Akwesasne, New York

Seven Dancers Coalition along with the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe collaborated and combined their events. The Day began with Chantel Henderson, a survivor of being abducted twice, and now turned advocate and activist, presenting at Seven Dancers Coalition with the Three Sisters Program (top photo).

Saint Regis Mohawk Tribes hosted an awareness event located at Generations Park, in Akwesasne, NY. Attendees voiced their concern and willingness to help educate and raise awareness, as well as to commemorate the lives of missing and murdered women and girls.

Local law enforcement was asked to participate in this action campaign to recognize the victims and to bring awareness to the issue of Missing and Murdered Native Women and Girls to a wider audience. Saint Regis Mohawk Tribal Police Chief, Matthew Rourke and Akwesasne Mohawk Police Services police chief Leanne O'Brien holding hands with Chantel Henderson (center photo).



Pine Ridge, South Dakota

During a Four Directions Walk, more than 100 people gathered at the Sacred Heart Church hall to speak out about their loved ones who went missing or were murdered. Many tears flowed as families spoke of their experiences and trauma.

Darla Black, Oglala Sioux Tribe's vice president, held the Wiping of Tears Ceremony for the mourners and spoke of the need for awareness and education.

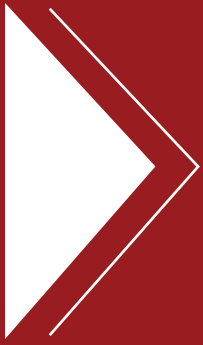
Larissa Lonehill, 21, was last seen on October 2, 2016, in Rapid City. Lisa Lonehill, Larissa's mother, who attended the event said, "I miss my daughter every day and hope they will be able to find her."

Donna Salomon, Oglala Sioux Tribe's secretary, spoke for the family of Jessie Waters, who died on April 30, 2015. Jessie was with child and a young mother with two sons, a very caring woman. "How she was taken from us is what hurts the most," said Salomon.

Sam Long, father of Hanna Harris, said Hanna would be 25 years old on that day. "We chose today to honor and remember our loved ones," said Long. "All over, people are doing events such as this for awareness and to remember them."

Two miniature dresses representing Emily Blue Bird and Hanna Harris were present during the event. The traveling display is being developed by Native Women's Society of the Great Plains as one of their projects to build awareness and education in grassroots communities regarding the epidemic of missing and murdered Native women (bottom photo).

Karen Red Star, the tribe's health education director, who collaborated with the tribe's employee assistance program, the vice president's office, Sacred Shawl Society, and OST Victim Services to organize the event, also drafted a proclamation that was signed by the president of the tribe. The proclamation declared May 5th as a day of remembrance for the Murdered and Missing Native Women, Children, and Men of the Oglala Nation.



SOCIAL MEDIA

Raising Awareness through Virtual Platforms

As we reflect on our 2021 National Week of Action for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, we want to thank everyone who shared their stories, their time, and their work with us. We heard from the families of MMIW, grassroots advocates, tribal leaders, members of Congress, survivors, and allies who are working toward systemic change to end violence against Native women.

On May 5, 2021, NIWRC advocated for MMIW across our Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter pages and invited partner organizations and the public to help raise awareness with us.

In 2020, NIWRC spearheaded May 5th actions strategically with our sister organizations to honor and focus national and international attention on the MMIWG crisis through the #MMIWGActionNow campaign.

These online efforts, which included a National Day of Action webinar, media outreach, and social media

activities, provided access for people compelled by the MMIWG crisis to participate and take political action to call for safety and justice for Native women.

“Collectively, the #MMIWGActionNow campaign reached more than 24 million people around the world [in 2020], not to mention thousands of people who learned of the campaign with the help of our Native media allies who continue to shed light on this issue alongside us. What we witnessed this year was our communities and allies really coming together to advocate for justice for MMIWG. This is a huge surge of momentum that we can really build on going forward.”

*—Mallory Adamski, Editor of Restoration, NIWRC
Director of Communications and Advancement*

Join us in continuing this momentum in the 2022 National Week of Action for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW), and use these posts as inspiration!

HASHTAGS TO USE DURING THE 2022 NATIONAL WEEK OF ACTION

#MMIWActionNow
#NoMoreStolenSisters
#MMIW



Eighth Generation
@8thgen

We honor the many Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) and work to uplift the voices of surviving family members. ❤️

TAKE ACTION at @niwrc's site:
niwrc.org/mmiwgnatlweek2...

#InspiredNatives #MMIWG2S #EnoughIsEnough #TakeAction



Urban Indian Health Institute @TheUIHI · May 6

Yesterday, our team wore red in honor of the National Day of Action for Missing and Murdered Indigenous People.

Today and every day, the work for justice continues. Thank you to @niwrc for all you do to support Native people.

#MMIWGActionNow #MMIWG #MMIP #NoMoreStolenSisters



National Congress of American Indians @NCA1944 · May 5

Today, NCAI is wearing red to continue to call attention to #MMIW in Indian Country. The statistics are alarming and unacceptable and we demand change. Stand with us by sharing your photos below.

#MMIWGActionNow #NoMoreStolenSisters #MMIWG



4

44

97



yellowstone · Following

yellowstone On some reservations, the murder rate of indigenous women is 10 times the national average. Enough is enough! We're wearing red to join the @niwrc in honoring and calling for justice for missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. #MMIWGActionNow

daryibegay 🙌🙌🙌 Thank you

daryibegay 🙌🙌🙌 Thank you

Liked by melissa_dinino and 37,678 others

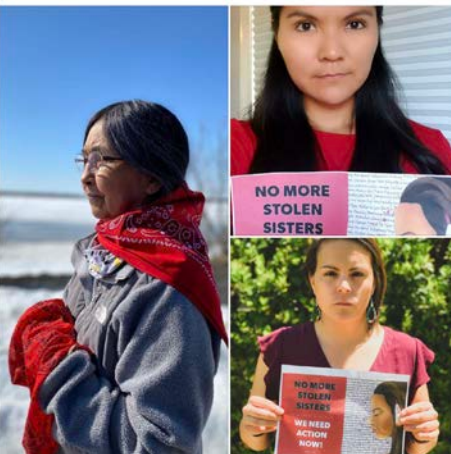
6 DAYS AGO

Add a comment...

Post

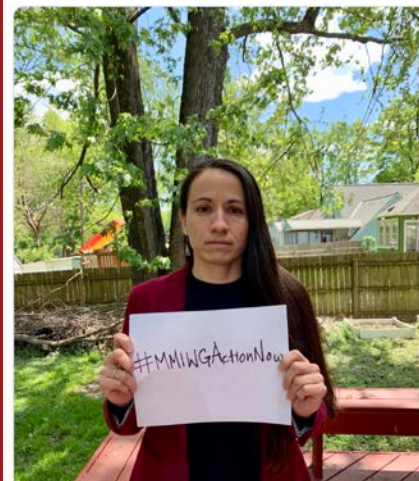
National Indigenous Women's Resource Center
May 5 at 7:15 AM

Today we honor the lives of missing & murdered Native women. The murder rate of Native women is 10 times the national average on some reservations. These disappearances and murders are often connected to domestic violence, sexual assault and sex trafficking. #MMIWGActionNow #NoMoreStolenSisters #MMIWG



Sharice Davids
@sharicedavids

Today National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Native Women and Girls, a time to raise awareness about this silent crisis and recommit to finding solutions. I wear red to demand #MMIWGActionNow.



National Indigenous Women's Resource Center
Published by Sprout Social · May 5 at 3:00 PM

Our team is wearing RED for the National Day of Awareness for the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls! We are honored to host the last webinar during our 2021 National Week of Action, "Uplifting the Voices of MMIW Families." Please join us today at 1 p.m. MDT: <http://bit.ly/3s1M62e> #MMIWGActionNow





ART FOR JUSTICE

Shifting the Cultural Balance to Respect and Awareness

Amber Webb, *Yup'ik*, Creator of the Memorial Qaspeq

The main inspiration for the qaspeq was the disappearance of Val Sifsof in July of 2012 from Granite Creek campground. She was a family friend. It was also the awareness of the pattern of deaths and disappearances that I didn't hear people talking about but that I'd been aware of since I was about 8 years old. They are all our relatives.

The goal of the project is to humanize the issue and find a way to make people feel it. I wanted to make the qaspeq large to represent the space that the grief occupies within Native communities. It was done to honor the memory of our relatives and remind the world that it shouldn't be up to Native women to prove their innocence before crimes against them are investigated.

It was also about healing myself and sparking healing for all Native women. I carry these stories, but they are not mine. The project has its own energy and my job is just to facilitate its movement. I can't undo these crimes, but if we can open conversations about the root causes of violence that are honest and do not minimize the effects of violence, then the project is worth doing.

I'm hoping that my efforts will honor the advocacy work happening all over North America. This work has been driven by the efforts of Native women and it's important to acknowledge that. Visibility is a step toward changing social attitudes. It has been featured on Alaska channels 2 and 11, the Juneau Empire, First Alaskans magazine, First Americans magazine, and was present during testimony in Juneau for HR 10 in support of Savanna's Act and continued funding for VAWA. The resolution passed unanimously.



Amber Webb stands with her 12-foot Memorial Qaspeq during the 2019 Alaska Federation of Natives convention at the Carlson Center in Fairbanks. The giant white Memorial Qaspeq carries the portraits of over 200 murdered Indigenous women and girls. In 2018, she received an Individual Artist Award from Rasmuson Foundation to create the Memorial Qaspeq.

Joanne Shenandoah, *Oneida*,
Composer of “Missing You”
(1958-2021)

The late and beloved Joanne Shenandoah released her video and song “Missing You,” on May 5, 2019 as part of the international movement to draw attention to the thousands of missing and murdered Native women in the United States and Canada.

The song was dedicated to Leah Shenandoah, Joanne’s daughter, who was also a victim of violence. Joanne Shenandoah is one of Native America’s most celebrated musicians and was a peace advocate. Shenandoah is the former Co-Chair of the National Task Force on American Indian and Alaskan Native Children Exposed to Violence which held hearings in 2014 across the country in response to an urgent need to address this crisis.

The hearings revealed the extent to which Native women are subjected to physical assaults including murder.

