

MMIWG2S Alaska Working Group



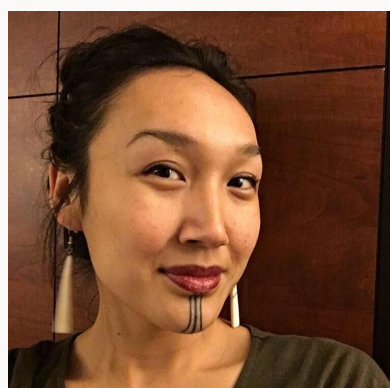
Presentation & Discussion on MMIWG2S/MMIP in Alaska
House Tribal Affairs Committee
March 22, 2023



Workgroup Members



Debra Dzijuksuk O'Gara is Tlingit, Yupik, Irish and raven from the Teeyhitaan clan and the Cedar Bark House of Wrangell, is an Assistant Professor in the Tribal Governance Department of the Rural and Community Development College. She has worked in the legal field for 32 years primarily for several Northwest Tribes in Washington and the Tlingit & Haida Tribes in Southeast Alaska. Since 2007 she has helped to build and developed the Tlingit & Haida Court first as a Magistrate, then the elected Chief Justice, the Presiding Justice and now a Pro Tem Judicial Officer. Most recently she has also worked for the Alaska Native Women's Resource Center as the Senior Policy Specialist on domestic violence and sexual assault issues.



Charlene is Iñupiaq, her family is from White Mountain and Golovin, AK. She is mother to Evan Lukluan. Charlene has served in many spaces as an advocate for Indigenous womxn, Indigenous sovereignty, climate justice and Indigenous rights to health and wellbeing. Charlene is a lifelong learner in both her cultural traditions and decolonizing academia. She earned her B.A in American Ethnic Studies with a minor in Gender, Women & Sexuality Studies, an M.A in Alaska Native Studies and Rural Development, and a PhD in Indigenous Studies. Charlene gratefully resides in Anchorage on the territories of the Dena'ina peoples. Here she has taught the Iñupiaq language and is part of Kingikmuit dance group with her son son.



Emily Edenshaw (Yup'ik/Iñupiaq) is the President and CEO of the Alaska Native Heritage Center (ANHC), a renowned living cultural center located in Anchorage, Alaska, with roots in Emmonak, Alaska. In addition to her role at ANHC, Emily serves on several boards and commissions, including the Alaska Travel Industry Association, the Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness, Alaska Humanities Forum, and Native Americans in Philanthropy. She is a fifth-year Ph.D. student in Indigenous Studies at UAF, researching Alaska Native Boarding School experiences and healing strategies related to these experiences, and holds an Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA) degree in Strategic Leadership from Alaska Pacific University and a Bachelor's degree in Journalism and Public Communications from UAA. She has also worked for Central Council Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, First Alaskans Institute, VICE Media, The National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition, and Southcentral Foundation.



Kendra (Kahtle-et) Kloster was born in the beautiful community of Wrangell, Alaska, and spent most of her childhood in Juneau, and is currently raising her three children on Dena'ina lands in Anchorage. Kendra is Tlingit Raven/Kiks.a'di of the Sun House and is a tribal citizen of the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska. She graduated from Fort Lewis College with a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration and a minor in Literature and obtained her Masters Degree in Public Administration & Policy Analysis from University of Alaska Anchorage. Kendra worked at the Office of Senator Ted Stevens, spent ten years as a staff member at the Alaska State Legislature, Executive Director for Native Peoples Action, and currently Co-Director for Law & Policy at the AK Native Women's Resource Center.

Workgroup Members



Kelsey Potdevin serves as Alaska Native Justice Center's Education and Outreach Manager. Kelsey is a Tribal citizen of the Native Village of Tanana and a Doyon Corporation shareholder. Kelsey was raised in Juneau, Alaska and has lived most of her life in the state. She has lived and worked in Anchorage, Alaska since 2014.



Alex was born in Anchorage and grew up in Fairbanks. He is of Alutiiq descent and a tribal citizen of Tangirnaq Native Village, and a shareholder of Natives of Kodiak, Koniag Incorporated and CIRI. He is a licensed attorney in Alaska, California, and several tribal jurisdictions. Alex is the Legal and Policy Director at the Alaska Native Justice Center where he helps set and direct the legal and policy agenda to further ANJC's mission of justice for Alaska Native people. He also provides training and technical assistance to support tribal justice initiatives.



