

Yup'ik Intro, Hello, my name is Emily Edenshaw, and I am Yup'ik and Inupiaq. My family is from Emmonak, Alaska. My mother was the late Libby Wolff of Fairbanks, my father is John Neeley of Texas. My grandparents are the late John and Cecilia Sipary of St. Mary's Alaska, and Emmonak, Alaska.

Currently, I live and work on Dena'ina lands in Anchorage, Alaska. As the President and CEO of the Alaska Native Heritage Center, I am proud to lead the only statewide living cultural center in Alaska dedicated to preserving and strengthening all cultures and regions.

First, I want to acknowledge the Aak kwan and Taaku kwann people, the Indigenous people of this land, for their stewardship and leadership that runs thousands of years deep. As a guest on your lands, I thank you. I also want to express my gratitude to the Tribal Affairs Committee for hosting this hearing today.

My sisters, who are joining online today, and I are here to discuss missing, murdered, indigenous women, girls, and two-spirited people. This is a crisis that Indigenous communities across the nation faces daily, and we do this work for the thousands of Alaska Native women, girls, and their family members who have gone missing or have been murdered.

I know that this information may be triggering or sensitive for some, and I encourage you to take good care of yourselves by taking a walk, drinking water, meditating, or talking to someone. It is important to me that you are safe and well.

One of our Yup'ik values is to show up as our true selves, to be our whole selves in every space alongside our community.

To live in truth.

My truth is that my mother was murdered in 2020, and her killer is out there right now. Walking free. Unfortunately, her story and mine are not unique. According to the Alaska Native Women's Resource Center, four out of five American Indian and Alaska Native women and girls experience violence in their lifetimes. These are sobering and likely drastic underestimated statistics, skewed by

underreporting, misclassification and systemic racism. So many of our women and girls remain invisible to data systems, law enforcement, public policy, and mainstream media.

The Urban Indian Health Institute reports that Indigenous women and girls continue to be targets for violence, abduction, and homicide at rates 10 times the national average. Alaska currently ranks first in the nation with the highest rate of females murdered by males, and Anchorage ranks third across the entire nation.

This is our home, these are our family members... and this is on our watch. This is unacceptable.

The work of Native Movement, Native Peoples Action, Data for Indigenous Justice, Alaska Native Justice Center, the Alaska Native Women's Resource Center, the Alaska native heritage center and other community organizations are beginning to build momentum across our state to better protect and understand the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. (MMIWG).

The MMIWG Alaska group was formed in 2018 and has since organized on a community level through vigils, virtual self-defense programs, monthly virtual gatherings and healing circles, and more. This group has also been building a statewide database, advocating for needed state and federal policy change, joining public safety commissions, and working to establish and nurture relationships with state and federal public safety agencies such as the Anchorage Police Department and Alaska State Troopers. This is hard work, but it is also heart work.

This MMIWG Alaska working group is rooted in healing and transparency and operates with direct guidance and feedback from our communities across Alaska.

As an example of our community work, just last week, we partnered with the Anchorage Opera to host the U.S. Premiere of Missing, an Indigenous-led Opera aimed to raise awareness of the missing and murdered crisis in our state and country. Over 700 people attended the opera, participated in healing circles, family activities, Alaska Native singing and dancing, and heard updates from the MMIWG Alaska working group. The most difficult part of the event was hearing the remarks from Scotty Johnson-Barr, who attended the opera in honor of his

daughter Ashley Johnson Barr- a 10-year-old Inupiaq girl who was murdered in Kotzebue, Alaska. Thank you to the state Legislature for honoring Ashley Johnson Bar every year on Ashley Johnson-Bar Day. We will always remember and honor her and the rest of our relatives who have gone missing or have been murdered.

Finally, I want the Tribal Affairs Committee to know that the MMIWG Workgroup does this work because the Alaska Native people, the first peoples of these lands, represent more than statistics.

We are mothers, daughters, granddaughters, grandmothers, sisters, relatives, and friends. We deserve and have the right to be safe from violence - and our loved ones who have been taken from us deserve Justice.

And the women and girls being targeted, hunted, and so often ignored don't exist in briefings, policy language, data, or media reports. They are fighting for their lives, fighting for their freedom, and fighting to be seen.

To bring resolution and change, the people who are already doing this work, many of whom are with you today, need to be included in the conversation spaces happening like this one today. I encourage you all to learn from the Indigenous people already doing this work on a tribal, local, state and national level. This is an incredible opportunity to establish and build strategic partnerships to bring an end to this crisis. It is also an incredible responsibility to support initiatives already doing this work in Alaska and Indian Country.

As a living cultural center, the Alaska Native Heritage Center is reflective of the needs of our community. Right now, our community needs us to be doing this work together.

Quyana again to the Tribal Affairs Committee for hosting this hearing today and for all of your individual work throughout the state. This is one step of many in the right direction toward justice and healing.

Quyanaqpak, thank you very much, for working to be part of the solution to this crisis for a better future for our loved ones across this state.

And now, let's begin our presentation.