Shenandoah walked on November 22, 2021. She was 64 years old.

Restoration Cover June 2019. Photo by Jane Feldman.

Shenandoah’s
song “Missing You”
is available on
YouTube:
[n8ve.net/KBJ3E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n8ve.net/KBJ3E)



FILMS FOR JUSTICE

Building Awareness to Create Change

STRONG HEARTS TO THE FRONT

MAY 5

**THIS IS A GOOD
DAY TO RISE**

National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women

"Somebody's Daughter increases awareness to create change."

- National Indigenous Women's Resource Center

somebodysdaughter-mmiw.com

#SomebodysDaughter #NationalDayofAwareness

MMIW-GIC.COM

Somebody's Daughter

Indian Tribes have continuously raised concerns and made specific recommendations to address the MMIW crisis from the early years of the Violence Against Women Act. Through the Violence Against Women Act, advances have occurred, but clearly, we are only at the beginning of the necessary process of legal, political, and social change. Single reforms have helped, but Congressional action to create larger foundational changes are essential. In the past, votes for or against Tribal amendments was a statement of support or opposition to safety and sovereignty. It was also a very large statement of the nation's knowledge and understanding of Indian Tribes as sovereigns, and responsibilities of the U.S. to Indian Tribes.

Efforts to inform lawmakers and the general public of the connection to the MMIW crisis to federal legal barriers to protect Native women have made a difference and are important to winning reforms. The release of *Somebody's Daughter* in January 2020 is one example of the public education needed in the MMIW crisis. The film released by the Global Indigenous Council

makes this connection and advances partnerships with Congressional champions who are working on changes to address MMIW.

Somebody's Daughter focuses on some of the higher-profile MMIW cases, most of which were raised during the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs hearing in December 2018. With historical points of reference, the victims' and their families' stories are told through the lens of the legal jurisdictional maze and socio-economic bondage that constricts Indian Country. For the first time on film, prominent tribal leaders reveal the devastating roles of drug cartels and gangs in the MMIW crisis.

"After watching *Somebody's Daughter* many thoughts fevered my brain for hours," commented Wes Studi, the only Native American actor ever to receive an Oscar. "The search for a solution begins with first knowing a crisis exists." The purpose of *Somebody's Daughter* is exactly that – to alert lawmakers and the public alike that the Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls crisis exists and demands urgent action.

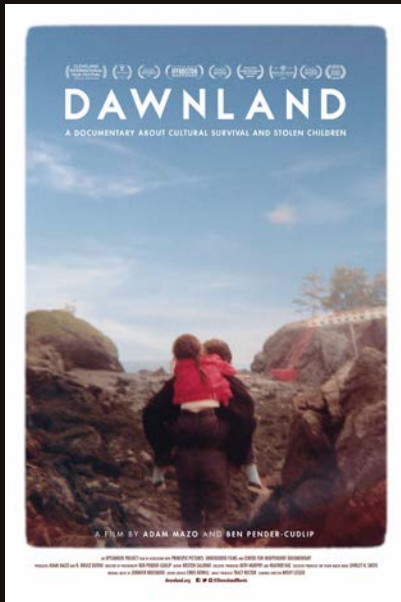
An Indigenous production, *Somebody's Daughter* was executive produced by the Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana and supported by the Blackfeet Nation and Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes in association with the Global Indigenous Council. *Somebody's Daughter* is presented by Alter-Native Media and directed by Rain, the team that created *Not In Our Name*, a short film that featured House Natural Resources Committee Chairman, Congressman Raúl Grijalva, and became the most-watched film on Sierra Club's social media platforms. *Somebody's Daughter* is narrated by Indigenous actor Julian Black Antelope, best-known for

his roles in *Into The West*, *Blackstone*, *Hell on Wheels* and Showtime's *Penny Dreadful*.

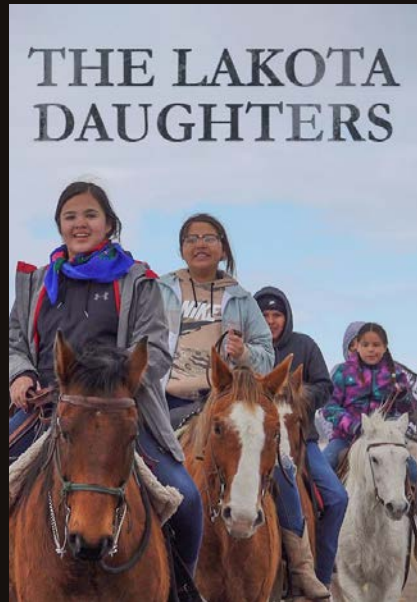
"Must our sisters have to step out into a world filled with monsters ready to use them for their own convenience and comfort, as our sisters hunt for supplies for their own survival? What kind of world have we created for our children?" Wes Studi asked after watching the documentary. *"There is no comfort in watching Somebody's Daughter,"* he cautioned, as the documentary provides a heart-wrenching insight into the tragedy.



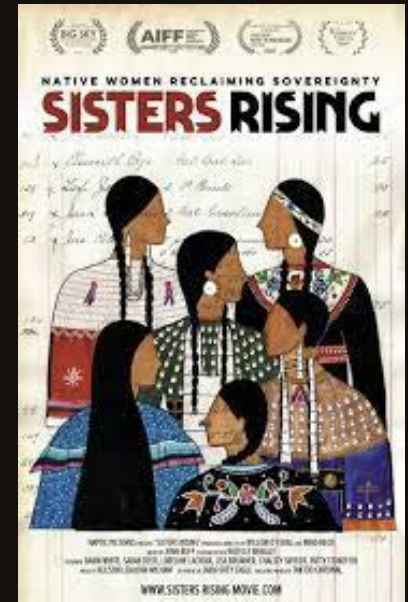
MORE FILMS TO RAISE AWARENESS



***Dawnland* (2018) by Adam Mezo and Ben Pender-Cudlip**
Dawnland addresses the untold story of the removal of Native children from their homes through the child welfare system. It follows the US's first-ever government-endorsed truth and reconciliation commission, which investigated the impact of Maine's child welfare practices on the Wabanaki people.



***The Lakota Daughters* (2020) by Victoria Kupchinetsky**
The Lakota Daughters is a documentary about women and girls of the Lakota tribe living on Pine Ridge Reservation, South Dakota. The film shows traditional and modern life of the Lakota tribe, and the tribe's efforts to empower the next generation of girls and women.



***Sisters Rising* (2020) by Willow O'Feral and Brad Heck**
Sisters Rising follows six Native women reclaiming personal and Tribal sovereignty: a Tribal cop in the midst of the North Dakota oil boom, an attorney fighting for Tribal sovereignty, a self-defense instructor, grassroots advocates, and the author of the 1st anti-sex trafficking code introduced in Tribal court.

THE WAR CRY PODCAST

The Crisis of MMIWP Demands We Come Together -
Four Yakama Perspectives



Left to Right: Robyn Pebeahsy, Lucy Smartlowit, Patricia Whitefoot, and Emily Washines at Collaboration Coffee in Yakima, WA. / Photo courtesy of Maddie Hicks.

By Emily Washines, Scholar and MMIW Advocate, *Yakama Nation*; Lucy Smartlowit, Co-Host, Community Outreach, *Confederated Tribes & Bands of the Yakama Nation/Mexican*; Robyn Pebeahsy, War Cry Podcast Co-Host, Producer, Editor, *Yakama Nation and Comanche*; and Patricia Whitefoot, Co-Host, MMIW Family Member, *Yakama Nation/Diné*

The War Cry Podcast shares the truths about Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and People (MMIWP), including LGBTQ2S. We focus on the Northwest, but also include our relatives in Canada and Mexico. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, we created the Podcast to provide insight and interview families to share their experiences or memories of their loved MMIWP, as well as professionals. The Podcast premiered on June 9, 2020, in honor of when the Yakama Nation Treaty of 1855 was signed. As Indigenous women we recognized the need to break through oppressive systems by telling our stories with our voices. Please join us for Season 3 beginning in June 2022. Seasons 1 and 2 can be found on Spotify, YouTube, and Apple Podcasts.

EMILY

Our Yakama people went to war in the 1800s to protect our women. To this day, some may not understand and label our warriors hostile for defending our families. When I think of what my relatives went through, I think about what they prayed for—the day when we would be strong enough to revisit this history together.

The Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation Reservation is in Washington with over 10,000 citizens and land spanning multiple states. In 1855, the Nation signed a treaty with the United States (12 Stat., 951).¹ This is the history we hear growing up about the land, resources, and agreements. Yakama teachings are passed down in ceremonies and social gatherings.

“The land holds a very special and sacred place to me where I was raised as a young child and continues to hold a very special place to me as a grandmother and a great-grandmother today because it’s that particular knowledge and understanding that I continue to share with my grandchildren today about who they are, where they come from and how they relate to the wider world.”—Patricia Whitefoot²

1 Yakama Nation Treaty of 1855: <https://www.yakama.com/about/treaty/>

2 Patricia Whitefoot’s Confluence Interview: <https://www.confluenceproject.org/?s=patricia+whitefoot>

As my daughters grew, we taught them dances that connect to our culture. We dance at powwows, in our Toppenish Creek Longhouse, and around the house. I explained to my daughters why there might be a variation in the way I was taught our songs. because there are 14 different Tribes and bands. They were excited to dance with other Yakama girls.

In our Longhouse, with its dirt floor and tall ceilings, Yakama women and elders sing while girls move their feet to the drum's beat and bring their arms up and down like swans. This group started with practices at the Longhouse and includes singing and teaching by Yakama sisters, mothers, aunts, and grandmothers. They are called the Iksiks Washanahl'a or Little Swan Dancers. Each time they gather, the girls are happy to see members of the Little Swans and exchange words of encouragement.

These girls and elders carry the message of our missing loved ones. We wear red and bring awareness all across the Northwest.

While we do not know the total number, we know of at least 39 Yakama women who are missing or murdered both on and off the reservation. Since the 1980s, the Yakima Herald-Republic has published a map and interviews from families in the northwest.³ They tracked 13 women who died violently on the Yakama reservation, most of whom were Native. All of the cases were unsolved.

