

**Grassroots Organizations Working in the Areas of Missing or Murdered  
American Indians and Alaska Natives  
May 7, 2021**

DARYL FOX: Alaska Natives Tribal Grassroots Organizations Listening Session. Leidos is the contract support for the Task Force. We are very pleased you are joining us today. At this time I would like to turn the listening session over to Marcia Good, executive director of the Task Force, who will introduce our opening speaking and agenda. Marcia?

MARCIA GOOD: Thank you so much and welcome to everybody today. My name is Marcia Good and I am executive director of the Presidential Task Force on Missing and Murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives, also known as Operation Lady Justice [OLJ]. It is truly my honor today to introduce to you the Task Force member Bryan Newland. Bryan is the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs at the Department of Interior. He will begin our session today with opening remarks. Bryan?

BRYAN NEWLAND: Yes, thank you Marcia. And welcome [SPEAKING IN NATIVE LANGUAGE]. My name is Bryan Newland, I am a Bay Mills Indian Community Tribal citizen. We are a small Ojibwe band way up here on the northern border between Michigan and Canada, and I am really pleased to be here with you this afternoon as part of this listening session. I serve as the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs at the Department of the Interior and I first want to make sure that I acknowledge Secretary Haaland who cannot be with us today but I hope, as many of you know, that she is entirely invested in doing something meaningful to stem the tide of missing and murdered Indigenous persons across the United States and Canada and has elevated this work within the Department of the Interior and nationally and has ensured that all bureaus within the Department of the Interior and across the government through the White House Council on Native American Affairs are taking this work seriously. I also want to acknowledge Jennifer Van der Heide, who is a senior policy adviser to Secretary Haaland. She is joining us this afternoon in this listening session as well.

I want to express my gratitude for all of the speakers who will join us today for sharing your stories. I know that for many of you it is very difficult to speak on these topics. It can be painful and often triggering, and acknowledge that it takes a lot of courage to come forward and share your stories so that we can speak truth on these issues and drive our work forward. I also want to make sure that I acknowledge that the pandemic has made it difficult for us to do our work in an appropriate way, being on the ground in

person, hearing your stories while we look you in the eye, while you look us in the eye, and that oftentimes these remote listening sessions are really not accessible for some of our most vulnerable people across Indian Country where we lack broadband services, telephone connections, cellphone signals, running water, roads and all the infrastructure that so many Americans take for granted.

So we understand that this isn't the perfect venue or even really the appropriate venue, and we are doing the best we can with what we have to connect with you and hear your stories. I know that this has caused a lot of frustration for people across Indian Country who want to be fully engaged with us on this work, and I just want to apologize for that, and please know that our focus is on doing this work and getting it right moving forward. President Biden, Vice President Harris, the Attorney General, the Secretary of the Interior, Secretary of HHS [Health and Human Services], and so many others across the government take this work seriously. We know that what lies at the heart of our efforts on this are people with stories to tell and communities and families, and we carry your humanity with us to work every day and we are going to do our best going forward to get this right and to use the tools that we have so that we can connect with you. So I want to say miigwetch, thank you, for being here with us this afternoon virtually, sharing your stories and speaking truth to power in driving our work forward, and I look forward to hearing the stories you have to offer us today. Miigwetch, thank you. Marcia?

MARCIA GOOD: Thank you so much for those powerful and moving words. We really appreciate your presence here on the Task Force and in this session today. So just to sum up a little bit about our last year's work during the first year of the Task Force. We held about 25 different listening sessions and consultations, heard from Tribal leaders and families, grassroots organizers, community members, all across the Indian Nation. But today's session is specifically targeted for grassroots organizations working in American Indian and Alaska Native communities, and with American Indian and Alaska Native people wherever they may be located, and the issues surrounding missing or murdered cases. So today's session is being recorded and a video/audio transcript will be available on the OLJ website in several weeks.

So if we could look first at the next slide. We stated in the registration that we are going to call speakers in the order in which they registered. We have had a really great turnout, we have approximately 60 registrants who have indicated they wanted to speak today and about 400 attending to listen. So we put the list together in order as we promised, and it was sent out to all of the registered speakers yesterday so that you could see where you fell in the list. And this first slide shows the first approximately 20 registered speakers. We have had – several had to call in with other

plans for today but this will show you kind of the order in which you are. We will leave that up for just a minute so you can see this first slide. Now the next slide shows the second of our sets of speakers in the order in which they will be called. And then finally our third slide shows the last set of speakers. So as I noted if you registered as a speaker before this morning, you were sent an email with this list and in what order you were in so you could be prepared for today. OK. And if we can go back to our first slide speaker, it is important to note that we have not set a time limit on speakers. We want to hear from everybody who has something to say here today, we ask that you just be mindful of the number of speakers that we do have registered. But please note because of the large turnout of people who wish to speak if we do not get through the entire list of speakers today we will reconvene for the rest of the registered speakers on Monday, May 17 at 3 p.m. Eastern time.

It is our goal to hear everyone speak without a time limit, just be mindful of the number of people that we do have on our list and everyone who has been registered is going to be given the opportunity to speak. In addition as you can see here on the bottom of the slide, if you would, in addition to, or in lieu of, wish to submit written comments you can email them to [OperationLadyJustice@usdoj.gov](mailto:OperationLadyJustice@usdoj.gov). We do not have a time limit on those comments, we regularly get comments from folks across the country with suggestions, concerns and questions, so feel free to do that at any time. Again, if we don't get through all of our speakers today we will reconvene this session on May 17 at 3 p.m. OK. So we are now ready to listen to those who have registered to speak and what we will do is we will just go down through the list as our moderator noted. We need to know whether you are planning to engage your video or audio and video and then you will be allowed to go ahead and present at that time. So our first speaker is Gina Lopez. It takes just a moment for the line to be unmuted and for her to be moved over to speak. Gina Lopez, are you on?

GINA LOPEZ: I am.

MACIA GOOD: You may speak. Thank you so much for being here.

GINA LOPEZ: Thank you. Hello, I am Gina Lopez. I am a member of the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe in Towaoc, Colorado. I currently work for the Colorado Coalition Against Sexual Assault. I am the rural and Indigenous community specialist. But today I would like to speak with you all and share about a couple of really amazing grassroots work that I am involved in. I firstly want to lift up and talk about a multitribal, multidisciplinary coalition. It's unfunded, totally on the time and volunteer effort of the folks who are involved. It is called NAUHZCASA, which is the Navajo Apache Ute Hopi and Zuni Coalition Against Sexual Assault and Family Violence. This was founded over

10 years ago by nurses and midwives who had called attention to the lack of resources and support for victims of sexual violence. And in that time, the Tribal communities and nations represented has grown and so has the acknowledgement of further violences and violations that are also tied to the trauma and all of the unmet need for care around sexual violence. So we have included family violence, which is also domestic violence, and to just broaden that because we understand at a grassroots community level that the issues around violence have a ripple effect and they spread throughout our people and across communities regardless of Tribal nations and jurisdiction.

We also have been continuing to meet throughout COVID. My coalition has stepped up for me to facilitate and to hold on our platforms, virtual meetings, and we have continued, we have not missed a meeting throughout COVID and our attendance has dropped a lot. Before COVID we were meeting in person every month, every Tribal – every Tribal Nation identified in the coalition stepped up to post in-person meetings in their communities, and this varied from domestic violence, sexual violence programs within Tribal communities, law enforcement, Indian Health Services. And the providers involved are advocates, they are law enforcement, law enforcement advocates, health care providers, mental health practitioners, all of the folks identified in NAUHZCASA's understanding of this net of care, this network, that is necessary to wrap around survivors and their families, and the community with this understanding that it is all of our business, what happens to our peoples. I talk about NAUHZCASA first because NAUHZCASA though is understanding of missing and murdered as an issue, we call attention to the root causes and these root causes have – are varied across our Tribal – our Tribal Nations but we all share in the same unmet need for acknowledgement and respect and honor for what our people who are being met with violence and violations on our bodies and our spirits, that we are seeing failures in that need to be met, we are having to go outside of our Tribes to find support and resources and innovative ways to help our people.

I promised the folks that are involved in NAUHZCASA that I would do my best to try to bring their – bring attention to this work and make sure that this group understands as well that with or without support, and with or without much needed funding, there are folks in these Tribal nations here in the Southwest who make it their business to come together and share in our experiences as providers, as responders, and to talk about the underlying issues that we do not get to speak about in other spaces. So I wanted to call attention to that, that that is happening, that there is a place where folks are being supported because to be in witness of what we are seeing in our communities is just as painful as experiencing it ourselves.

And then I also wanted to briefly speak about a grassroots effort here in Colorado. The Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives Task Force that we are developing, myself and two amazing Native women, Kelsey Lansing and Monycka Snowbird, and our goal is to recognize missing and murdered relatives across all communities here in Colorado whether they be Tribal, whether they be rural, whether they be urban, because one thing that we identified is that though these are different types of communities, our losses are the same. And we did not want to be divided in what our community makeup was and so we try really hard to stand together and that has created some obstacles for us.

Firstly, I think that grassroots approaches are important because though I see task forces being formed at state levels that involve important law enforcement and legal support, there also seems to be some lenses in which missing and murdered relatives are being acknowledged. So if you have a criminal history, it seems you do not – you do not get to be honored or recognized. A grassroots approach understands that as relatives we make mistakes, as relatives, we understand that there are – there are things that we experience in our lives, and in our communities, that are going to paint us as negatives in the eyes of systems and law enforcement and we're going to make mistakes, and we're going to end up incarcerated, we're going to end up with a past that is going to make it hard for us to make lives for ourselves and our families. And dare we go missing or be murdered, these systems may not feel that we are worth being seen as that and we acknowledge that this is part of the erasure, the genocide that has been coming for us since the beginning. We will continue in this work in Colorado missing and murdered Indigenous relatives unapologetically recognizing, acknowledging, and honoring all of our relatives and also we will continue our work in NAUHZCASA sitting at the root causes with folks, with boots on the ground, in our Tribal communities, standing with survivors in hopes that they are not one of the names and faces in the missing and murdered epidemic. That is all I have to share today. Thank you for this time and thank you for listening [SPEAKING IN NATIVE LANGUAGE].