Violet is Koyukon Athabaskan and Lingit, her family is from Yakutat and Ruby/Galena, AK. She is of the Eagle moiety, Teikweidì Clan - Eagle/Brown Bear. Her Lingit name is Aandayeen meaning "Looking towards the village." She is mother to three baby bears, Amiah, Camden and Carver. Her parents are Raymond Sensmeier and Eva Olin Sensmeier. She was born and raised in Southeast Alaska and now lives on the territories of the Dena'ina peoples. She is currently attending the Rural Human Services Program through UAF. She is a proud member of the Mt.St.Elias Dance Group. She loves to create jewelry and learned from her Grandmother, Lillian Olin how to bead. She loves to use her photography skills to help bring awareness to pressing issues facing indigenous peoples across the states. In her spare time you will find her out running or most likely at a local bead store.



Autumn Cantu is originally from Ruby, Alaska. She currently serves as the Communications Coordinator for the MMIWG2S Working Group. Her parents are Francis Captain Sr. and Deanna Houlton. Her grandparents are Martha Wright, the late Eugene Floyd Davis on her mother's side, and the late Eleanor Captain and the late William (Billy) Captain Sr. on her father's side. Autumn spends her free time with her family, enjoying the outdoors and reading as much as possible. Autumn is attending the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) for her Bachelor's degree in Social Work and plans to go for her Master's degree in Social Work as well. She has experience as a Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (TVR) Technician, Strategic Prevention Framework Partnerships for Success (SPF-PFS) Project Director, and a Suicide Prevention Coordinator at Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC), where she worked for 5 years.

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.



MMIWG2S Working Group Advocacy

The Working Group provides education, gathers and shares information on MMIP/MMIWG2S to ensure policy makers understand different strategies to address this issue that affects so many Alaskan families.

In order to really address the crisis of MMIWG2S/MMIP we must ensure we are addressing the interconnected issues related to public safety reforms and find ways to reduce violence.

Through this presentation you will get a background of the crisis, we will share how, when and where we do our work to address MMIWG2S/MMIP, and provide specific recommendations which have come from our communities across the state and have been identified as gaps that need action now.



The MMIWG Red Hand

A red hand over the mouth has become the symbol of a growing movement, the MMIWG movement. It stands for all the missing sisters whose voices are not heard. It stands for the silence of the media and law enforcement in the midst of this crisis. It stands for the oppression and subjugation of Native women who are now rising up to say **#NoMoreStolenSisters**.



Artwork by Sarah Whalen Lunn



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.

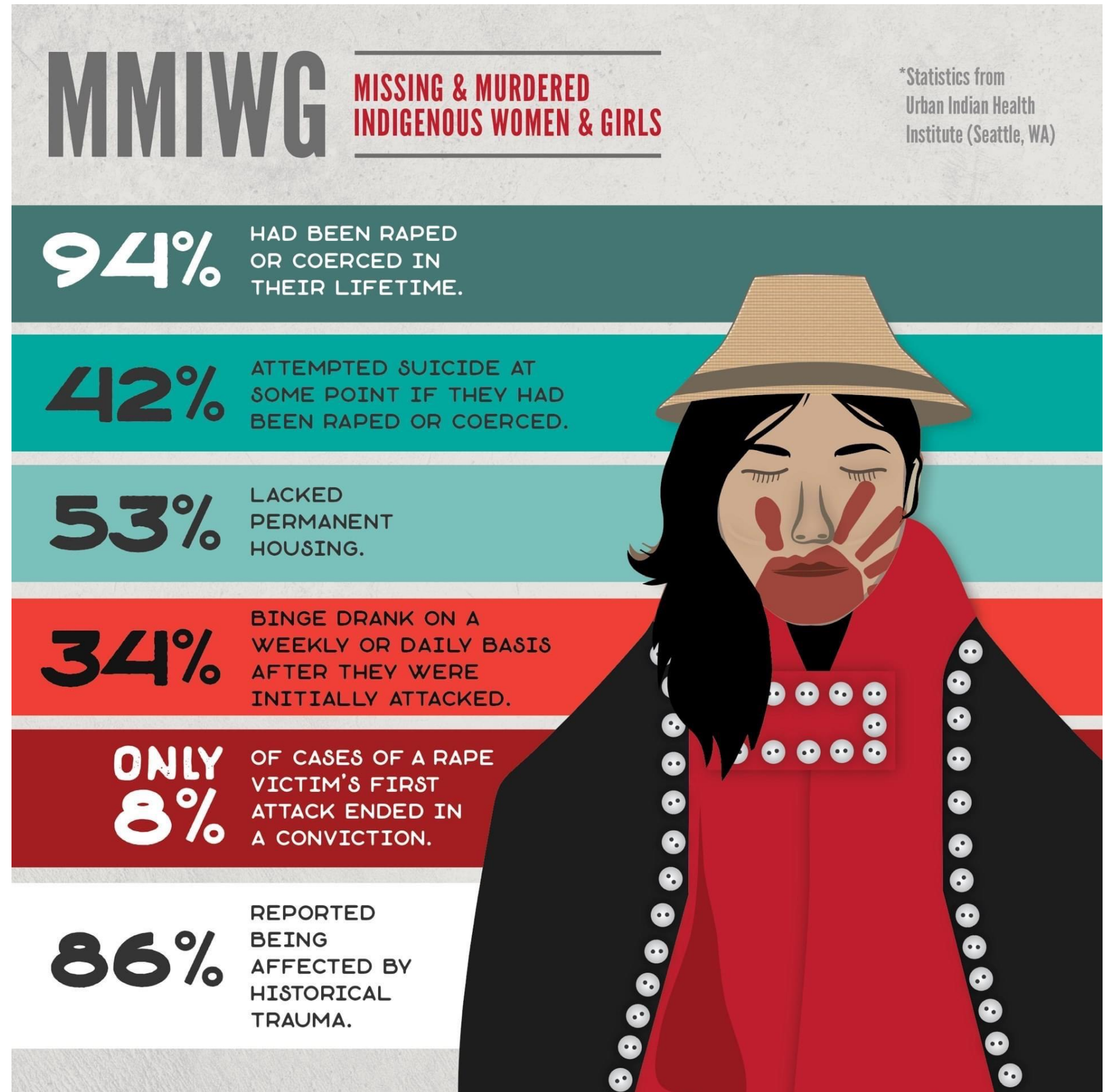
Population	
Civilized Whites	107
" Natives	2145
" Eskimo	1026, 2101
Uncivilized	
" Juvenile (Alaska) 1701	
" Juvenile (Alaska) 5712-23330	
Total	27331
Total for Alaska	34,701
Very truly yours Arthur J. Jensen U.S. District Court	