A gathering of Yakamas and community members focused on MMIWP took place 28 years ago in White Swan. Daisy Mae Heath has been missing since 1987. "There is not a day that goes by that I do not think of my sister. Our crisis demands we come together with a passion for our people," said Patricia Whitefoot.⁴ This has been an ongoing crisis. Multi-jurisdictional issues seriously impact our ability to address violence on reservations.

The Yakama Tribe's first reported case of MMIW was from 1855, which resulted in a war by the Washington Territorial Governor and the United States. The response to the Tribe reporting violence against our women and girls has yet to be addressed by any government. I wrote about the crisis of MMIW in War Cry.⁵

3 The Vanished <https://www.thevanished.org/>.

4 Tuttle, G. Yakima Herald-Republic. March 7, 1993

5 War Cry Case Study, by Emily Washines: <https://n8ve.net/IfOae>

This historical trauma has contributed to a pattern of fear for our people to report, especially since historically the state and federal governments have instead responded to protect those committing violence against Indigenous women. This is painful to examine and write about. Yet, without acknowledging this intimidation, we will fail to change it. War Cry is a balance of strength and vulnerability to bring history and justice forward for Native women and girls.

To give a sense of Yakama Culture, we look to our relationships and our language. Our Yakama language has kinship terms that are interchangeable between grandparents and grandchildren. Imagine the person sitting at the head of the table that shares the same title as a youth. As a parent, I reflect on the teachings our children and elders bring us. This includes how they speak up.

One day, my kids were outside playing when they saw someone walking away with their bike. They screamed, 'That's my bike!' The person kept going until all the neighbors came out of their houses to assist. The person dropped the bike and ran. The girls used their voices and got others to help them stop a crime. Think of the bravery of a child/youth asking for help.

While the passing of federal and state laws are bringing change, we need parallel action and voices in our Tribes. It is unfair that our Native youth grow to learn they face higher rates of violence. While we must continue to advocate for them, we have to also teach them to advocate for themselves and others.

During a 2016 meeting of the National Congress of American Indians, the Little Swan Dancers danced



Culture in Crisis Article, March 1993. / Photo courtesy of War Cry Podcast.

Visit War Cry
Podcast online:
[linktr.ee/
warcrypodcast](https://linktr.ee/warcrypodcast)



WAR CRY PODCAST

one evening for attendees from hundreds of Tribes. Before they performed, Patricia Whitefoot told the girls they have a purpose to bring awareness of MMIW. Our prayers, songs, and dances filled the space with happiness that was reflected in the audience's smiles as they shared hope for the younger generation..

We are teaching them how to have a voice, even when ours is threatened. Many of us see how this crisis has largely been silent. Families have felt alone. Our youth need to hear that violence against Natives is wrong. We need to give examples of how we can organize to ensure we receive the justice we deserve. What my daughters showed me is they will use their voice as they've been taught by their parents and community.

Growing up, I heard whispers about missing and murdered women. Earlier this week, I was shocked when my daughter sat at my laptop and said to a blank screen, "Today, we will talk about MMIW." This is a topic adults still whisper about.

Earlier, when the girls took action to stop the bike from being stolen, this connects to messages of their value and voice. During the pandemic, we took social distance measures to continue these relationships within our community. Our youth need these messages. Having these values instilled at a young age helps them ask for things that align with how they are viewed in the community. If something happens to our people, we need to have action and support from law enforcement, the community, elected officials, and advocates. Native people need to see our MMIW stories told in the media. One way we share our voices is through the War Cry Podcast.

LUCY

As an Indigenous womxn, I don't believe we ever stopped fighting the war since 1492. Our people have endured and resisted for 500 years and will continue to do so for the next 500 years. Our podcast is an example of the resilience and resistance that has often been overlooked and downplayed throughout our history. Coming together as a grassroots effort, we created a platform where we could provide support to effect social change while breaking through oppressive systems. We recognize that we cannot compartmentalize MMIWP without having dialogue about other issues that impact us; such as cultural/data genocide, forced assimilation, stolen land, appropriation, micro-aggressions, jurisdiction issues, sovereignty, self-identity and the list goes on.

Being a Co-Host and responsible for community outreach, I am constantly asking myself questions from 'How are we MMIWP advocates?' to 'How can we uplift and support other MMIWP advocates and efforts?' Throughout the past two seasons, we have emotionally and mentally grown as a team. We have many ideas and hopes to be an educational resource; identify local best practices for families and professionals; outreach and provide space to our Two-Spirit and LGBTQ+ community and to ultimately play a part in the grassroots movement to restore safety of Indigenous womxn/nations/communities while promoting self-care as an act of resistance and resilience.

As podcasters we are social change advocates. As matriarchs, we are catalysts to our people's healing journey. As an individual, I am holding space for the war cries that are yet to be heard.

ROBYN

My name is Robyn Pebeahsy, my Yakama name is Kiyaytani, which was also my great grandmother's name. I am the Producer, Editor and a Co-Host of the War Cry Podcast.

I interviewed Emily for another podcast I was associated with, the Decolonized Buffalo, about the root issues of MMIW. Emily had been involved with other magazines and podcasts. While the episode was very informative and filled with great resources and questions, we talked about how the one episode wasn't enough. We realized the unfortunate truth that MMIWP was a subject that could fill a whole podcast in itself, as we've done with the past two seasons.

Additionally, Lucy and I had worked closely on data and community participatory research and have had long discussions about MMIWP. We also realized that on our reservation, missing men are more prevalent than other groups, but are not as talked about.

I was in a great position to identify and connect Emily and Lucy, both eloquent, articulate, and passionate ladies. We agreed that we needed Patricia "Patsy" Whitefoot as a respected elder and Daisy Mae's sister. We all had worked with Patsy in some capacity, and in my case, since I was a young lady. We are eternally grateful for Patsy's guidance, advice and strong voice. Her example has led all of us to continue to speak out and explore this subject and other historical connections.

What I hope to see come out of the War Cry Podcast is a safer community, not just for women, but our men, young people and the LGBTQ and 2-Spirit community as well. As we've explored on the show, we see the historical connections of MMIWP and the violence against our people since contact. We see how this violence has led to wars, treaty signing and how Indigenous grassroots organizing actions and advocacy can change and strengthen laws, policies and practices.

Through War Cry, I hope we can evoke the true meaning of our title War Cry as we go off to and come back from battle, and as we mourn or are victorious. We are all those cries simultaneously. Furthermore, it is the cries of those who have been taken from our families and communities too soon. Some we are still looking for and finding.



Patricia Whitefoot talks to Yakama girls, Alice and Zora in the Toppenish Longhouse. / Photo courtesy of Emily Washines.

Please hear our war cries, listen, witness and speak out. Help us find them and support their families. Educate yourself, feel good about yourself. Not just because it's a good way to be, but it is a proven protective factor for our people.

PATSY

Shix patchway, inmima tiinma. Inknash wanikshash Twapat, kuu pashtinwitkiy Patricia Whitefoot. (Good day, my friends and relatives across Indian Country. My Indian name is Twapat, (name of my great-great grandmother) and my English name is Patricia Whitefoot.

As a citizen and life-long resident of the Yakama Nation, our family has lived and continues our way of life in the vast Columbia River basin of the Northwest. In following the traditional ways of our ancestors, we sustain our livelihood, where family roots are deeply embedded.

On October 29, 1987, our youngest sister, Daisy Mae Heath, age 29, (Yakama Nation/Warm Springs Tribe) was reported missing. She has been missing for over 34 years now. I organize with Emily, Lucy, and Robyn to Co-Host the War Cry Podcast because I know that by sharing our stories we honor our missing and murdered beloved family and help to create healing spaces for our families who have lost their loved ones. It is a powerful way to hold our governments, systems and societies accountable for preventing women from going missing and being murdered.



CALLING FOR CHANGE

Senate Committee on Indian Affairs Oversight Hearings

The family members and Tribal Nations, advocates, and national movement, have organized to create the necessary changes to federal law to address the crisis of MMIW. They have worked with Congressional champions and testified before the Senate Committee in Indian Affairs (SCIA) on the need for reforms to remove the systemic legal barriers to restore safety and create justice for MMIW. These organizing efforts have focused the SCIA on addressing this national crisis facing Indian Nations and Indigenous women.

On October 25, 2017, Carmen O’Leary, who is Cheyenne River Sioux and the Executive Director of the Native Women’s Society of the Great Plains, provided testimony addressing the urgent need to pass three bills intended to assist Indian Tribes in responding to these injustices: the SURVIVE Act (S. 1870), the Savanna’s Act (S. 1942), and the Reauthorization of the Tribal Law and Order Act of 2010 (S. 1953).

“Each of these bills are of extreme importance to the everyday safety of Native women and the ability of Indian Tribes to protect women. These Senate bills remove certain barriers and increase the ability of Indian Tribes to respond to these crimes and provide new options for Federal law enforcement agencies to respond to violence against Native women. The Native Women’s Society of the Great Plains has worked for the last five years to increase awareness of this issue. We have supported community justice walks, have a Facebook page dedicated to missing and murdered Native women, and honor Native women who have been murdered by creation of miniature traditional dresses. There are so many women who have gone missing or have been murdered it is truly a crisis facing Indian Tribes.

“With the high rates of violence against Native women, Indian Tribes and Tribal programs need the necessary resources to provide basic services such as safe shelter, rape crisis services, and advocacy for Native women who on many Tribal reservations have no services. In addition, Native women need immediate and long-term



(Top) Carmen O’Leary with then Senator Heidi Heitkamp.
(Bottom) Quilt of Native Women’s Society of the Great Plains. /
Photos courtesy of Carmen O’Leary

counseling and medical services due to the multiple victimizations committed against them by a single or multiple abusers. And sadly, for those families traumatized by having a missing or murdered relative they often need assistance with transporting their loved one home and with burial.”

—Carmen O’Leary, Executive Director of the Native Women’s Society of the Great Plains, SCIA Hearing, October 25, 2017



On December 12, 2018, the SCIA held its last Congressional oversight hearing of the year to hear testimony from multiple federal agencies on handling of cases of missing and murdered individuals. The non-federal witnesses who provided testimony during the hearing included Kimberly Loring Heavy Runner, the sister of Ashley Loring Heavy Runner; Patricia Alexander of the Co-Chair of the Violence Against Women Task Force of the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska; and Navajo Nation Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty.