MARCIA GOOD: Thank you so much, Gina. Powerful statements about how having several Tribes, multiple Tribes working together, but also the multidisciplinary approach works so well at the grassroots level. And you are absolutely right, everyone, regardless of their past and their history deserves to be seen, to be searched for, and to be able to speak justice, so thank you so much, Gina. Several of our speakers have indicated they are willing to put their time to the end to continue down the list. So Annie Forsman Adams has indicated she wants to skip her testimony at this time. So, I am not sure who our representative is from the Cahuilla Band of Indians, so if you could raise your hand with the raise hand key at the bottom and our moderator can

recognize you to speak. Do we have anyone on for the Band to speak today? OK. If they call in later, we will certainly listen to their statement. Leanne Guy has also indicated that she is willing to, kind of, wait and cede time at this time. So our next speaker would be Carmen Harvie. Carmen, are you available? Carmen, are you on?

DARYL FOX: Marcia, yes. We are just trying to unmute her at this time, one moment. Marcia, I believe there may be a double mute there. Carmen, we will go ahead and unmute your line at this time and then you may have to unmute your telephone after that. So, going to unmute now and then if you want to just take yourself off unmute on your end. You should be good. She is unmuted on our end, Marcia, so...

MARCIA GOOD: OK.

DARYL FOX: Maybe stepped away at the moment.

MARCIA GOOD: Carmen, are you able to unmute? Are you able to unmute your phone to be able to present your testimony? We want to make sure that you do have the opportunity to speak and so we will definitely come back to you and hopefully whatever technical issues are can be resolved. Tammy, one of our moderators, will check on your line to make sure that everything is OK. We will move on to our next speaker. Gen Hadley indicated that she wishes to cede her time at this moment. So our next speaker will be Cheryl Horn. Cheryl, are you available and on the line?

DARYL FOX: Marcia, I do not see Cheryl in the list of current attendees.

MARCIA GOOD: OK. And then we will move to Brenda Golden. Brenda, are you on the line?

BRENDA GOLDEN: Good eve – good afternoon. Can you – did you – can you hear me?

MARCIA GOOD: Yes. We can hear you. Go right ahead.

BRENDA GOLDEN: OK. This is Brenda Golden. I am Muscogee Creek from the Muscogee Creek Nation of Oklahoma, who has recently changed their name to just The Muscogee Nation. I am an attorney that practices law for a living. However, I am a co-founder of the Society to Preserve Indigenous Rights and Indigenous Treaties, also known as S.P.I.R.I.T. here in Oklahoma. And I also was the legal representative that assisted the first MMIW [missing and murdered Indigenous women] chapter in Oklahoma, MMIW Indian Capital in their formation. I am Muscogee Creek and I am also

the Wotko Clan. I grew up here in Okmulgee area. And I am pleased to be with you today to offer this testimony. Thank you for having me.

First, I would like to follow up if I may with the testimony I gave last year about this same time. It was in reference to the legislation that I created and developed called the Red Alert. I asked at that time to have more federal support for legislation because the Red Alert and the CLEET [Council on Law Enforcement Education and Training] training had not been passed in Oklahoma. The Red Alert was patterned after the AMBER Alert and the Silver Alert. And because of COVID, the state legislature did not convene and hold regular meetings and so they only heard things that were of an emergency – of an emergency nature. I just want to explain a little bit about the Red Alert because in that draft of what was called the Red Alert, it was meant to combat human trafficking, which is 40% of the victims of human trafficking are Native American. And we also know that there are underlying factors that make Native American women more susceptible to human trafficking. And so, if we were to have a Red Alert when a person goes missing of Indigenous ancestry or heritage, that might lead to better recovery down the road. And as we all have heard over and over, the police and law enforcement agencies sometimes do not take these, or oftentimes I should say, do not take these reports of missing Native persons as seriously as they should and this would have helped with that issue.

And so, to follow up with what happened with the Red Alert, Ms. Good, who is on the line here, after she heard my testimony last year on the Red Alert, put me in contact with the coordinator for the Ashanti Alert Network. And the Ashanti Alert is named after a young woman who went missing in Virginia or it might have been Florida, I am sorry on the details. But the state of Virginia was the only state that has initiated an Ashanti Alert. It is a Department of Justice initiative that assists with implementing alert systems for people who go missing under suspicious circumstances. And they have training and documents that they can provide to governments and other agencies to help implement and coordinate this.

And so over the summer, one of the representatives here in Oklahoma and I worked with the coordinator for Operation Lady Justice in the Northern District of Oklahoma to tweak the Ashanti Alert for the purpose of having it passed here in Oklahoma. However, once again, the state legislature did not pass the alert system that we requested. We asked for it to be named after a Cherokee citizen this time because we thought it would – that would make it more personable and that person's name was Kasey Russell, so we called it the Kasey Alert. And it did not get out of committee, I mean it made it out of committee, it did not make it to the floor. And so, I just would ask that, you know, we had that support in developing the legislation this year. We had

the support in helping to name the legislation. What we need is some kind of – kind of, support broadly because I believe and feel that a Red Alert or whatever kind of alert we want to call it would save not only Native persons' lives who go missing, but all peoples, I mean anyone that goes missing under suspicious circumstances. And we know that human trafficking is a huge issue across the United States and globally actually. And this could be one area where if that Ashanti Alert could be taken by the federal government or any government and better implement it. Right now, it is a voluntary system. And if we could just get some assistance and push to help get that going in.

And again, thank you, Marcia for sending that contact information to me and helping us to get that coordinated with Patty Buell with her input. I really appreciate that. So, the first thing was the – is the legislation, the legislative portion of that. As it goes to grassroots issues, as an attorney, I see so many persons with the issues of substance abuse, socioeconomic factors that cause them to get into the criminal justice system, which further is another factor for being a victim. You know, if you do not have a car and you are hitchhiking on the road and you get picked up by a predator just when you are trying to go to work or go to the grocery store or something, it is no fault of your own but it is a problem that a lot of us in these rural countries – counties have a problem with having a car. We do not have a license because it has been suspended. We cannot drive, so we have to hitchhike. And then, you know, the substance abuse problems that so many of our communities face. Here in this area that I am in, methamphetamine is just rampant. And I think that if we could have some grants or some funding, not like coming through the Department of Mental Health, but coming through to the grassroots level, specifically to address those who are potential victims who could be targeted for human trafficking or for kidnapping or even for violence.

You know, we have Tribal domestic violence programs that again are kind of disconnected from our grassroots MMIW groups. And we need some better coordination between those groups and our efforts on the ground out here where we are actually doing things to address the violence that happens to our Native women and our Native men too for that matter. We need to be able to provide that input and support between each other. And I do not know if that is a grant, if that is policy change, or what that means as far as what you all can help us with, but I would really love to see some sort of funding or grant program provided to our grassroots chapters, or MMIW groups, or nonprofits to provide self-defense training for women, training to men on how to be a better person and not rape and hurt our women. And also how to search and rescue properly. You know, a lot of our groups here in Oklahoma go out and do their own searches. They take it upon themselves when one of their loved ones goes missing that they use their own money and their own resources to go do these

searches, door-to-door, neighborhood-to-neighborhood, things that the police do not have the time and money to do. And so, they do that out of their – out of love for their relatives. And I think that training and resources and grants to do something like that would really help combat this issue.

So I think that again, I am just going to hit on those three, that the legislative effort of the Ashanti Alert, which we had called or I had called the Red Alert here in Oklahoma, could be kind of not a voluntary thing but more of a push to help us address human trafficking and MMIW, missing and murdered Indigenous people. Funding through grants for – to address the socioeconomic and the substance abuse issues that lead to victimization in Indian Country, also funding directly to the grassroots people to provide services, to do the searches, to help them to connect with their Tribal domestic programs and their Tribal governments. And then the last thing that I am going to say is that we have a task force, as I mentioned, we have the coordinator here in the Northern District of Oklahoma. And this effort here in Eastern Oklahoma has almost been secretive. I mean, we cannot get information about when they are meeting, what is going on, who is on the task force, who to contact, how to provide information, how to give input. We do not – we see it when they announce something on television that, "Oh, we are going to develop protocols for law enforcement." I do not consider that getting input from the community because those of us that are out here working in the field should be able to provide input to that task force on what works and what does not. And so, that is the one criticism I would have with the task force here in Oklahoma.

And so, those are the things that I wanted to share with you today. I think it is very, very important that we as a community be given resources, funding, whether that is funding, or matching grants, or something to be able to serve our communities and to better help our Native people here in – at the community level. So, that is what I had to say. I am sorry, I cannot stay and listen to everyone but I will catch you all on the recording. Thank you again for the opportunity. Thank you again, Marcia, for helping me with the Ashanti Alert last summer. And I will [INDISTINCT] you all a good weekend [SPEAKING IN NATIVE LANGUAGE].

MARCIA GOOD: Thanks so much, Brenda. We are so happy that you are on. I do have one other tidbit of information for you if Ashanti Alert did not work. There is a program that we have now found that we are going to do some training on through FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency] called IPAWS, which is the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System, and every Tribe can set up their own system. Basically, it allows you for a very nominal fee to, kind of, call out to folks to let them know when there is a missing person and you can set the criteria for whatever you

want it to be. So, Brenda, I will be in touch with you and get you some more information on that. And I would ask Matt Lysakowski [who] is also on here. Matt, if you could put a link in the chat or in the question and answer, whichever, so that folks can know about that. Second piece is Operation Lady Justice in connection with the COPS [Community Oriented Policing Services] Office have put together a program called the Volunteer Engagement Program, that can help Tribes set up their own Volunteer Engagement Programs to train volunteers to help with search and rescue. So, we will definitely be in touch with you in both of those things, Brenda, because it sounds like you are absolutely in need of those things and talking about them is being useful to your communities. So, we will be in touch. Thank you so much for your comments here. We very much appreciate it. OK. Our next speaker would be Mariah Greenwood Adair. Mariah, are you on?

DARYL FOX: She is not currently in the attendee list, Marcia.

MARCIA GOOD: OK. After Mariah, we have Christy McLemore. Christy, are you on?

DARYL FOX: She is also not in the attendee list currently.

MARCIA GOOD: OK. Lily Mendoza?

DARYL FOX: That one as well not on the attendee list currently.

MARCIA GOOD: OK. Rachel Fernandez. Rachel, are you available?

DARYL FOX: Rachel, your line has been unmuted.

RACHEL FERNANDEZ: OK.

MARCIA GOOD: Rachel, do you wish to be on video?

RACHEL FERNANDEZ: Sure.

MARCIA GOOD: If you do, go ahead and you can do your video on the bottom of your screen. Thank you so much. You can speak whenever you are ready.

RACHEL FERNANDEZ: OK. [SPEAKING IN NATIVE LANGUAGE] Namaewkukiw Metaemohsak. Hello. My name is Namaewkukiw which is Menominee for Sturgeon Woman. My English name is Rachel Fernandez. First of all, I want to apologize to my elders for speaking before them. I am a survivor. I am from the Menominee Nation in

Wisconsin. I am Executive Director of Woodland Woman Maeqtekuahkihkiw Metaemohsak. I am also a legislator of Menominee Indian Tribal of Wisconsin. I am a state task force member for Wisconsin. I have been involved in grassroots, boots-on-the-ground work for many years. And, excuse me, and I have been working to end gender-based violence through cultural care, through our elders, through our teachings. We center our work around our survivors and families.