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
- An overwhelming number of sex offense cases reported in Alaska are not prosecuted – barely 50% accepted for prosecution from 2018-2019. - ACJC 2020
- Alaska Natives and American Indians (ANAI) represent around 19% of the state's population, yet statewide 60% of the children in foster care are ANAI.
- Suicide rate 4x the national average
- 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.
- AN/AI Youth are over 2x more likely to experience physical dating violence in high school compared to white peers.
- AN/AI Youth are 5x more likely to be trafficked in Alaska among homeless youth.



Disproportionality of Victimization for Alaska Native 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)



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 Life



5,712

cases of MMIWG
were reported
in 2016

ONLY 116

of them were logged
in DOJ database

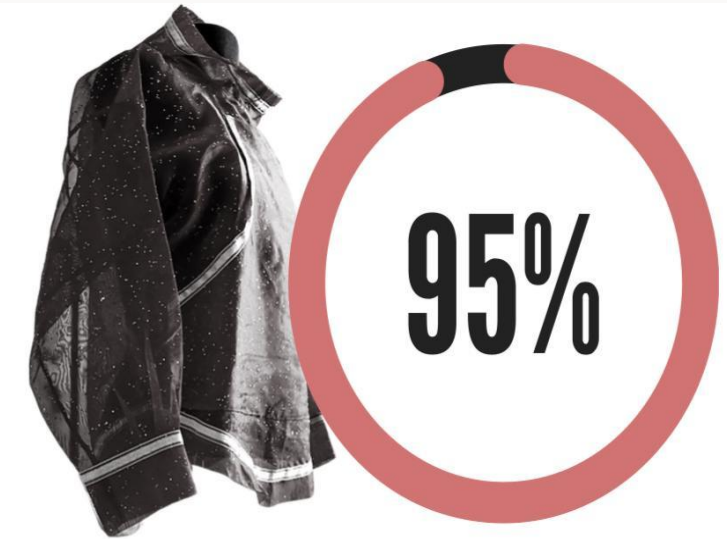


Missing in the Media

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

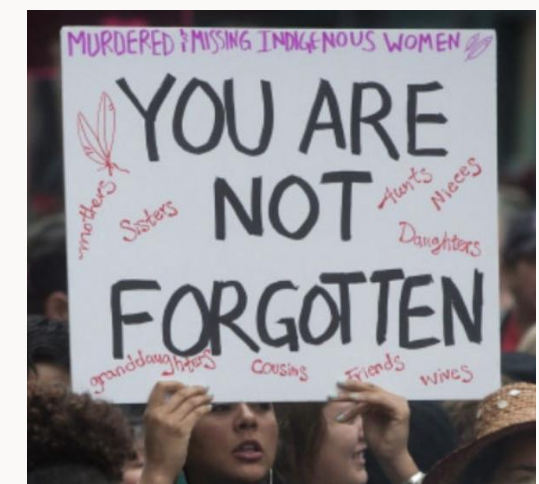
Urban Indian Health Institute examined 934 articles, which collectively covered 129 cases out of the 506 represented in the study.