“Tlingit and Haida is all too familiar with the corrosive effect that this violence against our women and children has had on our communities. It has been more than a year since the unsolved death of 19-year-old Jade Williams of Kake and nearly a year since the unsolved death of 37-year-old Francile Turpin of Klawock. The alleged murder of Judylee Guthrie, 28 of Klawock, Alaska, has yet to be prosecuted nearly two and a half years later. Earlier this year, Tlingit and Haida held a memorial in solidarity with our northern relatives after 10-year-old Ashley Johnson Barr of Kotzebue was found dead, sexually assaulted, and strangled, after being missing for days. Fortunately, the perpetrator is being held accountable for this heinous crime.”

“Because we believe the future of Indian Country rests in the secure status of women living in environments that are free of violence, Tlingit and Haida has committed its resources and staff to working towards bringing an end to these threats to our women and children. At our 2018 annual Tribal Assembly, Tlingit and Haida passed resolution TA18-27 calling for the increased investigation of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and asking the Department of Justice to report on their steps to reduce the disproportionate numbers of victims who are Native women.”

—Patricia Alexander, Co-Chair of the Violence Against Women Task Force of the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, SCIA Hearing, December 12, 2018

(Top) Patricia Alexander speaking at a Senate Committee on Indian Affairs Hearing on December 12, 2018, Washington, D.C.
(Bottom) Senator Murkowski and Patricia Alexander discuss concerns regarding the crisis of MMIW in Alaska. December 12, 2018.





RESOURCES FOR THE 2022 NATIONAL WEEK OF ACTION FOR MMIW

ORGANIZE now to honor and call for justice for missing and murdered Indigenous women. From April 29 through May 5, 2022, social justice actions will occur across the United States and we encourage everyone to take action. Organize and post your actions on your social media and share on NIWRC's social media. Connect online to any of the following resources we offer to assist you in understanding and responding to the crisis of MMIW.

STAY UPDATED on legislation affecting MMIW. Sign up for NIWRC's newsletter to receive monthly legislative updates at niwrc.org/newsletter and view NIWRC's MMIW State Legislative Tracker at niwrc.org/mmiw-state-tracker.

WATCH NIWRC's recorded webinar from April 29, 2021, "A National Briefing on the Crisis of MMIW." Available in NIWRC's Resource Library at niwrc.org/resources.

LISTEN to Episode 7 of NIWRC's Speaking Our Truth, Podcast for Change, "Issues of Violence Against Native Women with Jordan Marie Daniel," available at niwrc.org/podcast.

EXPLORE NIWRC's MMIW Toolkit for Families and Communities available at niwrc.org/mmiwtoolkit.

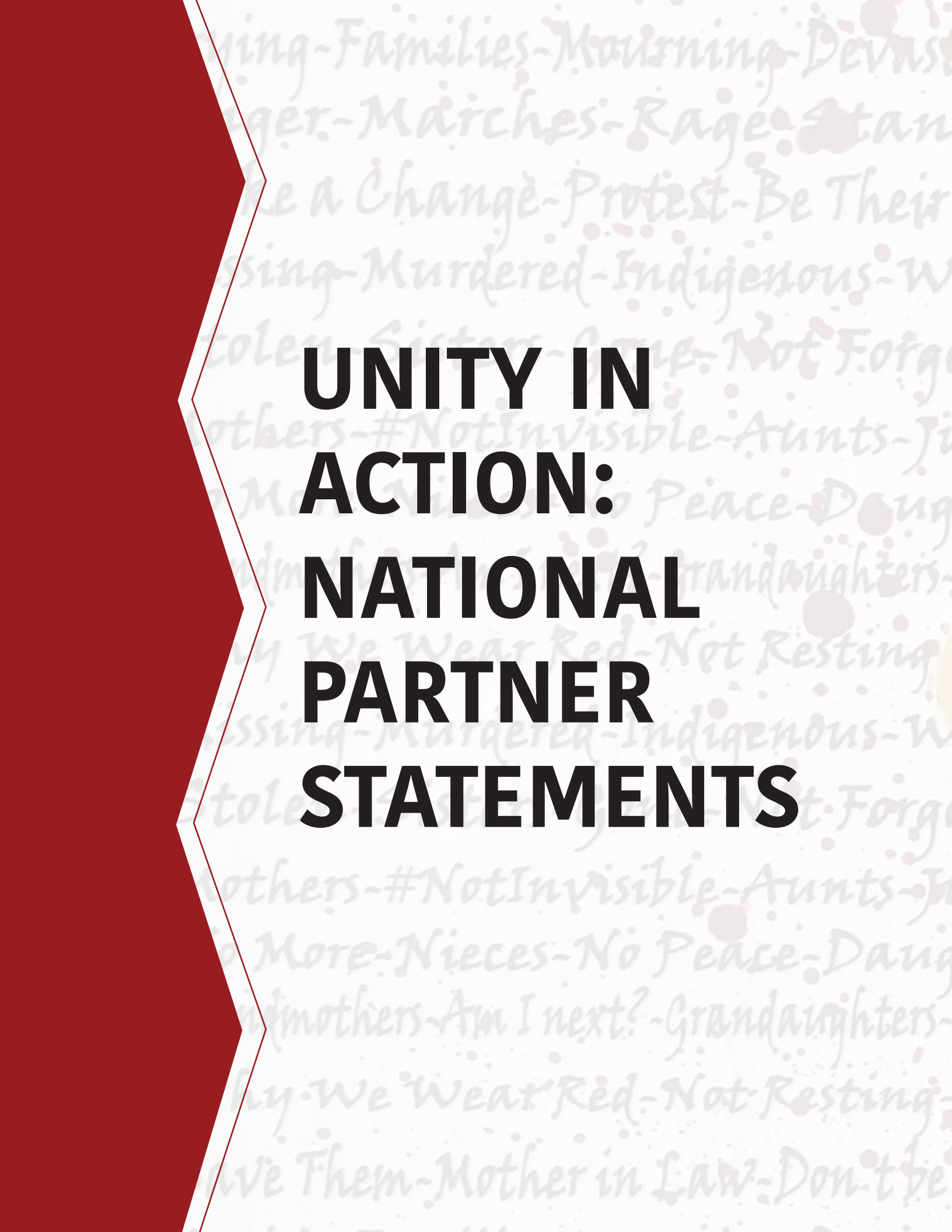
READ *GAO Report - Missing or Murdered Indigenous Women: New Efforts Are Underway but Opportunities Exist to Improve the Federal Response* from the US Government Accountability Office, October 2021. Available at n8ve.net/Vygom.

FOLLOW NIWRC on social media for updates.

Facebook: facebook.com/niwrc, **Instagram:** [niwrc](https://instagram.com/niwrc), **Twitter:** [@niwrc](https://twitter.com/niwrc)

POST on social media from April 29 through May 5, 2022 to call for action for MMIW using hashtags: **#MMIWActionNow**, **#NoMoreStolenSisters**, and **#MMIW**.

SHARE the StrongHearts Native Helpline (1-844-7NATIVE, or 762-8483). StrongHearts is a safe, confidential, and free helpline for American Indians and Alaska Natives impacted by domestic violence and dating violence. Trained Native advocates offer emotional support, crisis intervention, assistance with safety planning, and a connection to local Native resources. Visit strongheartshelpline.org.



**UNITY IN
ACTION:
NATIONAL
PARTNER
STATEMENTS**



Juana Majel-Dixon speaking at a news conference after the House voted to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act on April 4, 2019. Washington, D.C. (Photo courtesy of NCAI.)

NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

“The epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls must stop, we as Native women, advocates, leaders, legislators, and allies must take action to guarantee that no other woman is taken from this world before the Creator is ready to greet her.”

—Juana Majel Dixon, Pauma-Yuima Band of Luiseño Indians, Co-Chair NCAI Task Force on Violence Against Women

Fixing a Broken System

NCAI Resolution on Missing and Murdered Native Women and Girls



Adapted from *Restoration* 14.2, July 2017

In response to the tragic disappearances and murders of Native women, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) passed a resolution in 2017. The resolution recognizes the crisis in the destruction of human lives, the toll on tribal families and communities, and the danger it poses to the future of Indian nations.

“This crisis is not a new one. Native women became vulnerable to violence over hundreds of years due to the attacks on tribal governments and their ability to protect women,” said Cherrah Giles, Board Chair, NIWRC. “Clearly, we have a long road to restore the safety of Native women, but with the passage of VAWA over 20 years ago tribes received the first resources to respond to violence against women. VAWA has also strengthened tribal authority to respond to the violence.”

“The epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls must stop, we as Native women, advocates, leaders, legislators, and allies must take action to guarantee that no other woman is taken from this world before the Creator is ready to greet her.” —Juana Majel Dixon, Pauma-Yuima Band of Luiseño Indians, Co-Chair NCAI Task Force on Violence Against Women.

The disappearances and murders are the end result of a broken system that has failed Native women. The federal and state criminal systems do not, and cannot, provide the level of local response that is needed to protect Native women. Many times, the federal and state focus is on individual staff, the need for training, and increased personnel. While these issues are important, the reality is that the 229 Alaska Native villages and 345 American Indian tribes need a local immediate tribal response. As one grieving mother stated, “We cannot wait for the system to be fixed. We need help now. I have five grandchildren to take care of, to raise.”

The NCAI resolution highlights immediate steps the federal government can take to increase the response and also help grieving families and tribal communities. The resolution reads:

The NCAI does hereby resolve to advocate for changes to increase safety for Native women to address the crisis of missing and murdered Native women and girls by the federal government, with agencies including but not limited to the Departments of Justice, Interior, and Health and Human Services, including actions such as:

- To review, revise, and create law enforcement and justice protocols appropriate to the disappearance of Native women and girls, including inter-jurisdictional issues; and
- To provide increased victim services to the families and community members of the disappeared or murdered Native woman such as counseling for the children of the disappeared, burial assistance, and community walks and healing ceremonies; and
- Coordination of efforts across federal departments to increase the response to the disappearance or murder of Native women and girls; and
- Coordinate efforts in consultation with Indian tribes’ efforts to increase the response of state governments, where appropriate, to cases of disappearance or murder of Native women or girls.