I am here to speak because we cannot continue to organize events, gatherings, task force on the backs of our survivors or missing and murdered relatives and their families. We are – we are worth more and should be acknowledged in every area and aspect of this work. We need to have frontline advocates, survivors, missing and murdered relatives and their families at our table, our circles. We need to have us there, our voice – our voices matter. We matter. Opportunities for us to participate are meaningful and important. We need to be accountable to our relatives and families. We deserve to be heard. We deserve justice. We deserve the accurate data. We deserve the resources. We deserve solutions, coordination and effective efforts to prevent violence and oppression in our communities. Colonization, genocide, oppressive systems and assimilation have been happening for hundreds of years. This ongoing collective action needs to stop and we need to be a part of this. We need to see more of this in this work that is going on across our nation, across Turtle Island. I feel that working, you know, grassroots, boots on the ground, I have seen a lot. I have seen a lot of hurt, of heartbreak working with families that have missing and murdered loved ones. It is hard enough doing that work but not to be heard, not to be included in what is happening to our people, it is unacceptable.

We recently recovered a little sister, Katelyn Kelley. She went missing last June and she was recently recovered. We have been helping her mom and her family with many, many things. Not only support but a lot of – a lot of our cultural – our cultural care that we do here, our teachings, we always refer to our elders for those teachings, for that help, for that support. We also have another sister, someone who I remember going to school with. Her name is Rae Elaine Tourtillott. I have been involved in helping to bring awareness for her family. Just parts of her were found. And she went missing in 1986. She just had – she just had her baby, her daughter Elise. And Elise is out here doing the work and she is in a good place where she is involved in all of the awareness events. She goes to events. She speaks. And she speaks from the heart because she still needs justice for her mother. And it is not only our sisters. We have a brother out there. Robert Lyons. He is still missing. And I have been trying to help his mom not only with support but love. She has no idea where her son is.

And we know that there are people in our communities that know what happened to our brothers and sisters that are missing and murdered. We know that. But it is hard to do this work and not have the support from the very people that have been oppressing us. It is time for us to be at this table, to be in this circle. We are needed. These stories, these truths are needed to continue this work. And it is very important to have the families, the frontline workers, the survivors. We need them at this table. And so I am asking – I am asking that we are all included in this work that you are trying to do for all of our nations. It is only right. We have others also that have been missing or murdered on our reservation. Lisa Ninham, she has been missing since 1980 I believe. And she has a daughter that her sister raised and her daughter has been – has been trying to bring light to her mother's – her mother's story. Danielle, that is her name. And so we keep trying to bring light to our relatives' stories, their truths in hopes that our leadership out there will listen. We have another sister, little sister. I remember her in school also. Mary Tomow. She was murdered. We need to say her name also and bring light to her story and to her truth.

We do not want our relatives to be forgotten. We do not want our sisters stolen any more. We deserve better. We deserve – we deserve the media. We deserve the data. We deserve – we deserve justice. We deserve to be heard over and over and over again. So the work that OLJ started did not include – did not include us. And I think it is about time that we are included in this work, because the work that you are doing is on the backs of our families, our missing and murdered relatives. And it is about time that we are heard and we are included in all of the work to bring justice to our missing and murdered relatives. [SPEAKING IN NATIVE LANGUAGE] for this opportunity to speak.

MARCIA GOOD: Rachel, thank you so much for those incredibly powerful words and for saying the names of people that we need to remember and we need to recall. One of the things that Operation Lady Justice is doing in this administration is putting together private sessions to talk to family members who have had loved ones who have gone missing or been murdered, to be able to get exactly that kind of information that you are talking about. To hear firsthand the things that worked and more importantly, the things that did not work and that need to be changed. And so we are so happy to have that recommendation and to have you be a part of that, so thank you so much today. It is much appreciated. Our next speaker is Anna Schmitt. Anna, are you available?

ANNA SCHMITT: Hello. Can you hear me?

MARCIA GOOD: I can. Thank you.

ANNA SCHMITT: Hi, everyone. My name is Anna Schmitt. And I come to you today on behalf of the Zonta Club of Billings. I do not have a tribal affiliation, so I thank you so much for this opportunity to speak with you and I hope that I can act as an ally in the effort to address missing and murdered Indigenous peoples in our country. Zonta is an international organization that works to end violence against women. And we have been working closely within our local organization called the Montana Native Women's Coalition, who I believe is in attendance here today as well. And over the past couple of years, we have put on various awareness events in the Billings, Montana area, including a large march and a virtual event last year where we actually had speakers, survivors and experts like Cheryl Horn who was going to speak earlier today and Renee Bourque who I believe is going to speak after me, who shared their insights and their expertise. We also hosted the REDress exhibit by Métis artist Jaime Black in downtown Billings. And throughout this work, we have learned of many other organizations, grassroots and state and federal-based organizations that are – that are doing work on this topic and what we – as we continue to raise awareness, we would really like to be able to take a concerted action in addressing MMIP in Montana and the larger area in the west. But it would be helpful if there was a mechanism for collaboration and communication in order to do that so that we could join efforts and work together with at least the other grassroots organizations, if not all of the people that are involved in addressing this issue.

I want to echo what I believe some sentiments that Gina and Brenda, some of the previous speakers shared, that while it is great that our state has a task force, a state-based task force, it does not feel as though organizations such as our own have a seat at that table. And it would just be really beneficial if we were provided with some guidance, or like I said, a mechanism to be able to collaborate across the different sectors, across the different Tribes and communities in our state, so that we can have a more concerted effort going forward to address this. Thank you again for allowing me to speak today and thank you to everyone else who is sharing their input. I am very grateful to be able to hear it.

MARCIA GOOD: Thanks so much, Anna. We are glad that you are on here today. As you probably know, Billings is my hometown and I served in Montana as an Assistant U.S. Attorney, prosecuting crimes on a number of reservations in Montana for a number of years seeking justice for victims. So we are glad to have you here. I think that it is one of the things that we are going to hear across this group of speakers today. It is a collaboration, coordination, everybody working together, because the public health and public safety partnership is crucial to making in-roads here. Our next speaker Amber Crotty just messaged me and indicated that she is unable to participate today and

sends her regrets and Renee Bourque as well. They are both unable to participate today. Ted Hernandez indicated earlier on that he wished to cede his time at this moment. And so we will go down next to Tasheena Duran. Tasheena, are you available to speak today?

DARYL FOX: Marcia, I do not see Tasheena in the attendee list currently.

MARCIA GOOD: OK. Toni Handboy. Toni, are you available to speak?

TONI HANDBOY: Yes, I am.

MARCIA GOOD: Wonderful. Do you wish to be on video or just audio?

TONI HANDBOY: Just audio.

MARCIA GOOD: Thank you so much.

TONI HANDBOY: Thank you. I would like to say good afternoon and thank you for allowing me to be on this – be a speaker today. I am new into this. Last year, we started a search for an individual here at home on our reservation, the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe. And I was – we were alerted because we do a lot of grassroots work, community work, outreach work. We do various activities with our nonprofit organization called the Red Generation. And it was an eye opener for me to – what I had concerns about was the response and how the individual was basically announced missing and it took too long to announce it. It took a week or two before the family got any type of word that they were going to start a search. And there was no, you know, like, practice in place. And this individual went missing in December and was not found until September of the following year, unfortunately deceased. And for me, I have seen the law enforcement and how they responded. I have seen how the feds responded because on a reservation, we are dealing with a federal system, so the feds did not get involved for maybe nearly over a year, almost a half a year. And then the BIA [Bureau of Indian Affairs], it took them six months or more to get involved. And what I understood was that they looked at him as an absconder rather than a missing person because he was a part of the federal probation system. And still he was someone's relative, you know, he was someone's brother.

And for – the community started to do their own search. They started to reach out to each other and reach out to the family, help fundraise, help support, and do a search. And it was a learning experience for me because I am a, you know, a social worker and I work in a mental health and substance abuse field. And I wanted to get involved

because I started to hear stories after we searched – or helped search with this individual that was found a year later. And then I started to hear the stories of loved ones that have passed on that are still missing – or not passed on but that have been found but were missing for over 20 to 25 years. And I wanted to know how we could work together to help one another. And then I started to find the gaps in the database systems and how they were not specifically – specific data-driven databases. And I was looking at the Tribes and I was looking at our reservation and I started asking questions about the laws that we have in place and the policies according to murdered, missing Indigenous women and relatives. And there was nothing at the time and there still is not. And I have a law that was shared with me by the Commissioner at the time, Jeannie Hovland from the Navajo Nation. And I am reviewing it to look at it to see if we can adapt it to our reservation to possibly put something in place to be an advocate, to help our families and loved ones for immediate response.

And I am on here today because I want to learn – I want information and I want to be able to help support however we can with – our focus is on developing laws that focus on murdered, missing Indigenous women, relatives, girls, two-spirit. And to also include the sex trafficking laws and to look at how we could work together in unity because what I find on the reservation and other organizations here in South Dakota is that there is a division and I do not know what the division is or why it is that way but it is hard to get together at the table to talk to each other about what each and every one of us is working on. And also looking at possibly identifying the – I know that there are – when there are murdered, missing Indigenous relatives, there are a lot of different age groups.

We recently did an awareness campaign in Rapid City, South Dakota, because we found that there were so many young women missing reported in the database. At the time, I think there was 33 women and they were young. They were all young. And the only thing we can see in the database is that they were missing. There was no other information on that database. And so I started digging further and asking more questions on how we can assist, how we can help and what we can do to bring the message. And so what we did was we basically hosted an event and called it Calling Our Sisters Home or Our Relatives Home because we wanted to let them know that at this time of what is going on in our – in the world and on our reservations that it is a vulnerable time. It is a very risky time to be running away from home and that we wanted to be a voice and we wanted to be the person that they can reach out to if they have run away and if they wanted to return home. I do not know if all those young girls are runaways but there were some that were on that database for over two years. And I started to get concerned about, like, what is happening? What is going on? Are they reaching out to the families? Are they responding with updates?