- 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 Media

In the UIHI Report – more than 95% of the cases in the study were never covered by national or international media.



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.



Missing in the Data

Seven Key Items to Address for Date:

1. Establish a Data Codebook Across Agencies to Ensure Consistency in Data Collection and Reporting.
2. Mandate NamUs Entry
3. Improve Oversight of Investigations
4. Establish Tribal Review Boards
5. Mandate Cultural Training for Law Enforcement
6. Articulate Clear System Responsibilities in Alaska for Addressing MMIWG
7. Provide Case Support for Families and Communities



*Alaska
Native/American
Indian people become
invisible in data sets*



MMIWG2S Working Group Successes

The work group advocates for policy changes - here are some recent approved actions:

State Policies:

- Two new designated MMIP Investigators
- State of Alaska MMIP Council
- VPSO legislation and funding increased in 2022

Awareness & Healing:

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

Federal Policies:

- Passage of Savanna's Act
- Passage of Not Invisible Act - Tami Jerue and Michelle Demmert sit on NIA Commission
- VAWA Reauthorization



MMIWG2S Advocacy for Policy

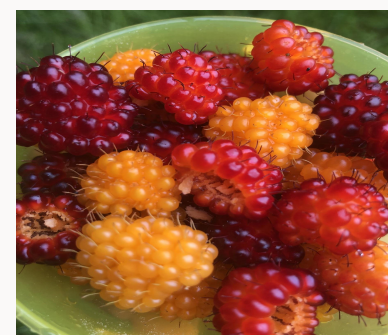
The MMIWG2S Working Group has been working with legislators over the years on MMIP Bills. The first bill was filed in 2020, and since then we have been drafting more comprehensive language.

House Bill 277: Missing/Murdered Indigenous Women; Report was introduced in 2020

Senate Bill 211 Missing/Murdered Indigenous Women; Report was introduced in 2022.

We have also supported legislation that will increase safety for our communities including the VPSO bill and processing of rape kits that passed in 2022.

We continue to advocate for the need to overhaul our outdated 911 system, increase VPSOs in communities across the state, increase broadband capabilities in rural Alaska, increase cooperation with our Tribes and within own state agencies, and more.



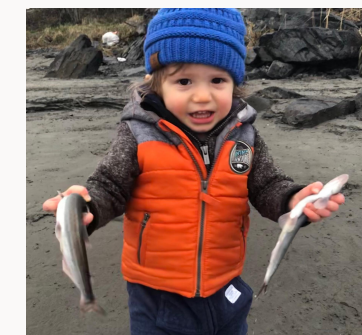
Recommendations for Operating Budget

- MMIP Attorney at Dept. of Law
- Continued expansion of MMIP Investigation Unit
- Data system improvements
- Funding for data collection on criminal justice investigation and prosecution
- Grant funding for Tribal Governments to respond to MMIP
- Mandatory Cultural Training led by Indigenous organizations
- Precinct funding and support for VPSO program
- Funding to support updating outdated 911 system



Recommendations for Legislative & Executive Branch Policies

- Require training from indigenous led organizations or contractors for all public safety officials (AST, local police, VPSO)
- Re-establish fatality review commission
- Establish annual non-competitive grant program for Tribes to address MMIP and Public Safety issues
- Require interagency cooperation
- Audits and reporting on law enforcement investigations
- Review Dept. of Law procedures for prosecution of cases involving murdered Indigenous people
- Review of case management by law enforcement
- Review of prosecution investigation, charging decisions and access to necessary resources for homicides; and review of judicial outcomes for homicides



Advocate for Change in Your Community

Every Alaskan deserves to feel safe in their home and walking around in their community.

Everyone has something to contribute.

Every Voice Matters.

We cannot make change alone – it takes all of us to come together to protect all our people across Alaska.

We need federal, state and tribal governments, non-profits, individuals and communities to work across all affiliations to make real change in Alaska.

