

Understanding the Crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous People



By the MMIWG2S Alaska Working Group
Hosted by Senator Donny Olson
Alaska State Capitol Lunch & Learn
February 6, 2024



About MMIWG2S Working Group

The Missing, Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two Spirit (MMWIG2S) Alaska Working Group is an Indigenous Peoples-led statewide working group supported by partner organizations: Alaska Native Women's Resource Center, Alaska Native Justice Center, Alaska Native Heritage Center, Data for Indigenous Justice, and Native Movement. Members began meeting in 2018 and have continued to meet weekly in effort to have shared communications, strategy, actions, and community building to address this crisis in our state.

What We Do

The MMIWG2S Alaska Working Group works in collaboration to share initiatives that impacts MMIWG2S/MMIP work, share and create strategies for change, and host healing centered community events. With partnership from statewide organizations, we leverage our collective resources and skills to analyze local, state, and federal policies, have a unified voice on advocacy, and create meaningful out-facing events for the community. Across our organizations we are able to support this work group administratively, through a policy subcommittee, community organizers, cultural education, research and data, and communications. As Indigenous peoples leading the change we want to see, we are rooted in our shared values and commitment to the safety and wellbeing of our people.



MMIP/MMIWG2S Statistics

2021 Alaska Baseline Report - “We are Calling to You” from Data for Indigenous Justice

- 229 cases of MMIWG (149 missing/80 murdered)
- These are baseline numbers

2018 Urban Indian Health Institute Report

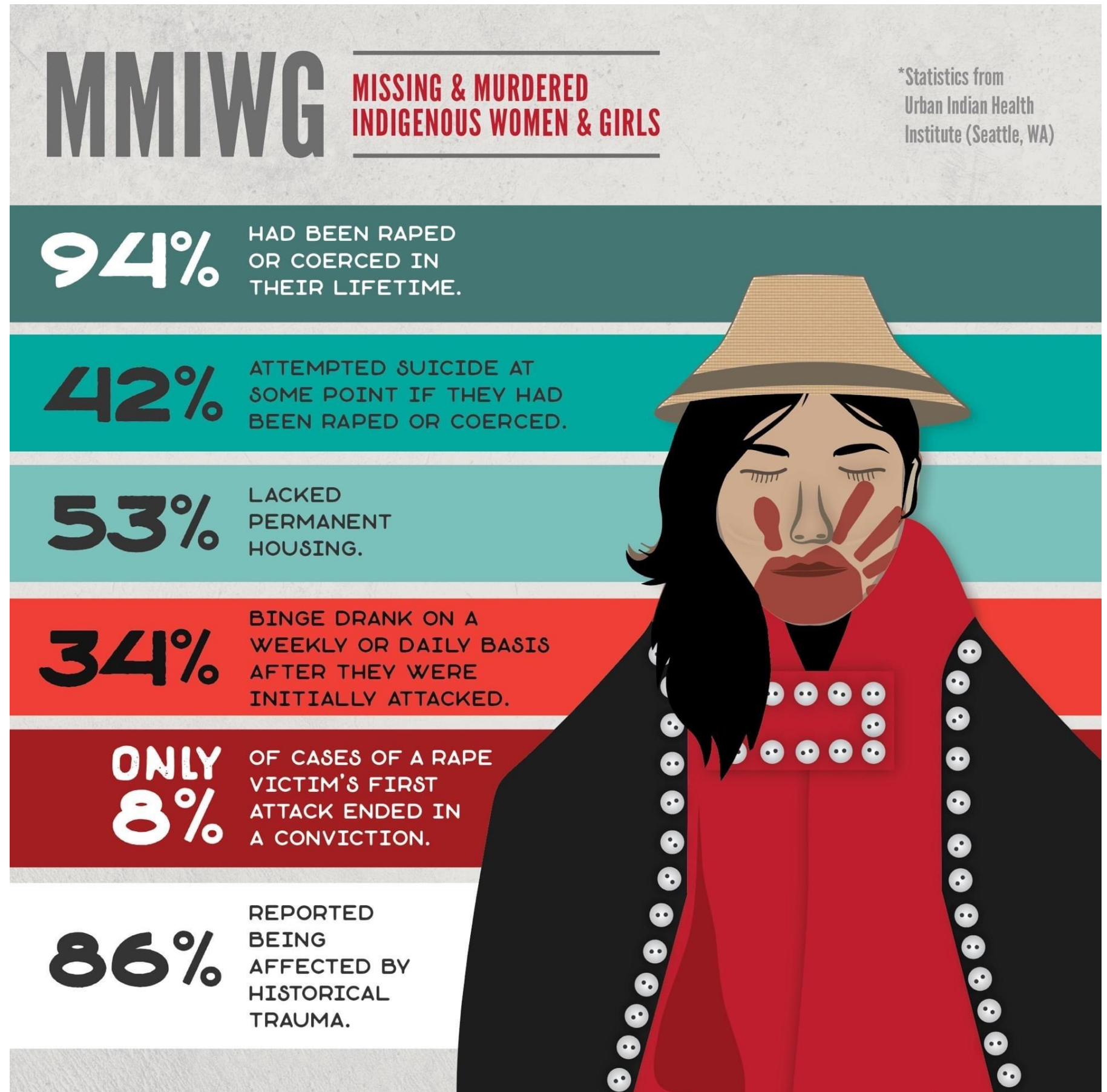
- Alaska had the 4th highest MMIP cases by state
- Anchorage had the 3rd highest MMIP cases by city
- Anchorage ranked in the top five cities with the highest number of cases not in law enforcement data.