And then I – so I think that it would be good if we can have a central – we have a need to have a central base on each reservation because we have nine reservations within South Dakota. But to have a central base that is specifically driven to be a voice for our relatives when they have questions about an update because there are so many people that play a role on the reservation and different fields that if we had one person that could be there to listen and respond and keep a database so we can keep it updated for the families. I think the immediate response is the best way to keep that line of communication open for our relatives. I had a chance to speak to a couple of families about some of the things that they have gone through and it is really emotional, it is sad and it – and it is hard to listen, but it is also a need to also start the healing process for some of our relatives to possibly start engaging and helping and supporting them. Those that still have loved ones that are missing out there on the reservations or in the world – in the world because sometimes they do not have a voice, they do not have a platform, they do not have a time to share.

And that is why we wanted to get involved and, you know, reach out in this webinar and we have been attending others – other webinars as well, but we want to get all the data that we can and I want to be a voice and try to help with the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe. I have a meeting set up with some of our delegated leaders so that we could try to bring a law to our reservation and start acting immediately and put something in place. I am not sure of any other Tribes if they have anything in place or any policies or practice in place for their Tribes. It is really difficult because we follow the state and Tribal codes and the laws and it is hard to get the BIA to respond and the federal system to respond when we do have a MMIW on the reservation. I am not sure if any other individuals are having the same experience. But it would help if we could all sit down and maybe get together and see, maybe have some think tanks and think about what it is that we can do to approach this matter in a more effective way and so that we can make impact and be those advocates and the voices for our relatives that are still missing, those that are murdered and still seeking justice.

That is it for today. I would love to be on for the rest of the day, but I will – I will watch the recording. And if there is any information that could be shared, I would appreciate it if I could get an email on anything. We have a couple of projects that we are working on which is the law. Hopefully, we could get it on the platform in June so we could get it approved and passed for our Tribe. I would like to thank all of you today and [SPEAKING IN NATIVE LANGUAGE]. Thank you.

MARCIA GOOD: Thanks so much for those comments Toni, I – there were – there is a bunch of information that I will get to you since you are, kind of, at the beginning of

this process. And thanks for reminding us about really needing to be prepared ahead of time and being able to work together collaboratively, looking at those gaps, and I will make sure we get you that information. Thanks.

BRYAN NEWLAND: Marcia, this is Bryan Newland from — over at the Department of the Interior. I just want to respond very briefly to Ms. Handboy. I appreciate your comments and your testimony today and some of your thoughts. The Department of the Interior has established a new Missing and Murdered Unit within the BIA's Law Enforcement Agency. And as we build that program out I would be willing to follow up with you and others — advocates across Indian Country on how to do exactly what you are referencing there to build a protocol for how we respond and how we collaborate locally when a person does go missing. I can't imagine the frustration of trying to mount a search yourself and having to wait so long for a response. So I just wanted to say that in response to you, Tribal consultation is something we are considering as we build that up, but also speaking directly with folks like you and other grassroots advocates. So I appreciate your testimony and I flagged it and we will speak with our internal team to make sure that we are working on what you just spoken on. Thank you.

MARCIA GOOD: And I'd also like to call [on] a Task Force member, Michelle Sauve. Michelle, I know that a number have — other speakers have talked about the need for funding. Can you give us just a quick rundown of something that you currently have available?

MICHELLE SAUVE: Sure, thank you, Marcia. Yes, I do know that not everyone can stay on so I appreciate the opportunity just to give a brief update. We do have a couple funding opportunities that can help address some of the grassroots groups. If a — if a coalition is not their own 501(c)(3), they could partner with an entity that's maybe one of their members to be the lead fiscal agent. But we do have social and economic development strategy grants. Those applications are open right now until June 25. And because of our support for this Task Force, we are awarding five bonus points for any projects that are — to address missing and murdered Native Americans. And it can be used to address some of those root causes that people have spoken about. We do not dictate what your project should be, what your objective should be, or what your goals are. Those are all determined by your community. And so I just wanted to make sure people knew about that. And we do have training and technical assistance providers who can help. And if you are at a stage where you would like to work on the capacity of your organization, we have a second type of initiative this year. It is called the SEDS, Social and Economic Development Strategies for Growing Organizations. And rather than being a project that you would do within the community, it is really to build your

organization's internal capacity to strengthen the organization. So that application is also open. And so if you go to – I will put in the – our website address in the chat, but it is [acf.hhs.gov/ana](https://acf.hhs.gov/ana) and you can also find it on [Grants.gov](https://Grants.gov). But we do have training and technical assistance that can help if this is your first time applying for an Administration for Native Americans grant and if you are not a 501(c)(3), we do encourage you to partner with one for this type of project. Thank you, Marcia, for letting me say that.

MARCIA GOOD: Thank you so much for providing that information. That is incredibly helpful from both of you. Our next speaker is Rae Peppers. Rae, I believe you are on the call.

RAE PEPPERS: Yes, I am. Thank you for allowing me time to speak. I currently work for the Northern Cheyenne Tribe as an aide to the Tribal President. But I also sit on the Public Policy Institute of the Rockies, which deals with MMIP issues. The organization is run by two attorneys and the intent is to look at helping some of these families with legal issues. And I see that is something that they keep running into. Also I served eight years on the Montana State Legislature. And most likely, I would still be there if I had not termed out. My Native roots go deep. I am a descendant of the Big Bear Band of Canada. I am an enrolled member of the Crow Tribe and I grew up in Encinal on the Laguna Pueblo Reservation. My dad was a full member of the Laguna Nation and I been married into the Northern Cheyenne Tribe, will be celebrating my 30th wedding anniversary here. This is – tomorrow. But this reservation has always been my home and I am proud to serve the Cheyenne people.

But I am also a survivor. I was taken from my family when I was 8 years old. And that is pretty hard to deal with because you lose that connection with your family. Even though I have nine brothers and sisters, I love them dearly, but I have never been able to reconnect and find that closeness – close relationship again. But I am going to be really blunt here because for the past several years, I watched the BIA be dismantled at the Tribal level. And offices are slowly being moved to the regional offices. To me, it is a sign that the Bureau of Indian Affairs is slowly being dismantled, which leads to many problems. For instance, we have BIA workers who could care less, I feel, about the people they are supposed to serve. They need to be serving the people of reservations. They are sending us police chiefs, criminal investigators and other BIA bureaucrats that are stating they are only there until their time – to serve their time until they retire or move on to better things. And we have actually had the Chief of Police state that. On the Northern Cheyenne Reservation, we are practically in a state of lawlessness. Nothing is getting done. We have had several recent unsolved murders and many unsolved cold cases. One is my husband's cousin who lives a short ways up

the creek from us. I have had two nephews who have been murdered, and I have people sending me messages, but I have had – I never realized how many members of my family have been murdered. So it is my whole intent to help as many people as I can.

Right now, I am assisting the family of Christy [INDISTINCT] because really her murderer continues to walk the streets of Lander. He not only ran over his victim once, he ran over her twice. And was only charged with intoxication. And it was not the law enforcement, the BIA law enforcement or the prosecutor's office that fought to get this investigated by the FBI. It was the sisters. It was the grandmothers. And that is not unusual. It is the families that step up, that take up the fight. So I understand when you talk about trying to get the organizations involved, and that we need to help support them financially. But back to Christy, she left behind three children who are now living with the mother of the murderer. [INDISTINCT] would like to get those kids back. It goes on and on. The families grieve and fight. Nothing changes. And we have been doing this for many generations now. It has got to stop. I mean, if you go back into the history of MMIP, it is commonplace. It is almost like it is normal. We have – we have to find a way to stop this. We have to make people accountable. As a legislator, I carried Hanna's Act in the Montana State Legislature in 2019. It was only a \$200,000 bill but the Republicans battled against me because it was a so-called Indian bill and it had too much money. I mean, that is a drop in the bucket. Also, the racist shenanigans that were used to try and stop this bill, they continue to haunt me today. But all I knew is I had to pass it because I was not going to let the people down.

And this is why I am talking today. I want something done. I do not want this swept under the rug anymore. I want our law enforcement at every level be held accountable. I want our prosecutors, our tribal law enforcement, our BIA law enforcement, our federals to help. I do not want them sweeping it under the rug. And I do not want it called an "Indian problem" ever again. We need to find funding to battle this horrible epidemic. We need people in the trenches at the grassroot levels. But they cannot do that with – unless they have financial assistance. And we need trained officers in the field who understand how serious this problem is. Because right now, the Tribes and organizations battle as usual for scrap funding. Some bills were passed at the state level but majority of them do not have money in them. There is one grant program, \$50,000 for all the tribes in Montana. What can you do with that? We also need funding for a jail, because the one on the Northern Cheyenne has been condemned. Our prisoners are being hauled as far away as Oklahoma, which is another reason why our BIA ignores our pleas for assistance. Our law enforcement is not willing to get involved or does not seem to grasp the enormity of this problem. And not long ago, I said in a Tribal meeting and the Chief of Police stated he was not concerned about the MMIP

issue because there is too many other pressing issues. And the reality is we are talking about murders. It is not a simple thing. Also, the Northern Cheyenne tribe is in a – currently in a battle with the BIA, the “638.” The CI [criminal investigator] positions, the law enforcement. I mean, they should be providing us with the best technical assistance they can. They are not. But I – in closing, we need financial support and training at all levels of law enforcement and – to assist the organizations that are trying to do something. And funding at the Tribal level, because I am asking people, “Do not look away because I assure you I will not give up and neither will others.” Thank you.

MARCIA GOOD: Thank you so much for that testimony. You have made many points that I think have been echoed by a number of speakers. And we just so appreciate your commentary. As you know we have a spokesman of the administration, Bryan Newland, is on. We have Jason O’Neal who – from BIA Office of Justice Services. He is one of our Task Force members. So you can be assured that your comments are going to be heard at the highest levels and be acted upon. So thank you so much. Our next speaker is Janet Davis. Janet, are you available?

DARYL FOX: I do not see Janet Davis in the current attendee list, Marcia.

MARCIA GOOD: OK. Before we finish this first page, have we been able to fix the connection issues for Carmen Harvie? Carmen Harvie was on our first page and we were not able to visit with her because we had a mute issue. And so I am wondering if that has been resolved. Carmen, are you able to speak? Carmen Harvie?

DARYL FOX: I mean it has been muted on our end. I am still seeing muted on that end.

MARCIA GOOD: OK.

DARYL FOX: Oh, there we go.

MARCIA GOOD: OK. Carmen, are you available?

CARMEN HARVIE: Yes, I am.

MARCIA GOOD: Carmen Harvie?

CARMEN HARVIE: Yes.

MARCIA GOOD: Great. I am glad we could get that fixed. We can hear you. Go ahead please.

