

A Resolution Regarding Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons

Mountain Sky Conference United Women in Faith

Background

Native American Indian and Alaska Native people, particularly women, are disproportionately likely to experience violence, murder, or go missing from their homes. This disproportionate risk has resulted a crisis identified as Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons (MMIP) and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW).

The MMIP crisis reflects underlying historic and economic factors that affect indigenous communities, including:

- Insufficient tribal law enforcement resources and funding;
- A lack of cultural understanding among non-tribal law enforcement agencies;
- Lack of non-tribal and tribal collaboration;
- A shortage of personnel on historic tribal lands to investigate MMIP;
- Substance abuse issues;
- Historic lack of trust of non-tribal entities; and
- The receipt of inequitable funding due to different tribal status by the federal government.

Resolution

Whereas, according to a 2016 study commissioned by the Department of Justice's (DOJ) National Institute of Justice (NIJ), more than 4 in 5 (84.3 percent) American Indian and Alaska Native women experienced violence in their lifetime, with 56.1 percent reflecting cases of sexual violence and 55 percent being from intimate partner violence;

Whereas, according to 2017 data, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found homicide was the sixth-leading cause of death for American Indian and Alaska Native women and girls under 44 years of age, with murder rates more than 10 times the national average;

Whereas, approximately 1,500 American Indian and Alaska Native missing persons have been entered into the National Crime Information Center index throughout the United States, and approximately 2,700 cases of murder and nonnegligent homicide offenses have been reported to the Federal Government's Uniform Crime Reporting Program;

Whereas, according to a 2020 joint study completed by the State of Hawai'i and the Hawai'i State Commission on the Status of Women, 64 percent of human trafficking victims in Hawai'i identified as at least part Native Hawaiian;

Whereas the current local, State, and Federal funding available in Indian country is inadequate to address the basic, emergency, and long-term service needs of victims and negatively impacts Tribal governments' ability to distribute lifesaving resources;

Whereas, in 2019, Operation Lady Justice was launched through Executive Order 13898 which established the Task Force on Missing and Murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives aimed at mitigating the missing and murdered Indigenous women (MMIW) crisis by improving the investigatory and prosecutorial capabilities of federal justice agencies and generating new guidelines for data sharing and law enforcement responses;

Whereas, in 2020, Savanna's Act (Public Law 116–165) and the Not Invisible Act (Public Law 116–166) were signed into law which initiated a joint commission between the Department of the Interior (DOI) and DOJ to combat violent crime within Tribal communities and develop new law enforcement protocols when investigating MMIW;

Whereas, in 2021, DOI created a Missing and Murdered Unit within their Bureau of Indian Affairs' Office of Justice Services to expand cross-departmental and interagency collaboration for the purposes of investigating cases of missing and murdered Indigenous people at the request of Tribal leadership.

Whereas, the only bill offered during the 118th Congress (2023-2024) is H. Res. 353, which expresses support for the designation of May 5, 2023 as the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. The resolution was introduced by Rep. Dan Newhouse (WA) on May 2, 2023, was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources and the

Committee on the Judiciary on May 2, and then referred to the Subcommittee on Indian and Insular Affairs on May 9, 2023. Not further action has occurred regarding this resolution.

Therefore, be it resolved; all levels of United Women in Faith are called to raise awareness regarding the MMIP crisis. Such actions that UWFaith will take include:

- Urging the National Office of UWFaith to host a presentation about MMIP for all members, using all available resources including the expertise of national directors, sister public policy and research organizations, and tribal representatives;
- Incorporating additional books into the United Women in Faith Reading Program addressing MMIP so that UWFaith members can learn more and become advocates for a coordinated federal, state, local and tribal response to the MMIP crisis;
- Hosting a session about the MMIP crisis at the 2026 UWFaith Assembly;
- Contacting Members of Congress (House of Representatives and Senate) to advocate for:
 - Funding sufficient tribal law enforcement personnel to ensure a timely response and adequate resources allocated for MMIP cases.
 - Funding for tribal courts and justice systems to provide the critical infrastructure to process and prosecute MMIP cases.
 - Funding for Bureau of Indian Affairs victim services advocates to provide direct services to victims and assistance for victims navigating complex bureaucratic systems.
 - Increased funding for mental and behavioral health services for survivors and their communities.
- Contacting the Office of the President and the Executive branch to urge an Executive Order to streamline emergency response communications across related federal agencies, including BIA and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

- Contacting state and federal agencies to advocate for the development and strengthening of MMIP state-level offices and other state-level MMIP initiatives. These efforts could include:
 - agreements to increase the response time of law enforcement agencies.
 - coordination and collaboration with survivor support services at the state and tribal level for survivors and their communities to receive the maximum amount of financial resources.
 - expansion of the AMBER Alert system for missing and abducted individuals. Several western states currently have implemented MMIP alert systems and state and federal agencies should work to incorporate these alerts across state lines into a federal alert system.

Considered and Approved, October 14, 2023, Billings, MT