NAMUS Monthly MMIP Update

- <https://namus.nij.ojp.gov/missing-indigenous-persons>
- Counted 292 Unresolved Missing Indigenous Persons Cases in 2021
- Murder is the third leading cause of death among American Indian/Alaska Native Women (UIHI)
- While women and girls are the primary victims of violence and human trafficking among Native Americans, they are not alone. People of all ages are victims of these horrific crimes, including men, boys, infants, and the elderly. In fact, 82% of indigenous men are victims of violence in their lifetime and Native children are more likely to experience trauma and abuse than their non-Native peers. When educating yourself about the struggles of Native Americans, it's important to recognize and remember *all* victims of these crimes. (CRS MMIP Research and Native Hope)



Disproportionality of Victimization for Alaska Native People



Disproportionality of Victimization - Data tells a story

- 80% of Alaska Native/American Indian (AN/AI) women will experience violence in their lifetimes - Rosay, 2016
- 55.6% of Alaska's sexual assault victims are AN/AI people - DPS 2018
- AN/AI people twice as likely to be victims of homicide - AJiC 2020
- Alaska Natives and American Indians (ANAI) represent around 19% of the state's population, yet statewide nearly 70% of the children in foster care are AN/AI as of December 2023. (<https://dfcs.alaska.gov/ocs/Pages/statistics/default.aspx>)
- 40% Incarceration Rate - Alaska Native men and women are more likely to be arrested than any other race in Alaska. From a national perspective, AI/AN are more likely to be arrested than any other race. (Prison Policy Initiative 2021 <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/profiles/AK.html>)
- An overwhelming number of sex offense cases reported in Alaska are not prosecuted – barely 50% were accepted for prosecution from 2018-2019. - ACJC 2020
- AN/AI Youth are 5x more likely to be trafficked in Alaska among homeless youth. (Murphy, L. (2016). Multi-city study on human trafficking and homeless youth: preliminary site report. Loyola University New Orleans Modern Slavery Research Project.



What Brought Us To This Point?

Why Are Indigenous People Going Missing And Being Murdered At Such High Rates?



“Kill the Indian in him, and save the man.”

- U.S. cavalry captain Richard Henry Pratt

This was the mindset under which the U.S. Government forced tens of thousands Alaska Native and American Indian children to attend assimilation boarding schools.