CARMEN HARVIE: Yes. [SPEAKING IN NATIVE LANGUAGE] I am Carmen Harvie, and I am Choctaw MOWA [INDISTINCT]. And I grew up in Oklahoma. And I am with the Murdered and Missing Indigenous People Central Chapter of Oklahoma. And before that, I was with the MMIW Indian Capital in Anadarko. And I have been working with MMIW for about six years. So I have a lot of information. And I am very thankful that MMIW grassroots organizations have been brought to the table, finally brought to the table, and to speak and to say all the things that need to be said. And I feel like we can say everything that we need to say, because if we – if we cannot give you everything that we need you to hear then it does not help anybody. So I am thankful that we have this time to do this. And we have – we had a MMIP coordinator that was in Oklahoma. And, you know, I kept her in the loop of all the missing cases that we were working on throughout the time she was here. And it was – it was kind of difficult because we as MMIW organizations in Oklahoma collaborated on issues, everything that was happening. And we could not get her to our table because she said, "I cannot come into that space because I am federal. I cannot go out and search with you because I am federal. I cannot investigate because that is not what my position is." Can you make me a copy of a flier that we can put up? "I can try." I never got one copy of anything.

So these copies and fliers that we make on all these searches – I am headed to a search right now as I am speaking, but I am pulling over because this is important too for these families. And I get emotional about it because it is – like we are tired. We are tired. We need to be heard. These families need to – their voices need to – we speak for them, because they are not getting any help. A couple weeks ago, I was in Austin, Texas – I live in Northern Oklahoma. To look for a girl that is missing from Oklahoma. Walk the streets and hand out fliers. Talked to people on the streets. We put a light under – we put a fire under the seats of the law enforcement to do their job, to help us. If there is no grassroots organizations out here trying to look for these families and pushing these law enforcement to do their work, there would be nothing. Nothing would get done. And, you know, it has been – we are the task force. Our MMIW – there are grassroots across the nation. We are the task force for our people. We keep our own data. We do our own trainings.

You know, it is – I found out that our MMIP coordinator left. I did not even know she left. I was still sending her information on cases. I am like – I kept calling her, calling her. Where is she? Why isn't she calling me back? I called about four or five different MMIP coordinators across the nation. You know, I found someone in Alaska. Answered

their phone and told me that she had left. And I was like, "Why – if we are going to work together, then why not inform us?" Even the task force we have in Oklahoma is like – they are not opening the doors to us either, but the pilot project is going to go nationwide, but if you do not invite the people that know the issues and things that are happening within law enforcement in the community, the resources that are needed, if they do not bring us into the table, that pilot project is going to fail.

I am frustrated because the door has always been shut on us. Even like – we have MMIW Awareness Day. We had it the other day on the 5th. It was great. It was awesome. People came out and supported, and it was great. And I know today there are probably – a lot of these people that were supposed to be on here are probably out there doing the awareness for today. I bet you that is where they are at. So it has got to be – you know, we need to partner and say, "OK, it is your schedule. What is happening?" Be aware of what is going on with MMIW. We try to get our Tribes to get involved as well, and I do not think they understand how important and how frustrating it is to look for their people. Whenever these – whenever our people go missing, I call these Tribes and I say, "You have someone missing." I am calling them to say, "Come help us find your people. Oh, well, you are out of our jurisdiction, we cannot." No. This is your people. I am looking for your people. You know, I am two hours away from where I am going searching today. And our MMIW grassroots are collaborating to head down there to pass out fliers and talk to – I called the dad this morning and I talked to him. The mom is in surgery right now, and there is nothing she can do. But I am going down there. I told the dad, I said, "I am going to come there. I am going to help you find your daughter." And the other MMIW grassroots are down there as well.

You know, it is – we need support. We need resources. We need an investigator. We have an investigator that donates her time with us. She is a Native woman. Her name is Darcy [INDISTINCT] and she is so valuable to us. She knows the ins and outs of law enforcement. And we – you know, we have a task force. We work with domestic violence – we have a domestic violence program within our group as well. So we put our own task force together. But their funding, it comes out of our pockets. We raise money to – for gas, to pay for fliers at Staples, to – you know, to feed the family, what have you, you know? It is – it gets so frustrating sometimes. But, you know, with the Red Alert – the Red Alert that did not go through. You know, Gen Hadley and I – I know she is going to be down there meeting me with a family down there to do the fliers. That is probably why she was not on the call. But, you know, her and I met with the state representative to get it started, to get this Red Alert started. And that means to go nationwide for our Native people.

And when these – the grassroots or whoever is trying to get bills for MMIW, we need you guys to support us and call the state offices and say, "We support this bill. Please help us." Please help us because this – if we are partnering together, we need support from you as well to help get these bills passed for – you know, for the sake of our MMIW families. Because I think it is very important – you know, just like the AMBER Alert, it is very important for us to have a Red Alert for all our Native people that go missing. Because it is – the epidemic is just outrageous. It is so outrageous. When these teenagers run away, we are out there looking for them because we do not want them to be a statistic. We need some kind of prevention for that. And also, in our foster care system, when our kids are running away from the foster care because they are being abused or what have you, we cannot even – we cannot even – we know what is happening and we see it but we cannot get any information or – of any kind to find them. And they are going to be another statistic because nobody is looking for them. And, you know, it is just – it is a lot.

It has been a lot in these last six years to do this. And, you know, we need the support of – some kind of resource to help us, because once we find the families, we make sure the families have a resource to go back to for their children, for – you know, for the adults, what have you. We are putting the resources together and make sure they have something to fall back on so that they can get help for whatever reason it is that they are – they have gone missing. And then we have a lot of murders that have not been solved. My niece included. It has been five years. She was in a double homicide. And there has not been any solution. Whoever murdered them has gotten away with it. And then – there are so many in Oklahoma.

And then we have the McGirt ruling that has come into effect in Oklahoma. And that is another thing. So there is so much going on, and that whenever we do not get to come to the table and say, "Hey, this is what is – this is the real issues of what is going on. We are out there and looking for our Indian people." But regardless, if – you know, if – we are not being heard, we are still doing what we got to do for our people, regardless. Of course, we got Ida's Law bill passed so that we can have a liaison to work on the cases and to train tribal, state, local government, tribal government, and – but still we are going to keep doing this because we are hoping to be coming to the table to them too but we have to wait for them to bring us to the table, because we cannot tell them, "Oh, this is," – you know, tell them what to do. But we are just hoping, because we are always ignored. We have been ignored so long, it is just like – it is just like we do not matter. But our MMIW grass – grassroots are saying, yes, we do matter, and we are going to keep looking for our people until something happens, until something – someone finally like helps us. Helps us, you know, find our people and bring something together to help us. But from – you know, we have not seen it. I would like to give the

benefit of the doubt, just like I did with the MMIP coordinator. I am like, "You know, she is going to help us, yeah," but, you know, I have hope. I have hope. But — I thank you for allowing me to speak and say my frustrations, and hopefully, we will be able to come together and work together and get these — get something done.

But thank you so much. And I have written to Marcia Good, and I have sent that MMIP coordinator that left us, I sent her a big old email with all of the information of what the MMI families wrote about their issues and MMIW grassroots organizations, their needs were. But I do not know what she did with it. I thought maybe she would share it with Marcia, but I do not know if Marcia got it or not. But, anyway, I thank you for having this, and keep us in the loop. And I will stay in contact with the comments to your organization. And also all this information that you are saying that you are going to send out to different ones, I would hope that you would send all that great information to all of us. Like, the funding agencies that you say that, you know, we could apply for, for a 501(c) or for — not a 501(c). Or, you know, all these other resources that you are talking about that you are going to give out to different ones, I would like all of that emailed to us because a lot of times on these webinars that information is gone. Once it is gone, it is gone. But I thank you for this time. I got to get back on the highway to go to the search. Thank you.

MARCIA GOOD: All right. It is just hard to know what to say. Thank you so much for the work that you are doing and for your comments. We feel your frustration. We hear you and we want to say that with this administration, with this Task Force, that we promise to work with you on these things. I will make sure that all of the folks who are on this webinar are emailed all of the information that we are putting into the notes here on the slide and into the chat, so that you can see the resources that are available and we can hear what other kind of grassroots bottom line needs that you have that we can hopefully help you with. So thank you so much, Carmen. Your words are very much appreciated.

OK. We are going to take a 15-minute break here. Rest assured, we are going to listen to everybody if we can get through everybody today. And if not, we will finish up at another date because we want to hear from all of you. So let us take a 15-minute break. We will come back about 3:20, 3:25, somewhere in there. We will be going on to our second page of speakers. So we will put that up so you know in what order that folks are going to be called. And we want to make sure that everybody is connected back on this webinar. If you want to just put yourself on mute and it can be playing in the background. We will come back and start up again in 15 minutes. Thank you so much.

MARCIA GOOD: OK. We are back from our break, and we will go ahead and continue on with our speaker list on the second slide that is up here today. So, again, we will continue to call speakers in order. There are some, I believe, that are on and there are some folks who have not been able to call in today. So let us start at the top with Serrell Smokey. Serrell, are you available?

DARYL FOX: I do not see that person in the attendee list currently, Marcia.

MARCIA GOOD: OK. Selwyn Whiteskunk?

DARYL FOX: Same status for that person, not in the attendee list.

MARCIA GOOD: OK. Stacy Bohlen? Stacy, are you available? Stacy Bohlen, are you able to join us and speak?

DARYL FOX: Stacy, your line is unmuted.

MARCIA GOOD: You may need to unmute your phone as well if you are double muted but we are available anytime.

DARYL FOX: So I do see an alert that – inactive alert under that name, so they may have stepped away or have not been back yet.

MARCIA GOOD: OK. We can – we will just come back to Stacy. Kristin Welch? Kristin, are you on?

DARYL FOX: I do not see that name in the current attendee list.

MARCIA GOOD: OK. Stacey Montooth? Stacey, are you available?

DARYL FOX: Same status for her...

STACEY MONTOOTH: Hello.

DARYL FOX: Oh.

STACEY MONTOOTH: I am on.

MARCIA GOOD: Who do we have on?

STACEY MONTOOTH: It is Stacey Montooth.

MARCIA GOOD: Hi, Stacey. We can hear you. Do you wish to also be on video?

STACEY MONTOOTH: Certainly.

MARCIA GOOD: OK. We will go ahead and get you on video.

STACEY MONTOOTH: Hello. I am Stacey Montooth, citizen of the Walker River Paiute Nation, and I am the Executive Director of the Nevada Indian Commission. I want to take time to thank everyone for putting together today's programming. I especially want to just emphasize the vital need for cooperation and collaboration when it comes to our missing and murdered Indigenous loved ones. This is a pandemic. It is an epidemic. It is hideous, and it has to stop, and that is going to take a comprehensive approach and it has to involve our Tribal communities. So I appreciate this platform and learning from everyone here today. [SPEAKING IN NATIVE LANGUAGE]

MARCIA GOOD: Thank you so much, Stacey. We are glad that you are able to be with us today. Do we have anyone on from the Urban Indian Center of Salt Lake? They are our next speaker. Urban Indian Center of Salt Lake? OK. We will come back. Debra Harry. Debra, are you available to testify today?