The resolution provides an overview for basic reforms at the federal level. These are basic steps that begin to address this crisis and cause everyone to question why they do not exist. Why for example do Indian tribes not have a dedicated funding stream under the Victims of Crime Act? Why, when the murder rate for Native women is 10 times the rate of other populations, does no protocol exist for law enforcement? Why are no response or efforts being coordinated across criminal justice agencies and departments?



ALASKA NATIVE WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTER

“Looking back to 1979 when we first founded our shelter in Emmonak, I have learned we cannot be silenced. We must use our voices for those who live in fear.”

—Nugange (Lenora Hootch), *Yu'pik*, Founding Board Member of the Alaska Native Women's Resource Center

When a Loved One Is Taken Too Soon

Looking to Alaska Native Culture and Healing Practices to Strengthen our Communities

By Tiana Teter, *Koyukon Athabascan*,
Program Specialist, AKNWRC



Elizabeth Jerue (left) and son Weston Jerue (right). / Photo courtesy of Tami Truett Jerue, AKNWRC.

Each time someone dies unexpectedly or goes missing, our communities are shattered emotionally. Sadly, statistics show that for Indigenous women and girls ages 12-30, murder is the third leading cause of death.¹ Each loss of a missing or murdered Indigenous woman or girl is felt immensely, and healing is hard to achieve. However, healing can come from the community coming together, acknowledging the loss, and providing strength to one another through songs, dance, and cultural practices that are meant to comfort and bring support for the loss of a relative or tribal member.

The Alaska Native Women's Resource Center (AKNWRC) is a firm believer in Tribal communities being the most knowledgeable resource when creating local victim services. Tribes/communities know what is best and needed more than anyone from the outside. The AKNWRC provides services to rural communities by supporting them in using their voices, languages, and teachings to develop local victim services, train tribal

advocates, and create awareness around the issues of domestic violence and sexual assault.

This is one reason why we are focusing on “Culture is Our Best Protective Factor and Healing Practice” in AKNWRC’s curriculum material. It follows the same belief that Tribal communities should be in charge of their own healing, as they can do it more efficiently than an outside service provider who is not as familiar with their culture.

“Culture is Our Best Protective Factor and Healing Practice” is a belief system that addresses regionalized forms of communication that can become a barrier to accessing services, while also discussing culture as a whole as being a protective factor that assists in healing from trauma. Many areas of Alaska are fortunate to have their Native language as their first language. This gives them insight into culture that a non-Native-language speaker lacks. Our languages and cultures are complex and have protected us for centuries. When we begin to look at culture in this light, we can reaffirm and begin

¹ <https://wisqars.cdc.gov/fatal-leading>



Photo courtesy of Michelle Demmert.

to use it as a healing practice in responding to domestic and sexual violence with the resilience our ancestors instilled in us. When we are seen as “real human beings,” our humanity is recognized and our identity as an Alaska Native or Indigenous person is one of strength and resiliency.

As a Koyukon Athabascan woman, I am very familiar with the power our traditional songs hold. I was born and raised in the interior of Alaska, and I was raised on the cultural value of learning and teaching traditional songs, so they can be passed down again. Songs that are frequently taught by elders and sung during funeral potlatches, memorial potlatches, marches such as the one described below, and during times of happy celebration. There is so much power that comes from singing in loud unison in your ancestral language with your community.

I embrace this approach in working with our Alaska Native communities.

Now, more than ever with the realities of COVID-19, victims of domestic violence in rural Alaska are at an increased risk for experiencing controlling behaviors from their partner, are less likely to be in contact with friends and family or are rarely seen in person, and are having more difficulties in getting away from their abusive partners.

Sometimes this violence becomes an overwhelming tragedy hitting a community so hard that public awareness activities and a call to action are needed. A recent trip to Prince of Wales Island in Southeast Alaska demonstrates our approach and support for the community. In the Spring of 2021, the AKNWRC traveled to Prince of

Wales (POW) island to attend an MMIW march in Craig, Alaska. This march was the second officially organized march held to honor the women in their community who were missing or murdered, and to spread awareness on the issues of domestic violence and MMIW.

On the night of the march, people filled the streets wearing traditional clothing, as well as red T-shirts, red sweaters, and masks with a red handprint. The symbol is frequently used to represent solidarity for MMIW. The march was led with drumming and traditional singing, and by two young men carrying a large banner that read, “Prince of Wales Violence Against Women Awareness March, honor our women.” Many people carried their own signs, some saying, “The cycle of violence ends here,” and “No more stolen sisters.”

One matriarch, the mother of a young woman whose unexpected death shattered the entire community on POW, carried a red dress symbol high in the air. Halfway through the march, her family and community embraced her with love and sang in their traditional language as she mourned her daughter. Being in the crowd of people, you could feel the healing taking place.

This march was one of the most evident experiences of the power and healing by a community that I have ever seen. We honored those who were taken too soon and provided education about ways to prevent gender-based violence and how to recognize signs of danger. The night ended with one fact that the community wanted to share to educate: *If someone you know is strangled by their partner, the likelihood of them being murdered by their partner is 10 times higher. Information is powerful and if more people knew the lethality risks of strangulation and risks to look for, we could save more lives.*

This inspiring event on POW was one of many experienced by the Alaska Native Women’s Resource Center this past year. At the Women Are Sacred Virtual Conference 2021 and as part of our virtual presentation series, our staff presented on what “Culture is our Best Protective Factor and Healing Practice” means, and how looking within our communities is one of the most powerful mechanisms to strengthen our communities.²

While COVID-19 has changed the way the AKNWRC provides prevention information and educates Tribal communities on domestic violence, sexual assault,

2 <https://youtu.be/9cRL3rkZRGa>

MMIW, the impacts of abuse and barriers to accessing services in rural communities, we have also found new ways to reach out and support our Alaska communities. AKNWRC’s goal is to help equip Tribes/communities with the knowledge and skills to respond in a trauma informed way. Unfortunately, these trainings and gatherings, normally presented in person, have gone mostly virtual for the AKNWRC. Just as COVID-19 has changed our training, it has also changed the dynamics of gender-based violence³—support is needed now more than ever.

The AKNWRC is committed to Tribal voices, languages, and teachings as the best tool that Tribes and our communities have in prevention and intervention of domestic and sexual violence. Embracing and utilizing our ancestral and cultural knowledge as a belief system is a pathway forward for healing from trauma and changing the crisis of MMIW. We believe our communities and Tribes have the answers and need the support to identify their indigenous—natural and organic—resources to supplement those that are provided from the outside.

Ana-masee’, Ana-basee’, Dogindih’n’, Gunalchéesh, Háw’aa, Quyana, Tsenaa-’ii, Masi-cho, DOIKshin.

3 [https://www.ajemjournal.com/article/S0735-6757\(20\)30307-7/fulltext](https://www.ajemjournal.com/article/S0735-6757(20)30307-7/fulltext)

LEARN MORE ABOUT AKNWRC

Watch AKNWRC’s virtual presentation from Women Are Sacred 2021, “Culture is Our Best Protective Factor and Healing Practice” available at: **n8ve.net/CT7En**

For more information on AKNWRC, visit **aknwrc.org** and sign up for their newsletter.

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Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women: An Action Plan for Alaska Native Communities

By Michelle Jaghaal.aat Demmert, *Ch'áak from the Kaax'ooos.hittan (Man's Foot) Clan of the Eagle Moiety and Central Council Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, Law & Policy Director, AKNWRC*

THIS IS WHY WE WEAR RED
Forever in our hearts our Missing and Murdered Sisters

Murder is the 3rd leading cause of death for American Indian and Alaska Native women. 13% are shown to be tied to domestic and sexual violence.

- UIHI Missing and murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Report

We know this data is incomplete.

WE WILL BE SILENT NO MORE



When a woman goes missing in our community, or dies unexpectedly and often from suspicious circumstances, our communities go through a series of emotions from grief to anger. We are sad for the loss of our loved ones and often have so many questions and concerns with no place to turn for answers. We are concerned about where she might be and who can help us with answers? After days, weeks, months, or even years go by without adequate answers, we are angered about why we are not getting the necessary help.

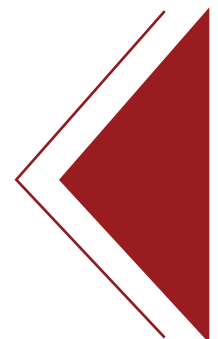
The issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women (MMIW) is gaining national recognition due to grassroots efforts to draw attention to this crisis. Federal and state governments are now looking at this issue and trying to develop a plan to address collecting the data for crimes that for far too long have been overlooked and underreported.

The Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women: An Action Plan for Alaska Native Communities is a Toolkit intended to be a starting point for each Alaskan community to develop a plan of action before a tragic event occurs. It can also be used as a guide after a relative is feared missing or harmed to help organize the community. It is a collection of ideas, tasks and recommendations of what can be done within a community aimed at supporting a

family facing crisis and ways to respond in an organized way when one of our mothers, aunties, sisters or children have gone missing or is found murdered. This Toolkit is meant to be a document that is continually being edited, added to, updated and will evolve as new resources are found and strategies are developed.

The Alaska Native Women's Resource Center (AKNWRC) hosts monthly calls on MMIW for the purpose of informing and discussing current developments and issues around MMIW, to educate and review legislative efforts and policy issues and to hold dialogue with Alaska communities on healing, prevention and action in response to the crisis of our missing and murdered women and children. If you would like to be added to the email list to receive more information on these monthly calls, please email info@aknwrc.org.

**Access AKNWRC's
Toolkit on MMIW:
n8ve.net/8Lqoh**



Not Invisible Act Consultation, September 10, 2021

Statement of Catherine Edwards, Central Council Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska



Catherine Edwards, Central Council Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska. / Photo courtesy of NIWRC.

I am Catherine Edwards, the first Vice-President of the Central Council Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska. We represent 22 villages in Southeast Alaska and 3 urban populations in Anchorage, Alaska, California, and Washington, with more than 32,000 citizens. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Not Invisible Act—Gunalcheesh! I would like to say that I am honored to be here and honored to be a representative of my people. Though after many years of being involved with this work and testifying in various federal consultations each year, I continue to hope that someday we could stop repeating the same messages and requests.