Boarding Schools and MMIWG

Destruction of identity, inward and outward

- Boarding schools were meant to destroy the way Native peoples not only see ourselves, but how society sees us as “less than” or “sub human”

Sexual Abuse as Institutional

- Levels of civilization of Alaska Native children (societal worth) made sexual abuse permissible, leading to a high percentage of abuse within these schools
- Boarding schools were also a means for resource extraction, which led to a large amount of sexual abuse of Native women

Lasting Effects

- According to several studies, the children of a parent who has been sexually abused are more likely to be the target for abuse, becoming a cycle that has become a cycle genetically embedded
- The factors of continued of negative societal identity and resource extraction within Native communities reveals how one of the many continued legacies of these institutions can be seen in the MMIWG crisis
- These factors can also explain why it has continued to be allowed by governmental entities which do not see Native peoples on the same level of personhood, leaving way for abuse to be unchecked.



Alaska District
Includes all of Alaska not comprised
in the Delta and Juvenile Districts.

Population	
Civilized Whites	107
" Natives	2145
" Eskimo	1026, 2101
Uncivilized	
" Juvenile (Alaska) 1701	
" Juvenile (Alaska) 2712-23330	
Total	27331
Total for Alaska	34,701
Very truly yours Arthur J. Jensen U.S. District Court	

Similar assimilation tactics of Alaska Natives were happening as well

- Eroded the cultural standard of respect and safety
- Subjected women and children to unimaginable violence that often resulted in ending or altering their lives, the lives of their families, and tribes' forever
- Attacks on Indian tribes began with the taking of lands
- The “Doctrine of Discovery”



Missing in Life

**Mothers
Grandmothers
Daughters
Aunties
Fathers
Grandfathers
Uncles
Cousins
Relatives
Friends
Neighbors
Alaskans**



Kuspuk of MMIWG by Amber Webb

Missing in Life



MURDER

The third-leading cause of death among American Indian and Alaska Native women and girls aged 10–24.ⁱⁱⁱ

We have now gathered and reclaimed a total of 229 cases of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Womxn and Girls in Alaska.

149 as missing status.

80 as murdered.



Missing in the Media

Our world revolves around media –

- connects us
- influences us
- educates us

We welcome it in many spaces of our lives – in our home, at work and play. It's on our phones, television, radio. Media has become the way we get our news, share important information, connect with our friends and family. It is also a way to send alerts when people go missing or law enforcement need help with collecting information. The media industry decides what to put out, deciding what the general public should see and shouldn't see.



*A content analysis regarding MMIWG revealed that more than **95% of the 934 articles reviewed were never covered by any national or international media.** [1]*



Missing in the Media

Urban Indian Health Institute examined 934 articles, which collectively covered 129 cases out of the 506 represented in the study.

- One-quarter of the total number of cases were covered by local, regional, or national media.
- Less than one-fifth of the total number of cases were covered more than once (14%),
- less than one-tenth were covered more than three times (7%), and
- less than 5% of cases were covered more than five times.
- The top ten cases that received the most coverage comprised 62% of all coverage, and 47% of coverage was regarding just one case.
- Nearly all of the articles UIHI surveyed (91%) regarded a murder case, and 83% of the cases covered by media were murder cases. There were 27 articles printed in national or international media, covering 21 cases.



Missing in the Data

- A report by the Urban Indian Health Institute identifies 506 urban missing and murdered indigenous women & girls.
- Researchers also revealed significant challenges in collecting data on the total number of missing or murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives residing off-reservation and outside rural villages

“We owe it to these women and girls to fully identify the scope of the problem,” Lucchesi said. “What we found in our research was that in some cases law enforcement agencies didn’t even have records on file to consult, they were simply going off what they could remember of past cases. This is unacceptable.”



MISSING AND MURDERED *INDIGENOUS* WOMEN & GIRLS

A snapshot of data from 71 urban cities in the United States

*This report contains strong language about violence against American Indian and Alaska Native women.

Missing in the Data

The lack of tracking, quality data, and reporting means there is a scarce amount of available data for Tribes and Indigenous communities to advocate for and have access to resources.