DEBRA HARRY: Yes, I am.

MARCIA GOOD: Wonderful. We can hear you. Do you wish to be on video?

DEBRA HARRY: I do not mind. I do not know how to do it.

MARCIA GOOD: There should be a button at the bottom that says "begin video" or "start video." I believe in the bottom middle of your screen.

DEBRA HARRY: All right.

MARCIA GOOD: If you hit that, you should be – there we are.

DEBRA HARRY: I believe I found it.

MARCIA GOOD: OK. Go...

DEBRA HARRY: Wonderful. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. [SPEAKING IN NATIVE LANGUAGE] I am a Northern Paiute woman. We call ourselves Numu. And I am from a place called Pyramid Lake in Nevada. I work with a group of Indigenous women from this region of northwestern Nevada on MMIW issues. We have worked for the past four years to lead the Reno Women's March in which many of our community members have participated, raising awareness on the issue of murdered and missing Indigenous women. We have also done film screenings and events, weekend events for our communities at the University of Nevada, Reno where I work as an associate professor in Indigenous studies in the Department of Gender, Race, and Identity.

Obviously, the issue we are discussing today has old roots. The violence against Indigenous peoples and particularly Indigenous women and girls is rooted in colonial notions of racial superiority and a dehumanized view of non-Christian, non-European peoples. This dehumanized view of Indigenous women is further perpetuated by mass media and Hollywood. Mass media shapes the vast majority of Americans' understandings of who Indigenous peoples are, and it results in these dehumanized views of Indigenous women persisting in the American psyche today. As a result, Indigenous women and girls are viewed as expendable. I want to say that the conditions that we are dealing with today are not — are not ours. We did not create these. They are a direct result of decades of colonial domination. Institutional and structural racism keep Indigenous peoples marginalized, vulnerable and preyed upon. That is the system we live in. It is underfunded. It is under-resourced. It is staffed by uncaring law enforcement, courts and social systems that fail to address these issues, fail to address these cases and bring them to justice. As Rae Peppers mentioned earlier, we live in a state of lawlessness, and we know that the issues and the needs are many.

One of our Tribal leaders, Chairwoman Amber Torres of the Walker River Paiute Tribe, told Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto this past week in a listening session that what we need is boots on the ground. In other words, we need to build capacity on the ground with people who care, and the government has a responsibility to fund those efforts. We also need at a statewide level, a task force or some coordinating body that facilitates the best use of existing resources because we cannot continue to have the nonresponse or the lack of care by people who are paid to do their job and they do not do it. And so there is a lack of coordination, and there is much to be done with the existing resources that are there. Sadly, I think that everyone on this call knows that not one family has escaped the violence and all Indigenous women and girls live in fear today because of the situation that we exist within. We hope that we can see some tangible results. One that puts Indigenous families and communities at the center because they know best how to address these issues and that resources are

there to support that work. If there is one thing that COVID taught us this past year is that the federal government can indeed fund families and communities and organizations and agencies quickly without bureaucracy when it wants to. Thank you.

MARCIA GOOD: Thank you so much, Debra. You make excellent points. We have learned many lessons over this last year and that certainly is one of them. Our next speaker is Lestina Beltran. Lestina, are you available? Lestina, are you on the call?

LESTINA BELTRAN: Yes, I am. I did not figure out how to unmute myself.

MARCIA GOOD: OK. I hear you. Believe me, I hear you. Do you wish to be on video or just audio?

LESTINA BELTRAN: I think the video if I can figure out how to do that.

MARCIA GOOD: OK. Button at the bottom of the screen, it should say “start” or “begin video.”

LESTINA BELTRAN: OK. I see it. It is not giving me that option though. OK.

MARCIA GOOD: If you want to keep trying or you just want to – there we go. We can see you.

LESTINA BELTRAN: OK.

MARCIA GOOD: Go ahead.

LESTINA BELTRAN: All right. Hello, everybody. Please forgive me. I ask my elders to forgive me for speaking before them today. [SPEAKING IN NATIVE LANGUAGE] Greetings my relatives. [SPEAKING IN NATIVE LANGUAGE] It is good that you are all here and I offer you all a heartfelt hand – handshake. And I feel like, you know, we are not meeting under the best circumstances and that this topic is something that is not like a happy one but I – nevertheless, I am still honored to be here. And I was listening to everybody that has spoken before me, and some of the things that I thought of to add to the discussion would be about like the data collection regarding the MMIW cases and the MMIWR [missing and murdered Indigenous women and relatives] cases that are going on. I – well, first of all, I guess I am here from Nebraska Urban Indian Health Coalition in Omaha, Nebraska, and we primarily focus on serving the urban communities around Omaha. And my role here is as project coordinator for Project Beacon, which is addressing human trafficking and sex trafficking in Indian Country.

But, you know, as somebody else mentioned earlier, 40% of those MMIW cases are victims of sex work or sex trafficking, so I think there needs to be a broader focus on that as well. I also think that some of the terms, like sex workers, are loosely used, and sometimes women who go missing are not being trafficked for cash but maybe they are being trafficked or they are partaking in sex trafficking for a place to stay or even a ride from the city to the rez. And then in those instances, many of them end up going missing. And we hear about them later on by way of their body being found or by way of a local grassroots agency looking for them. I attended an MMIW conference on May 5 in Sioux City, Iowa that was hosted by the Great Plains Society, and there was a lot of shared stories there, shared trauma regarding cases where the perpetrator's family is in the Tribal judicial system and that hinders justice from being served and it hinders searches and it hinders all effort — all efforts by the family of the — of the victim. So I think in instances like that, there needs to be more attention paid to those cases and not just by one FBI field agent but maybe by several to eliminate any bias or to eliminate anything that may be going on in the Tribal court or the — with the Tribal police. So I think that they need to become more objective when they deal with cases like that, especially regarding a small reservation.

Another thing that I have noticed and heard about is how some of these MMIW or MMIR [missing and murdered Indigenous relatives] cases get little to no media coverage, and when they do find their bodies, they are classified as something other than a homicide whether that is hypothermia, delirium tremens, or other things that were not even like relevant to the case. I think that a lot of our work on the MMIW movement has started from grassroots because the Tribal agencies and urban agencies do not have funding to support these causes so we as communities have come together to try to help the families, support the families, and search for some of these victims. I have three relatives. Two of them are cold cases. One of them is Lakota Renville, whose body was found in Kansas City, Missouri in a lot. She had been brutally murdered and stabbed, and of course the local police there were quick to say she was a prostitute in their media release. And that, to me, kind of like discards any other facts regarding her case or kind of gives the general impression, "Oh, well, she was a — she was a prostitute so she does not matter." And I do not like when the media does that or, you know, when they do anything that paints the victims in an — in an unwholesome light or tries to make them look like they deserved it because they were a criminal or because they were involved with this.

I also have another relative, his name is Nicholas Lee Adams and he was found in Oklahoma in a pond. His story is a tragic one. He was raised in a foster care system. He was adopted out as an infant and raised in Oklahoma. And when they found him,

his body had been in that pond for so long that they – you know, they could not really determine the cause of death or they could not gather any evidence. So his is also a cold case. And then I have another family member, his name is Merle Sol who is an active missing person. He has been missing for – going on six years now. And the police have done what they can but we have also as a family like scoured through the community. I know at one time he was known to frequent shelters, and so I did my work, and I had a friend who was working at the shelter and had the access to the database to check all the shelters in the state but none of them had him registered as an – as a client or anything like that. And it was not like him to not check in with family and to not call for his disability check. And, you know, we do not know what happened to him. He is just gone. And every time that there is a body that is found in Nebraska, my family gets hope that maybe it is him. Like, they just want to know. They want to know what happened to him. Where is he at? Can we bring him home? Can we have closure? But like with him too, like there was not a whole lot of media attention for him. There was not like an AMBER Alert or the other alert that you guys were talking about that says, "Hey, have you see this man" or, "If you have seen him hitchhiking around this area on these days, can you let us know or can you call the family or anything." None of that was done for him also.

So I think that we as Native people have laid the groundwork to the MMIWR movement but I think as a lot of the other women have spoke about today is that we need more funding and we need more national attention to this crisis. And that is what it is. And I heard a lady speak earlier, and she was saying something about how, you know, as Native people – it is sad but, you know, we have been – we have like been classified as less than – or, you know, our disappearances do not matter as much as, you know, maybe our caucasian relatives or other people out there in the community. And I have noticed that myself also. And I think there is another case that brings that to light too with a little girl that was missing. I do not know if they found her yet, but at this MMIW event, they mentioned her and they – a lot of people were speculating and saying, "Why didn't they issue an AMBER Alert for her" or "Why aren't they releasing more information regarding her disappearance?" So I think people have had that general consensus but nobody really speaks about it. It is kind of like the elephant in the room. Like, we are supposed to be the first peoples, why don't we have like – why don't we have equality in all these other areas? So – and I just want to wrap it up with saying thank you for allowing me to speak today and I hope that as a result of all that is said here today, that there will be more action taken regarding this MMIW crisis that continues to go on. That is all I have to say. Thank you.

MARCIA GOOD: Lestina, thank you so much. Bryan Newland.

BRYAN NEWLAND: Yeah. Thanks, Marcia. Lestina, Ms. Beltran, I want to just acknowledge you for the work that you do along with all the other advocates here and for the points that you have made. It is – I just wanted to respond by affirming that we understand within the Department of the Interior that people most vulnerable to this type of violence are often, you know, they have criminal background or sex workers [INDISTINCT]. As we go forward with implementing the Not Invisible Act, the commission that we have to appoint from across – from across the country, including across Indian Country, has to include people who are survivors of human trafficking and violent crime against Indian women. And we want to make sure that as we appoint people to the Not Invisible Act Commission, that we are being mindful of that and not stigmatizing people or casting them as responsible for what has happened to them. Though I appreciate you drawing attention to that, and that is something we are trying to be very mindful of. Thank you.

MARCIA GOOD: Thank you so much for that. We have a couple of folks who I called on earlier who have joined us. I would like to call on Stacy Bohlen. Stacy, are you available? Stacy Bohlen?

STACY BOHLEN: I am trying to be heard. Can I be heard?

MARCIA GOOD: Yes. We hear you. Do you want to also be seen on video or just audio?