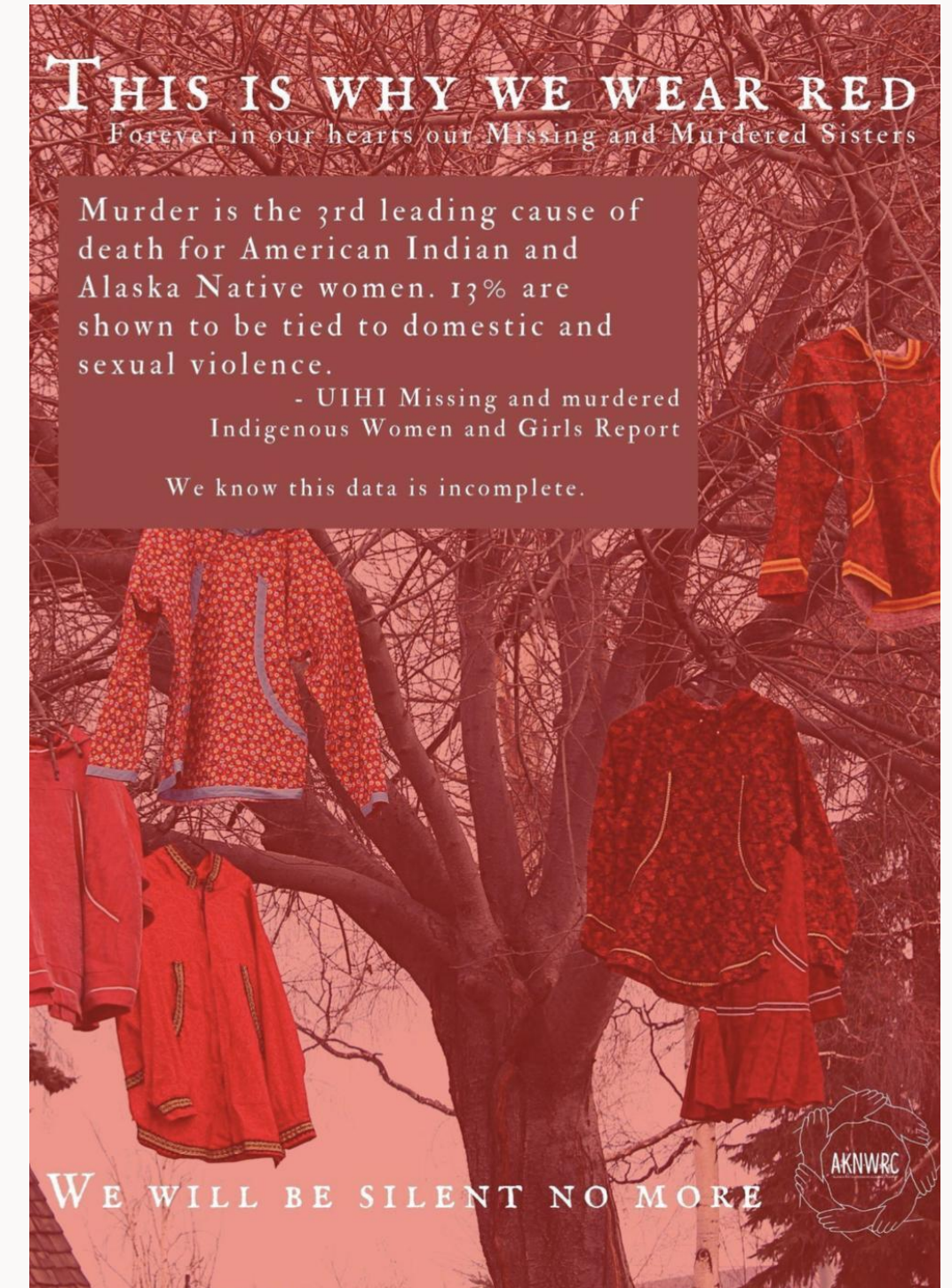


Resources for Your Community

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



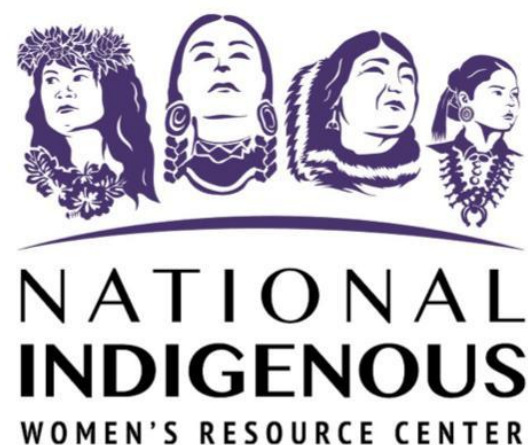
Standing Together For Action

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.



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