I will respond to your questions, but before I do, I want to make a strong case to have significant representation from Alaska stakeholders. Far too often our situation is overlooked and misunderstood given the challenges that our communities face with the lack of law enforcement in many of our communities, the remote locations, extreme weather exacerbated by global warming and the extractive industries effects on our communities.

Our communities, both rural and urban, continue to lack basic services that would help to increase the safety for our women, children, and families. My goal in testifying again and again to federal agencies is to give voice to the voiceless and remind you that violence against women in our communities is in crisis. Each and every day, as these meetings are taking place, violence is happening to our families and our communities are suffering. It is my hope that you will listen, not just to our stories, but also think about what resources should be provided to us and then visit us, listen to us. We know what to do. We simply need help with resources and partnerships.

I am also the co-chair of the Tlingit and Haida Violence Against Women Task Force that was established in 2017. The Task Force is a community-driven response to end domestic violence and to address cases of missing Alaska Native women. It is charged with studying, analyzing, reporting, and providing recommendations on how to:

- Improve criminal justice system to better serve and protect Alaska Native women;
- Increase criminal justice protective and investigative resources for reporting and identifying murdered and missing Alaska Native women;
- Identify rates of violence against women and reduce incidences through continuing efforts to connect state, tribal and federal resources;
- Address issues relating to public safety and law enforcement that create barriers for responding timely to violent crimes against Indigenous women in rural Alaska communities;
- Identify effective tribal justice methods used to reduce violence against Alaska Native women; and
- Create partnerships with local, state, and national organizations for resource development (such as the Alaska Native Women's Resource Center, National Indigenous Women's Resource Center and NCAI's VAW Task Force.

Why do we need such a group? Because the Federal government has and continues to fail the trust responsibility to our Tribal communities, especially in providing necessary resources to decrease violence and increase safety from domestic violence and sexual assault.

In the 1960's my Grandmother's sister, Auntie Butch was beaten, raped and, left in a ditch where my Uncle, 15 at the time, had to claim the body, and the local police



Anchorage 2018 rally to raise awareness of violence against women in Alaska Native communities co-sponsored by Tlingit & Haida. / Photo courtesy of Tlingit & Haida.

wouldn't do anything about it or help him, because she was Alaska Native. Two years ago, my daughter fled our homelands because of a stalker. When she attempted to seek help through the State court, the Judge not only allowed her stalker to question her, and denied her request for a protective order, saying she was simply too nice. All of this in spite of the fact that the perpetrator was in court just two months prior, also for stalking another woman—he is now running for School Board!

Alaska continues to rank in the top five in the rate of women murdered by men and we know this rate is higher for American Indian/Alaska Native women. We know that women killed by men are most often killed by someone they know, and more than half are killed by an intimate partner. Here we are in 2021 and we still have Native women beaten, raped, and left in ditches and law enforcement isn't helping. In 50, 60 years we really haven't come very far. We as Alaska Native women

represent 50% of sexual violence and while American Indians are overrepresented in DV/SA, Alaska Natives are among the most victimized nationwide being victimized 2x the national average and in some areas even higher. They say 1 in 3 American Indian or Alaska Native women have experienced sexual assault and domestic violence. However, I have yet to sit in a group of my Tribal sisters and find the 2 out of 3 that have not been sexually assaulted or beaten. We really haven't come very far.

We continue to remind the federal agencies, year after year, that in Alaska we do not have adequate law enforcement and lack the resources to remedy this situation on our own. In addition, we currently have a Governor who continues to cut law enforcement funds and support for the Tribes. Tlingit and Haida Tribe has run the Village Public Safety Officer program in Southeast Alaska, however, only has the funding to provide VPSO

in a small number of our 22 communities. Due to the budget cuts and retention difficulties, a VPS officer is the only law enforcement presence, often on call 24/7 and not well paid. These officers also do not have arrest authority and are not allowed to carry firearms. This explains the low retention rates and recruitment difficulties.

The last fifteen months, with the COVID-19 Pandemic, we have seen conditions and safety in our villages drastically worsen. Lack of adequate housing, an issue before COVID, has forced victims and children to remain in the homes of their abusers. Many of the rural villages throughout Alaska thus do not have shelters or safe houses that can provide refuge and safety. The lack of sufficient funding for preventive services and resources prevents our communities from teaching how to live in safety and unlearn violence. Safety, wellness and eliminating violence for our tribal communities and citizens continues to be our top priority.

Also, do not forget about the Department of Justice State of Emergency in Rural Alaska Declaration. On June 28, 2019, DOJ stated an emergency in rural Alaska existed and provided some resources—primarily to the state to back-fill the state cuts. We need on-going support and assistance to build the necessary infrastructure to address the dire jurisdictional issues that are truly health, safety and welfare issues and such assistance is required by the federal trust responsibility.

Again, Alaska is often overlooked or misunderstood about the extreme conditions that many of our communities face and we need strong VOICES, not VOICE, but VOICES at the table.

We believe the NIA Commission should review and adopt these recommendations:

- Implement NCAI recommendations regarding the tribal set-aside from the crime victim fund to assure that the resources reach victims, survivors, and their families;
- Fully implement the 2005 reauthorization of the VAWA NIJ research program and specifically provide Tribal Nations information regarding missing and murdered AI/AN women;
- DOJ and DOI should review, revise, and create law enforcement and justice protocols appropriate to the disappearance of AI/AN women and girls, including interjurisdictional issues as provided by the Savanna's Act and Not Invisible Act;

- Support efforts of the Government Accountability Office to prepare and submit a report on the response of law enforcement agencies to reports of missing or murdered Indians, including recommendations for legislative solutions as provided by the Studying the Missing and Murdered Indian Crisis Act of 2019;
- Develop protocols, in consultation with Tribal Nations, which recognize the inherent right of American Indians and Alaska Natives to exercise their traditional practices in response to MMIW. These protocols must address the current violations of tribal beliefs, religious, and cultural practices of the murdered woman and the disrespectful handling of her remains. The protocols must address the following:
 - The denial of request by mothers and other immediate family members to see the bodies of their loved ones. In many cases, the requests of family members to see the remains of the AI/AN woman have been denied without explanation.
 - Develop law enforcement toolkits that provide for a thorough investigation and answer the necessary questions so coroners can correctly identify the “manner of death.”
 - Mailing and shipping remains without notice to the family and sometimes without proper clothing and modesty covers. In many cases, mothers and families have received the naked remains of their loved ones in cardboard boxes and plastic bags.
 - In adjudicated cases, return of the victim's personal effects and belongings to the family, if desired, for proper disposal and/or burial consistent with cultural practices.
 - Coordinate efforts across all federal departments to increase support for tribal responses to missing or murdered AI/AN women and girls as required by Savanna's Act;
 - Coordinate efforts in consultation with Tribal Nations to increase the response of state governments, where appropriate, to cases of the disappearance or murder of AI/AN women and girls; and
 - We recommend the federal departments under the VAWA mandated consultation support this investigation and allow Indian Tribes to use VAWA grant funds to participate in relevant meetings at the United Nations and with United Nations' bodies.



Anchorage 2018 rally to raise awareness of violence against women in Alaska Native communities co-sponsored by Tlingit & Haida. / Photo courtesy of Tlingit & Haida.

Now to answer your questions:

What, from these topics, is a priority that would most benefit your Tribe and/or community? We need a comprehensive plan that includes mapping out the origin of the violence, the various intersections of domestic violence, stalking and trafficking and map out what works and hasn't worked—what resources have been provided and what ones are needed now to make a difference? For example, we know that our children are disproportionately represented in child welfare because often, the state does not understand our communities and removes our children from our communities. These children are disproportionately targeted by traffickers. Eventually they come into the judicial system and are viewed as criminals rather than as the ongoing victims of racist institutions. This is just one example of the mapping that is needed.

Are there other topics related to the Commission's objectives that you wish the Commission to consider?

Yes, we need to look at the grant solicitations that leave out our Alaska communities. For example there is a grant called, FY 2019 Law Enforcement-Based Victim Specialist Program. With the increased VOCA funding for Tribes, the Alaska Native Women's Resource Center proposed working with Tribes to get a victim-based specialist with all Village Public Safety Officers (VPSO's). We thought this would be a great start to providing more services. Sadly, our VPSO's did not

meet the definition of "law enforcement" so we could not pursue this track. These VPSO's are the closest thing we have to law enforcement and to exclude our communities based on this poorly drafted definition shows how so often we are shut out of available programs.

Every Agency that provides grants and programs to Tribes should have a meaningful tribal group to administer the program. OVW is the only program that has a statutorily mandated tribal group in DOJ or HHS programs, but administratively this could be accomplished. FVPSA does a great job with so little funding—their example should be replicated. Director Shawndell Dawson and Deputy Commissioner Powell just held a two-day consultation and by day two they announced changes and promised quick responses to other questions.

Are there agencies, bureaus, offices, or programs you believe should be represented on the Commission that are not listed in the Act? Yes. The CDC should be part of the federal programs. Again, there are so many intersections of issues and services needed. In Alaska, we need to have the state Attorney general involved in policy change—I am sure other PL 280 states may have similar issues with roadblocks by their AG's as well.

Gunalchéesh—Háw'aa—Thank you for taking the time to listen to our concerns; and we will be submitting written comments.

POUHANA 'O NĀ WAHINE

“If your people need healing and need to be taken care of, you have to take care of your land. If you don't take care of your land, you can't take care of your people.”

–Loke Pettigrew, Pouhana 'O Nā Wahine



Hō'onipa'a o Nā Wāhine Hawai'i

To Plant Firmly Hawaiian Women

By Rosemond K. Pettigrew, Dayna Schultz, NaniFay Paglinawan, Dolly Tatofi, Members of Pouhana 'O Nā Wahine, and Paula Julian, Senior Policy Specialist, NIWRC

To address the MMIW crisis requires healing. In essence, we created the Pouhana 'O Nā Wahine (Pillars of Women) to heal our communities from trauma caused by colonization and the related effects of domestic and sexual violence. And for Native Hawaiians, healing is a process that is intimately tied to our kūpuna āina, the land where we as a people have resided for generations.