STACY BOHLEN: Sure. If you can control and...

MARCIA GOOD: OK. So...

STACY BOHLEN: ...make that happen, that would be a welcome and beautiful thing. I am not saying that [INDISTINCT] saying that.

MARCIA GOOD: OK. What you need to do, at the bottom of your screen, there should be a button for you to push that says “begin video.” And if you utilize that then we will be able to see you.

STACY BOHLEN: How does that work?

MARCIA GOOD: It is not like being – that is perfect. It is [INDISTINCT]

STACY BOHLEN: OK. Well [SPEAKING IN NATIVE LANGUAGE]. Good afternoon, my name is Turtle Woman. That is my traditional name. I am a citizen of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians from the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. My Anglo

name is Stacy Bohlen. I am the Chief Executive Officer of the National Indian Health Board. Our organization serves all 574 plus federally recognized Tribal nations for the provision of health care, public health, health services, addressing health disparities and, in general, being a relentless advocate for the Indian health care system and the people who utilize it and depend on it. I do not have prepared remarks for today but there are some things I would like to share.

Last week, the National Indian Health Board hosted its annual Tribal Public Health Summit. And we were really fortunate to have a symposium on murdered and missing Indigenous peoples. And this is a space that the National Indian Health Board is a relative newcomer to compared to the people who have been doing just unbelievably hard work and meaningful work, impactful work for years and years. And our role, as it is evolving in this space, is to – currently, we are – we are writing a report and looking at the public health protective factors that may be employed to address the MMIP issue. And when we look at the public health protective factors, the ones that are traditionally identified are not traditionally ours. Our Native ways of knowing, our Native ways of forming family and community, of meting out justice and of ensuring that we have safe and healthy Native communities, not necessarily the same as the lens through which we are perpetually encouraged to look. It is a lens that was largely developed by Western society and cultures, and not with thoughts about our traditions, our ways of defining what wellness is, what health is, and we are remedying that. We are engaging with folks from across the country to help us be able to provide some knowledge and information that will inform and empower Tribal communities to stand on their protective factors, resilience, the ways that we are empowered as Native peoples. Our organization did work very vigilantly on the Violence Against Women Act. And we were very pleased when Tribal provisions in that act were adopted and gave our people some authority to mete out justice for those who commit crimes within the bounds of Tribal lands. Of course, that act is up for reauthorization, and we will all be working together on that again now.

But there is something else I would like to say today, and an earlier speaker touched on this, and she touched on the role of the media in saying who we are and in defining us. And I – and many of you may recall the research that was done around the mascot issue where Native children felt much less able to believe they could become the person they imagine becoming after viewing mascots, and yet supported the mascots because it is the only place they saw themselves reflected in mainstream culture.

Along those lines, recently former Sen. Rick Santorum from Pennsylvania made some crushing remarks about our people. He made the remarks that were really, really well-informed and up-to-date in 1493 when the Doctrine of Discovery was issued that

declared our lands as virgin territory that nobody was here to occupy and all that – all that is here, and the North American continent could simply just be taken because it was blank. When you perpetuate a narrative like that, you perpetuate a position of invisibility, of irrelevance. You perpetuate an idea that our people are – that we simply do not matter. He said that there is nothing in American culture that is Native American culture. That we have not contributed anything to American culture. I think that that level of ignorance, and I think violent language about American Indians and Alaska Native peoples contribute to this topic. Because if you are already invisible, how can you be missing? And when you think back to the constructs of colonization that formed this nation, that were the building blocks that are still in place today, that – on which this nation is founded. We have to look very honestly at how we define ourselves. How we – how we own our space, and our bodies, our cultures, our futures and our presence. I believe that any other ethnicity that would have encountered that kind of terrorizing language about who they are to America would have met with others from that culture or place to respond to speak up. But CNN has not done that. And I think people like Aaron Payment, my Tribal Chairman; Jonathan Nez, Chairman of the Navajo Nation; Victoria Kitcheyan, Chairwoman of the Winnebago Tribe would be astonishingly effective pundits for Native people to speak our truths and reclaim the fact that we are in fact here and that we have always been here. Who we are matters.

And we as Native people need to get ourselves on the big and small screen on a regular basis with our own voices to elevate who we are and occupy space that cannot be taken from us, like these women and children are taken from us. So in closing, I just want to say we have often said at the National Indian Health Board that the number one disease we suffer from is invisibility. It is like a – an indicating factor that leads us to places like having a race to the bottom for the worst health disparities all across the country, and yet little investment is made in us because if the dominant culture policymakers do not see you, there is no problem and you do not exist. We have been able to turn some of that around with COVID and largely because of the three people I mentioned and many other Tribal leaders who took to the airwaves and spoke up. So part of overcoming this issue for our people is demanding our collective visibility. And I believe that that will inform a path forward for reclaiming our peoples who are stolen from us, who are murdered and who are missing. They matter, and we want them back, and they deserve to be counted and they deserve to be seen. And the National Indian Health Board will do what it can to contribute to that outcome. Thank you very much for the time.

MARCIA GOOD: Thank you. Thank you so much for those sentiments. I have never – I think I have never heard it put quite so succinctly and aptly in terms of visibility, and that is something for all of us to think of. We will definitely be looking to the – with the

Indian Health Board going forward. Our next speaker who was trying to get on when I called her name and was not able to is Kristin Welch. Kristin, are you able to get on at this time?

KRISTIN WELCH: Can you hear me this time? Hello?

MARCIA GOOD: Yes, I can – I can hear you, Kristin. Do you want to be on video as well?

KRISTIN WELCH: No. Speaker is fine.

MARCIA GOOD: OK. Thank you.

KRISTIN WELCH: [SPEAKING IN NATIVE LANGUAGE] My English name is Kristin Welch. I am a Menominee descendant and a member of the Martin clan, and also the founder and executive director of Waking Women Healing Institute. We are a grassroots Indigenous survivor-led organization that serves the family of MMIWG2S (missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit) and survivors of sexual violence here in Wisconsin. And what we continue to see in this work is that oftentimes our families and advocates are left out of really important conversations, and not only are we left out of conversations but we are not in a place of where decisions and solutions are being created. And we continually see these intercepting issues of MMIWG2S that are not addressed likely for resource extraction and its contribute – contribution to our murders. Everywhere we see those pipelines, we have man camps. We know that human trafficking follows those pipelines but yet they are allowed to continue to be put up in urban and Tribal lands which are some of the most under-resourced areas. Our – excuse me. Our rural areas and Tribal lands.

We also continue to see a lack of prosecution. There is a huge lack of prosecution for acts of sexual violence against Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit with human trafficking, with sexual assault and even when we go murdered. When we find those cases, it is the grassroots advocates that have to push for basic charges to be in place. We are the ones that show up on the federal steps with our family members advocating for correct charges to be in place. Prosecutors play an incredibly important role and have a huge amount of power to correct this issue. And as a system, they have to begin holding them accountable. We also see a lack – a lack of investigation. So these things that we are asking for are incredibly basic things. Investigate our murder when we go missing and murdered and do it properly with the correct amount of resources backing those things. Prosecute our offenders. When we have these violent acts of sexual violence, which is the root cause of MMIW is the patriarchal sexual violence. It has been perpetuated for over 500 years. It gives those perpetrators

of violence power to continuing targeting us. We also do not see enough focus on prevention of the issue in the first place. Go to the root cause, go to the source, and focus on all of those beautiful grassroots advocates who have spoken, who are out there on the ground doing the work, implementing the solutions, and fully fund them. They are implementing solutions that are working, that are creating change, and they should not have to fight for resources. It should not be competitive-style funding to send those grassroots efforts. They need to be fully funded and then implemented in a way in which the communities are telling you, "That this is what is going to work for our community."

And we also have to have the system held accountable itself for the violent acts that it is causing against our Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit. We have heard so many stories of our sisters, of our nieces, of our aunties and mothers being put in jail when they fight back against their trafficker, when they fight back against their rapist, when they fight back against their domestic violence abuser. That is absolutely unacceptable. We are not doing enough to protect our victims of crime. And then when our Indigenous women are sitting in these county jails, most oftentimes they are raped and they are assaulted at the hands of the system. We have heard of cases, our beautiful niece in Ashland county who was carrying a life while she was in jail. She lost that beautiful baby because they were – they were refusing her the prenatal care that the doctors told her that she needed. That is a MMIW at the hands of the system. And it is both local level, those state officials that have to start holding them accountable and the federal resources need to be backing them. We are the solution. Those grassroots and MMIW families do not need to be carrying this burden anymore.

It is a travesty that our families have to constantly put on hold their mourning and their grieving to go out and search for their loved one because nobody else is doing it. They have to put on hold their mourning and their grieving to become a social media expert and getting their story out in the media because we are not in the media. We are not in the media at the local level. We are not in the media at the national level. And when we are, it is because grassroots and families are putting our stories out in the media. Our stories are valuable. Our family stories are valuable. And it is data. And it needs to be looked at in that way. It is truth. And in that truth, you find those solutions for change. And all we need our systems to do is to act on those solutions in the way that our families and advocates are telling you it needs to be implemented. They know exactly what needs to happen. We need those things to be funded. We need systems to stop abusing our relatives and allowing the abuses within their systems to happen.

And we need the funding to make this stuff – the prevention efforts a priority. We are tired of seeing our families paying for travel to attend court cases in other states so

that they can hear justice, hopefully, be played out for their family member. We are tired of [INDISTINCT] with our families as they are re-traumatized by law enforcement, the lack of clear and transparent communication from law enforcement, and the way in which our court systems treat our family. No family should have to create a GoFundMe so that they can bring the remains of their loved one home. That is one of the biggest injustices that we see, is that this is all on the back and the hands and the responsibilities of grassroots and our family. And then we forget about the children. There are so many children that are left behind, that are constantly reaching out for a mother who was taken, who was murdered, who was stolen, and that mother will never be able to reach back for that baby. What are we doing to support that child now? The system has a responsibility to ensure that child has every access to opportunity that they deserve. It is a community responsibility. It is a human being responsibility. And the solutions will not come from the system.

We are asking you, we are mandating you to respect the words and the data and the truth of the family members because they hold the solutions. We need better communication on all levels. There are a lot of state initiatives. There a lot of federal initiatives for MMIW that have zero communication with our MMIW families and grassroots advocates. I think our cold case offices are good examples of that. All the family members we talk to have no clue what is going on with them. They are not being communicated to about their cases. And when there is communication between the state and the federal levels with our families and advocates, it is because we initiated it first. Our families need to be represented, not just in a listening session but in those spaces, where you are brainstorming, where you are coming up with implementations, and then how those would be delivered into our community. Because only our community know what that is going to look like. Only our communities can give you the solutions.