Through research methods outside of FOIA requests (government missing persons databases, news reports, social media and advocacy sites, direct contact with families and community members who volunteered info), UIHI found 153 cases that were not in law enforcement records.

The 'Invisible 153' represent a sliver and a window into those who have gone missing from our communities and data for far too long.



Missing in the Data

We Are Calling to You: Alaska's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Womxn and Girls Crisis was released by Data for Indigenous Justice in February 2021. This report specific to Alaska identified 229 MMIWG cases in Alaska through the research and collection of their own.

Additionally, DIJ identified various obstacles and barriers to collecting data including:

- **Jurisdiction** in Alaska is a multi-dimensional web that, instead of creating multiple layers of secure networks for families and tribes, results in people falling through endless gaps.
- **Protocol Variation** across the state, varying information on process, protocol, and services is unclear.
- **Lack of Centralization & Digitization of Data** leads to missing data but also means in many cases reports cannot even be generated at a community or agency level. The systems also do not connect or speak to each other.



MMIWG2S/MMIP Successes

State Policies:

- Four new designated MMIP Investigators
- One MMIP AAG at Dept of Law
- State of Alaska MMIP Council - which is now a working group under DPS
- VPSO legislation and funding increased

Federal Policies:

- Passage of Savanna's Act
- Passage of Not Invisible Act
- VAWA Reauthorization

Awareness & Healing:

- Annual Heartbeat of the Drums and 5K Run/Walk
- Multiple Awareness Events & Presentations
- Self Defense Classes
- Resources and Building Connections Across Alaska