“The life of the land is in its people,” said Rosemond “Loke” K. Pettigrew, Board President, Pouhana 'O Nā Wahine, quoting the Native Hawaiian writer Dana Naone Hall. “If your people need healing and need to be taken care of, you have to take care of your land. If you don't take care of your land, you can't take care of your people.”

This process of healing is part of the Native Hawaiian concept of ho'oponopono, which means to make things right.

“The abuse has been carried on through at least four generations, and it's going to take a lot of work,” Pettigrew said. “Because you have the next generation of 30 and 40-year-olds that are still oppressed, emotionally, maybe in other ways as well, with the violence in their families. And if it's there, then it's carrying on to the next generation. You need to regain who you are and where you come from to heal,” Pettigrew added. “Connecting and accepting who you



Pouhana O Na Wahine Board of Directors Meeting, July 10, 2021, Manoa Valley, Oahu. / Photo courtesy of Loke Pettigrew.

are and where you came from is important for healing, because you're not only healing your present self, but you're healing your past self. You're healing your kūpuna who have suffered as a result of just being Indigenous or Native Hawaiian, by government oppression, even oppression by your own people in some cases. So you have to go back to who you are, where you came from, and identify your family, and address it.”

In this way, the Pouhana 'O Na Wahine (PONW) are healing more than just the trauma of current-day survivors—they are healing the pain that Native Hawaiians have endured since the 1800s when colonization on the

island began. This healing process is uniquely Hawaiian, addressing domestic and sexual violence in a way that empowers survivors to reclaim their identities through Native Hawaiian culture.

The sisters of the Pouhana ‘O Nā Wahine understand that for Native Hawaiian women, true healing can only occur when a woman’s identity—her family, land, ancestors, culture, and history—is fully embraced as part of herself. In Pettigrew’s words, “When you connect to your family, or your ohana, and you start to know who you are and what your place is as an Indigenous woman, then you can see that this is who I am, and this is who I’m proud to be.”

In response to the MMIW crisis, the PONW took steps to join the efforts to honor and seek justice for MMIW. In 2021, we became a member of the state MMIW Task Force on Missing and Murdered Native Hawaiian Women. We also became a member of NIWRC’s National Partners workgroup which organized the first National Week of Action for MMIWG this past April 29-May 5, 2021. The PONW participated in the 2021 Week of Action by organizing our May 3 webinar titled Nā Hānauna ho‘ōla: Healing Generations. In 2022, the PONW will again be part of the national organizing efforts for the second National Week of Action. The team looks forward to educating at the local, state, national and international levels about disparities we face and the importance of solutions rooted in Native Hawaiian culture to prevent violence against women, including missing and murdered Indigenous women.

The Pouhana ‘O Nā Wahine is a grassroots organization focused on opening a Native Hawaiian Resource Center on Domestic Violence to reduce domestic violence disparities faced by Native Hawaiians. These disparities date back to the days of first contact with foreigners that resulted in the 1893 overthrow of Hawaii’s monarchy by the U.S. government’s 1898 annexation of our homelands. The U.S. apologized through their Joint Resolution (PL 103-150):

Whereas the long-range economic and social changes in Hawaii over the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries have been devastating to the population and to the health and well-being of the Hawaiian people

Our vision is to restore the balance of mind, body, and

spirit, bringing our people to the state of well-being; and to preserve and promote Hawaiian culture to help families and communities live their best lives and heal from domestic violence, sexual violence, and colonization. Our mission is to advocate for Native Hawaiian families who face challenges related to domestic violence and gender-based violence by exercising our inherent sovereign rights as Indigenous people of Hawaii to care for and protect our kanaka, ‘āina/kai, and akua (people, land/ocean, and gods).

The PONW is committed to secure dedicated resources to open a Native Hawaiian Resource Center on Domestic Violence to provide technical assistance and training; partner at the community, statewide and national levels; and develop policies and cultural resources to stop, prevent, and eliminate domestic violence and help victims and their family members increase their safety. Collectively, the individuals of PONW have over 50 years of experience in the advocacy and social service field and are all Kanaka ‘Ōiwi who have a passion for helping to heal generations past and present to ensure the healthiest future.

In partnership with the National Indigenous Women’s Resource Center (NIWRC) and the Alaska Native Women’s Resource Center (AKNWRC) and with the support of the Family Violence Prevention and Services Program within the Administration for Children and Families, PONW is developing an organizing curriculum titled *“E ho‘oulu pono ka mana‘olana, ka mauli ola a me ka ‘ikena no ka lāhui i ka leo kalahea aloha: No ka wā i hala, ka wā nei a no ka wā e hiki mai ana”* (Using the voice of our people to bring hope, healing and knowledge for our people: Past, present and future).

The organizing curriculum will:

- Help serve as a roadmap for PONW’s advocacy and organizing, including to develop our organizational capacity to lead, organize and partner for social change at the local, statewide, regional, national and international levels to increase Native women’s safety;
- Support Native Hawaiian community organizing efforts;
- Address the unique challenges facing Native Hawaiians responding to violence against women; and
- Help to center Native Hawaiian culture as a protective factor.



“We selected pouhana (central wood pole used in traditional Native Hawaiian homes) as part of our name because we recognize without the pouhana, the house falls apart, and wāhine, like pouhana, are the strength of the family. We come together as a hui (group) to serve as pouhana and help our people to address domestic violence and related injustices.”
—NaniFay Paglinawan, Pouhana’s Kūpuna (elder)

Please join us during our 2022 National Week of Action for MMIW to continue to urge the U.S. government to reaffirm and support Indigenous protective systems through our joint 6-Point Action Plan, including: Recognizing and respecting Indigenous responses of Native Hawaiian communities and organizations to protect Indigenous women, including through the support of a Native Hawaiian Resource Center on Domestic Violence.

The Pouhana ‘O Nā Wahine is excited to share that in October 2021 we received notice from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) that effective April 13, 2021, the Pouhana ‘O Nā Wahine is now a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. This marks a point in the changes and shift resulting from grassroots organizing of Indigenous women against the range of disparate and disproportionate serial violence Indigenous women experience, including missing and murdered Indigenous women.

The PONW thanks the NIWRC and the AKNWRC for their partnership and support in helping us organize and advocate since 2013. “Our partnerships with NIWRC and AKNWRC have provided us with brave spaces to build relationships of understanding, respectfully discuss, acknowledge and accept differences of opinions and views, and to seek balance in all relationships and

things to create a shift of thought or perspective, which continues to be central to our advocacy and organizing to increase the safety of Native Hawaiian women and communities,” Pettigrew said. “Me Ka ha’aha’a (with humility).“

“We are not only concerned with wanting to create and hold safe spaces, we also want to take it further and have the real discussion that needs to be had so that we are continuously living in a state of Aloha in all ways,” said Dolly Tatofi, Board of Directors, Pouhana ‘O Nā Wahine. “When we are able to have real discussions about real issues and conflict in a way that is with Aloha, we uphold the values of Aloha as a way of being, a Nohona Aloha so to say. I would like to actually be able to help us move toward a SACRED SPACE as well where we are able to acknowledge and realize how connected we really are that we meet in a space of full honor and respect of all beings with no judgment and just pure Aloha.”



**View Joint 6-Point
Action Plan**
n8ve.net/Wyrfu

INDIAN LAW RESOURCE CENTER

“United States law must move forward, it must meet its obligations under international human rights law, and it must protect all women everywhere from all forms of violence and discrimination including the most vulnerable— Indigenous women and girls.”

—Jana L. Walker, Cherokee and Delaware, and Christopher T. Foley Cherokee, Senior Attorneys, Indian Law Resource Center

A Human Rights Response to the MMIW Crisis in the United States

International Law and the Movement to End Violence Against Indigenous Women and to Address MMIW



By Jana L. Walker, *Cherokee and Delaware*, and Christopher T. Foley, *Cherokee*, Senior Attorneys, Indian Law Resource Center

UN Headquarters Geneva. / Photo courtesy of Indian Law Resource Center.

For more than a decade, the Indian Law Resource Center (the Center), and its various partnering organizations including the Alaska Native Women's Resource Center, the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center, and the National Congress of American Indians and its Task Force on Violence Against Women have used international advocacy, combined with domestic advocacy, as part of a strategy to restore safety to Indigenous women and girls. The Center's Safe Women, Strong Nations project works to end violence against Indigenous women and children and its devastating impacts on Native communities by raising awareness of this crisis regionally, nationally, and internationally, by strengthening the capacity of Indian and Alaska Native Nations and Indigenous women to prevent violence and restore safety and Tribal criminal authority and to preserve Tribal civil jurisdiction.

Under this strategy, we show that violence against Indigenous women and girls in the United States is not simply a domestic criminal law matter; it is also an international human rights issue. For example, the United States government's failure to respond to the crisis of violence against American Indian and Alaska Native women and girls and the issue of missing and murdered

Indigenous women (MMIW) is a human rights violation under international law.

Indigenous Women's Rights are Women's Rights and They Also are Human Rights

The United Nations (UN) recognizes that women's human rights include the right to be safe and live free from violence and discrimination. In fact, violence against women and girls is recognized as one of the most pervasive violations of human rights worldwide, a rights violation that occurs in all countries. The United Nations further recognizes that gender-based violence and discrimination significantly impairs women's enjoyment of all their other human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The UN and American Declarations on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples are significant affirmations of the rights of the Indigenous peoples, and these two Declarations establish human rights benchmarks for member countries to meet when they adopt laws or policies that will affect Indigenous peoples. Article 22 of the UN Declaration explicitly calls on countries to ensure that "indigenous women and children enjoy the full protection and guarantees against all forms of violence and discrimination." The UN Declaration also affirms

“Violence against indigenous peoples and individuals, particularly women, hinders or nullifies the enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms”

—American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Article VII

Indigenous peoples’ right of self-determination, which includes the right to maintain their legal institutions and to determine the responsibilities of individuals to their communities.