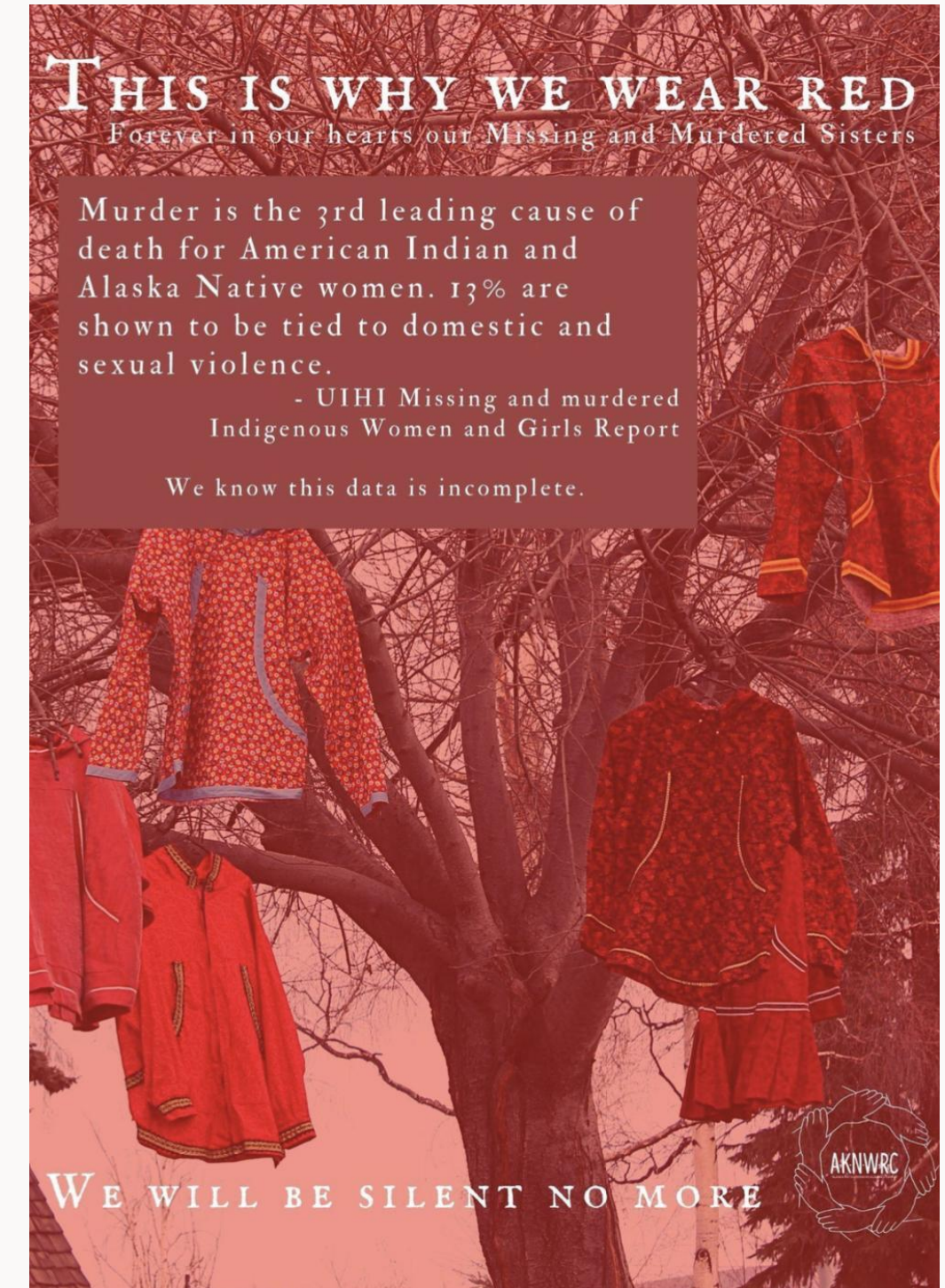


Resources for Your Community

The organizations that participate in the MMIWG2S Alaska come to this work from different areas of practice. Not all our organizations are direct services providers to individuals and their families. In order to provide further reach to individuals and families seeking services and resources, we have compiled this document which includes resources for crisis intervention, emergency shelter, direct victim-survivor service providers, and other kinds of services that may aid in healing. Note this is not a comprehensive list of all survivor services in Alaska.

MMIWG2S AK Working Group Resource List

This is Why We Wear Red – MMIWG An Action Plan For Native Communities



Standing Together For Action

We recognize the work that organizations, communities, Tribes, and others all across Alaska, the country and the world.

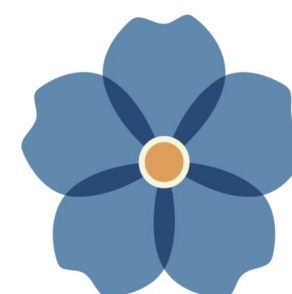
We do not stand alone.

We do not do this work alone.

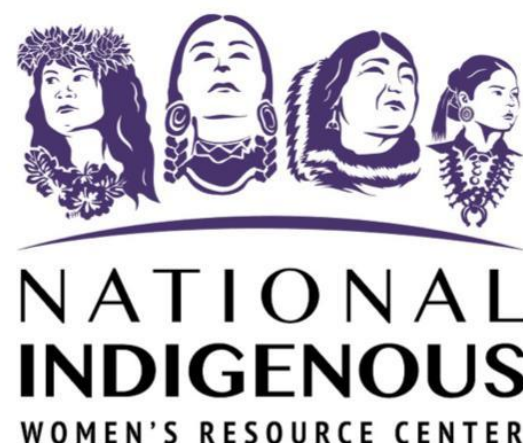
We need everyone at the table to keep people safe.



Missing & Murdered
Indigenous People



VICTIMS FOR
JUSTICE



National
Congress of
American
Indians



Urban Indian
Health Institute
A Division of the Seattle Indian Health Board

MMIWG2S Working Group



Visit our websites for more information

www.alaskanative.net

www.anjc.org

www.aknwrc.org

www.dataforindigenousjustice.com

www.nativemovement.org



Follow MMIWG2S Alaska
on Facebook and Instagram



Gunalchéesh - Háw'aa – Quayana

Mahsi'Choo - Baasee' - Maasee'

Dogedinh - Thank you