In 2016, the Organization of American States adopted the American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Article VII recognizes that “violence against indigenous peoples and individuals, particularly women, hinders or nullifies the enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms” and calls on member states to “adopt, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, the necessary measures to prevent and eradicate all forms of violence and discrimination, particularly against indigenous women and children.”

In 2016, the UN Human Rights Council—the United Nations body specifically tasked with promoting and protecting all human rights worldwide—adopted for the very first time an annual resolution on accelerating efforts to eliminate violence against women that explicitly also addresses violence against indigenous women and girls. (A/HR/RES/32/19). The resolution recalls the 2014 outcome document of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples in which member States agreed to intensify efforts, in cooperation with Indigenous peoples, to eliminate and prevent all forms of violence and discrimination against Indigenous peoples, particularly women and children. In the resolution, the Council also expressed deep concern that indigenous women and girls are disproportionately affected by violence and sexual violence and alarm at the high level of impunity regarding gender-based violence and killings of women, including Indigenous women and girls, noting the role of the criminal justice system in preventing and ending such impunity. The Council also noted how institutional and structural discrimination against Indigenous women

and girls further increases their vulnerability to violence. The Council underscored the duty of member States “to exercise due diligence to provide protection to women and girls, including indigenous women and girls, who have been subjected to or are at risk of violence.”

International experts recognize that Indigenous women often experience multiple forms of discrimination that can make them more vulnerable to other forms of violence such as human trafficking and the impacts of extractive industries. This heightened level of violence that Indigenous women face leads to so many of our sisters going missing or being murdered. But the MMIW crisis is not just about violent crime. It is also about the systematic discrimination that permeates the American criminal justice system, and how that discrimination leads law enforcement and prosecutors to let violent crimes turn into MMIW cases that remain unreported, uninvestigated, unprosecuted, and unsolved.

The UN Declaration states that indigenous women have the right to live lives free of all forms of violence and discrimination, but the MMIW crisis exists squarely at this intersection of violence and discrimination against Indigenous women. MMIW cases exist in large part because violent crimes against Indigenous women are not treated as seriously, if at all, as crimes against non-Indigenous women. This discriminatory practice and pattern is a human rights violation.

Indigenous women have the same fundamental freedoms, the same human rights, as all other people. Yet the overall rate of violence for Native women is 2/5 times higher than for any other group of women in the U.S.¹ More than 4 in 5 Indigenous women in the U.S. have

¹ <https://n8ve.net/i40Dw>



Quilt Block. / Photo courtesy of Indian Law Resource Center.

experienced violence. More than 56% have experienced sexual violence, and of these women, 96% report sexual violence by a non-indigenous perpetrator over whom Tribal governments lack full criminal jurisdiction.² On some reservations, the murder rate is 10 times the national average.³ And Alaska Natives suffer the highest rate of forcible sexual assault in the entire country.⁴

We must not allow Native women to continue to endure these terrible rates of violence and the corresponding lower rates of enforcement, prosecution, and punishment of their abusers, just because they are Indigenous and have been assaulted on an Indian reservation or in an Alaska Native village. Discriminatory legal barriers that persist in the United States that affect the safety of Native women must be removed. United States law must move forward, it must meet its obligations under international human rights law, and it must protect

all women everywhere from all forms of violence and discrimination including the most vulnerable—Indigenous women and girls.

The United Nations was established in 1945, and its Charter states that the institution was founded, in part, to “reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women...” And as international human rights law has developed over time, the United Nations has evolved to respond directly to issues just like MMIW—violations of human rights, violations of women’s rights, and now violations of indigenous women’s rights. But institutions rarely act without pressure, so it is up to us to speak, to write, to advocate, to make sure that the UN and OAS continue to press the United States and other countries to meet their obligations to protect Indigenous women’s human rights.

² <https://n8ve.net/gz90y>
³ <https://n8ve.net/cD47D>
⁴ <https://n8ve.net/HbO0L>



STRONGHEARTS NATIVE HELPLINE

“In cases of intimate partner violence, StrongHearts Native Helpline is an invaluable preventative tool in the movement to end the epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous relatives. Sometimes the availability of a Native-centered resource like StrongHearts Native Helpline is the difference between a relative seeking safety or going missing.”

- Lori Jump, Ojibwe,
StrongHearts Native
Helpline Director



Centuries of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives

How Domestic and Sexual Violence Intersects with MMIR Native-Centered Resources

By Ericca “CC” Hovie, *Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians*, Communications Manager, StrongHearts Native Helpline



Native American cultures, languages, lands, and lives were all systematically and forcibly taken through colonization. Our ancestors endured genocide and assimilation for more than five centuries. Today, there is ample evidence that genocide still occurs through the inhumane conditions on reservations, the jurisdictional issues that prevent the prosecution of non-Native perpetrators on Tribal lands, and ignoring the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives (MMIR) crisis.

The Connection to Domestic Violence and Sexual Violence

Domestic violence isn't a Native American tradition; it is a symptom of colonization that continues to this day.

Through colonization, Native women were devalued by non-Native people. They were degraded, attacked and raped—acts that still occur at alarming rates today. Tribal communities continue to experience disproportionate levels of rape and sexual assault, largely committed by non-Native perpetrators. Native women are sexualized in the media—in costumes, Native American imagery and caricatures, and movies. Native women and men still struggle from the effects of colonization, marginalization and assimilation, and our shared trauma. Over half of Native women, in particular, have been physically abused by an intimate partner.¹

StrongHearts Native Helpline understands the issues of MMIR are related to domestic, dating, and sexual violence. We understand that missing and murdered victims can be children, elders, Two-Spirit, men, and those with disabilities. This crisis affects all of our relatives. Survivors deserve justice.

Research² shows that women are more likely to be killed by an intimate partner (spouse, boyfriend, same-sex partner, or ex-partner) than by anyone else.³ Over 84 percent of Native women have experienced violence in their lifetime. Nationally, across all racial and ethnic groups, approximately two out of five female murder victims are killed by an intimate partner.⁴ Homicide is a leading cause of death for American Indian and Alaska Native women.⁵ Many killings linked to domestic

1 Rosay, André B., “Violence Against American Indian and Alaska Native Women and Men,” *NIJ Journal* 277 (2016): 38-45, available at <http://nij.gov/journals/277/Pages/violence-againstamerican-indians-alaska-Natives.aspx>. Accessed November 2021.

2 Shannan Catalano, Ph.D., BJS Statistician. “Intimate Partner Violence: Attributes of Victimization, 1993–2011” U.S. Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs Bureau of Justice Statistics. November 2013. <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/ipvav9311.pdf> Accessed November 2021.

3 “When Men Murder Women”. Violence Policy Center, 2021. <https://vpc.org/when-men-murder-women/> Accessed November 2021.

4 Cooper, Alexia and Smith, Erica L., BJS Statisticians. “Patterns & Trends Homicide Trends in the United States, 1980-2008 Annual Rates for 2009 and 2010”. U.S. Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs Bureau of Justice Statistics. November 2011, NCJ 236018 BJS. <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/htus8008.pdf>. Accessed November 2021.

5 “When Men Murder Women”. Violence Policy Center, 2021. <https://vpc.org/when-men-murder-women/>

violence occur right after recent breakups or during separations. Leaving an abusive relationship is the most dangerous time for a victim of domestic violence.

“In cases of intimate partner violence, StrongHearts Native Helpline is an invaluable preventative tool in the movement to end the epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous relatives,” said Lori Jump (Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians), Director, StrongHearts Native Helpline. “Sometimes the availability of a Native-centered resource like StrongHearts Native Helpline is the difference between a relative seeking safety or going missing.”

Complicated legal systems, jurisdictional confusion, and lack of resources also leave many Native American and Alaska Native victims of violence and their families without support or justice. Whether the violence is coming from inside the home, or from strangers living near Tribal communities or in urban centers, meaningful action must be taken to prevent more Native women from going missing or being murdered.

Prevention

One way to address these issues is through culturally-appropriate domestic and sexual violence advocacy. We need services that approach healing from an Indigenous perspective – where victim-survivors feel understood and where their unique needs as Native people can be met.

Created by and built to serve Tribal communities across the United States, StrongHearts Native Helpline is here to answer that call. It is a culturally-appropriate, anonymous, confidential and free service dedicated to serving Native American and Alaska Native survivors and concerned family members and friends affected by domestic, dating and sexual violence.

Advocates are available 24/7 by texting or calling 1-844-7NATIVE (762-8483) or via online chat at strongheartshelpline.org. Advocates can provide lifesaving tools and immediate support to enable survivors to find safety and live lives free of abuse.

vpc.org/when-men-murder-women/ Accessed November 2021.



The graphic features the StrongHearts Native Helpline logo in the top left corner, which includes a turtle icon and the text "STRONGHEARTS Native Helpline". The main text reads: "Follow us on social media to learn more about our work as we envision a return to our traditional lifeways." Below this text is a close-up image of a hand holding a smartphone. At the bottom left, there are icons for Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube. At the bottom right, the phone number "1-844-7NATIVE" and the website "strongheartshelpline.org" are displayed.

Follow StrongHearts on social media:

- Facebook: fb.com/strongheartsdv
- Instagram: strongheartsdv
- Twitter: @strongheartsdv



VIOLENCE IS NOT OUR TRADITION

TAKE ACTION NOW

Access Tribal resources

Request technical assistance

**Join mailing list to organize,
receive updates, & action alerts**

**Connect with our work at
niwrc.org**

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OF NATIVE SOVEREIGNTY AND SAFETY FOR NATIVE WOMEN

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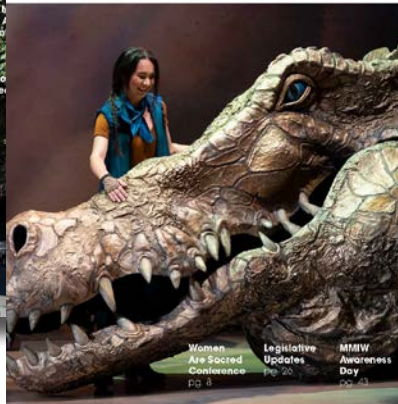


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**“A Nation is not conquered until the hearts
of its women are on the ground. Then it is
finished, no matter how brave its warriors
or how strong their weapons.”
-Cheyenne proverb**



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