We just need the system to stop putting up barriers, stop creating excuses of bureaucracy, of congressional acts or whatever excuse we get. There is not enough money, and there certainly is not enough urgency around this issue at the state and federal level. We have a task force here in Wisconsin. We are – we have high hopes, but we really needed to move quicker, not just here, but I think all of our federal-level partners working on MMIW. We are going missing and murdered right now while we are having this conversation. I do not understand how many stories you need to hear. How much more data needs to be represented before something is actually done? So we want to thank you for listening to us today. We hope that you represent our family voice and our advocate voice in all of those phases of decision-making. And hope that you remember them not just today, tomorrow, but thinking about that for generations to come, that what we are doing right here right now is creating that solution, that

beautiful place where they do not ever have to have these conversations of MMIW. They do not ever have to share their stories about sexual violence. [SPEAKING IN NATIVE LANGUAGE] Thank you for listening.

MARCIA GOOD: Thank you so much, Kristin, for those very moving words. We all keep in mind every day as we do this work, all of the people who are working in this area and working with you, that none of us would be here were it not for the families and the victims that have gone missing or have been murdered. And you are absolutely correct in that the tribes have the best solution for those issues and we in the federal government need to look into that. So thank you so much for that. Our next speaker on our list today is Suzanne Trusler. Suzanne, I believe, that you are on. Can you let us know if you are able to speak?

SUZANNE TRUSLER: Yes. Hi, Marcia. Yes, I am on. Can you – can you hear me?

MARCIA GOOD: Yes. We can hear you. Do you wish to be on a video?

SUZANNE TRUSLER: No, I do not think. I was having trouble late – earlier...

MARCIA GOOD: OK. We are getting a little bit – we are...

SUZANNE TRUSLER: OK.

MARCIA GOOD: OK. We are getting a little bit of echo or feedback, but...

SUZANNE TRUSLER: Yeah. There is an echo kind of. That is what I was talking about. I was having trouble with that earlier. But I think – is it OK now though? Hello?

MARCIA GOOD: Yes. We can hear you – yes, we can hear you fine.

SUZANNE TRUSLER: Oh, OK. Well, I will go ahead and start. Yeah. Hi, good afternoon, everyone. And especially thank you to Operation Lady Justice Task Force for this listening session. My name is Suzanne Trusler and I am from Montana, and I am a member of the Northern Cheyenne Tribe. It has just been so heartbreaking, just sitting here listening to the frustrations of today's speakers. And my heart just goes out to everyone. MMIP is a crisis, and it has been for a long time. And as we all know, Montana is the second highest in the nation for MMIP. So, I am hoping our state MMIP board and Operation Lady Justice will not just be another entity created that just becomes a band-aid for this very serious issue. I feel that in-depth commitment and

involvement is crucial at the grassroots level, and so many people have talked about that today. I think that is one of the solutions.

Also, in alleviating the numbers of MMIP, law enforcement needs to do a more thorough job in their investigations and not take it so lightly, or just feel it is something that is not worthwhile. I have no idea what they talk about as one speaker said, when they said it was not important. I wonder what is more important. I guess they did not say, but just in my lifetime, I have seen the numbers climb horrendously rather than diminish. And I know that the legal entities who work on solving these cases are overworked, and many times short staffed, but we Indigenous people are in a major crisis. And just like any other crisis, the utmost attention needs to be given. We need to get the grassroots population involved, and not just depend on a state board who meets occasionally. The survivors of the missing and murdered are working diligently on their own, a lot of times without funding, and we have heard a lot of that today. But they are working on their own to solve what happened to their loved one. Families are angry. We are all angry. We are in a nationwide crisis, which until recently has been predominantly ignored. But in spite of that interest that is being given nowadays, there is still a lot of work yet to be done. So, Operation Lady Justice Task Force, we need justice for the victims. But vision without action really is simply just passing time. Thank you for hearing me today.

MARCIA GOOD: Thank you so much, Suzanne. Very powerful words. Do we have someone on from Oneida Nation? We had a representative on Oneida Nation that was signed up to speak. I do not have a name, but if there is somebody on from Oneida, if you could raise your hand and let us know that you are here? Is there anyone on from Oneida?

DARYL FOX: Don't see anyone raise a hand yet, Marcia.

MARCIA GOOD: OK. Well, we will come back to them. Jacob Molitor. Jacob, are you available?

DARYL FOX: I think that person is not in the attendee list currently.

MARCIA: OK. Joseph. Joseph from the Trickster Cultural Center, are you available?

DARYL FOX: Same status for Joseph. Not in the attendee list.

MARCIA GOOD: Christine Benally. Christine, are you available?

DARYL FOX: Do not see Christine as well. That being said, Marcia, there is a Jennifer Webster that had raised her hand. Perhaps for Oneida? Do you want to instead meet her?

MARCIA GOOD: OK. Yes, please.

DARYL FOX: OK. And if you can go ahead and unmute, Jennifer Webster, please? Jennifer, you are unmuted.

JENNIFER WEBSTER: OK. OK. Can you hear me?

MARCIA GOOD: We can hear you, Jennifer. Are you speaking on behalf of Oneida Nation?

JENNIFER WEBSTER: Yes, I am.

MARCIA GOOD: OK. Great. Do you want to be on video?

JENNIFER WEBSTER: Sure.

MARCIA GOOD: OK. Go ahead and press the button on the...

JENNIFER WEBSTER: If you can turn it on.

MARCIA GOOD: Yes. Press the button on the bottom of your screen that says "start video." And I will stop mine, and then you can start yours.

JENNIFER WEBSTER: OK.

MARCIA GOOD: And we can hear you loud and clear. There you go.

JENNIFER WEBSTER: OK. [SPEAKING IN NATIVE LANGUAGE] Jennifer Webster [SPEAKING IN NATIVE LANGUAGE]. Good afternoon. My name is Jennifer Webster, Councilwoman for Oneida Nation in Wisconsin. Also a member of Wisconsin's task force. Wisconsin had just organized a task force last October. And I think Kristin mentioned that as well. So we have only had maybe two meetings, but what Wisconsin realized was that we do not have a consolidated database for the state. We have pots of information all over the state. Northern Wisconsin and Milwaukee, total across all these different pots of information is there, but they are not speaking to each other. So that was just one of the gaps identified here in Wisconsin. And what this task force

would like to do is, hopefully, we can help develop laws in Wisconsin for sex trafficking and human trafficking.

Also, on Wednesday, May 5, Oneida, we also held awareness event on Oneida. We did a walk. And then we held a fire. We lit the fire at noon on Wednesday that went for 24 hours, and a lot of the other Tribes in Wisconsin were doing – lighting those fires that well – as well. And there was great TV coverage for awareness. Here in Oneida, we are located just outside of Green Bay. So, I saw three different channels, events that were happening in different parts of Wisconsin. So, I was thankful for that. The media here is aware, and I was just so thankful to be able to see other areas, other Tribes in the news as well for good things. So I too want to thank you, OLJ, for bringing awareness and for acknowledging the issue. Thank you for starting the conversation. This is not something that we have talked about. And now, the country is understanding and seeing MMIW, and they are understanding what it is. Thank you for making the efforts, coordination such as this, to bring this to light. And I want to encourage and uplift, and pray for each one of you, to keep striving, to keep working, and to keep fighting for our – for our sisters, and for our families. So, with that [SPEAKING IN NATIVE LANGUAGE] thank you, from Oneida Nation.

MARCIA GOOD: Thank you so much, Jennifer. You were the second speaker who has mentioned extractive industries within this area. I know that Kristin mentioned that as well, and that it is something that we will be looking at. Certainly has issues that go along with it. And we want to take a look at kind of the underlying connection of these barriers. So, thank you for bringing that up. OK. I think we are at Jacqueline Platero. Jacqueline, are you available?

DARYL FOX: Jacqueline is not in the attendee list currently.

MARCIA GOOD: Sandra Cianciulli? Sandra Cianciulli?

DARYL FOX: Same status for Sandra.

MARCIA GOOD: Sandra, are you available? OK. Mary Kunesh? Mary Kunesh? I think I saw Mary on the line earlier.

DARYL FOX: Yeah. Mary is. Tammy, if you would not mind unmuting Mary Kunesh. Your line is unmuted, Mary.

MARY KUNESH: Thank you [SPEAKING IN NATIVE LANGUAGE]. Mary Kunesh [SPEAKING IN NATIVE LANGUAGE]. Good afternoon, my relatives. I am very pleased to

be here with you. I am Sen. Mary Kunesh from Minnesota. I am a descendant of a long line of strong Lakota women. And it is their spirit that I carry the work that I do, especially around our missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, men, boys, two-spirit and communities. I am a first-year senator here in Minnesota, but I have spent four years in the House of Representatives. And while I have been there, I have been able to champion a number of pieces of really historic pieces of legislation for our Native communities. Specifically, two years ago, I authored and passed legislation to create a Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women's Task Force. And within the 18 months that we were able to do it, it was – it was an incredible experience, and when we talk about working from the grassroot level, this was literally from the community.

When I had the inspiration to create this legislation, influenced by the Canadian report and the very tragic death of Savanna LaFontaine in North Dakota, I went to the community and said, "I will work on this legislation, but you need to help me create it. You need to let me know, should we, first of all, do this, because we know how painful bringing up memories of lost loved ones can be?" And they said, "Absolutely, we must." And so, it is with their support that we sat down, and worked on who should be on the task force and who would not need to be, but making sure that there were family members and survivors, and community organizations that have worked on this for so long as part of the voice. And so, I was very proud to say that in spite of COVID, we were able to put together a very comprehensive report that came out in November, and if – and if any of you are interested in reading that, I will try to put that link into the chat, so that you can see that piece of legislation.

And if there are other legislators or policymakers on this call, or if any of you would like to use that piece of legislation as a – an outline or a platform to create your own legislation within your – within your state to create a task force, if we all did the same thing, basically, and created our own task force, we will basically have our national study right there. And I think it would be an incredible movement across the nation to do that. And so, with that being – that being completed in November – excuse me, in December, we are still tying up loose ends, but the piece of legislation I am carrying this year is to create a permanent MMIR, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives, Office here in Minnesota. It would be the policy in our public safety department. We are, again, asking for little – very little money. But unfortunately, our stock with our GOP majority Senate, who has not only – not given us a committee hearing, but has filed – has – well, basically said that they do not want to grow government, and they do not want to spend the money. But we still have a few weeks left of our session, and I am hopeful that through the communication and pressure of our communities, that this will still happen.

I do want to just mention the extraction industry, and the effect it has on MMIR. We have a battle with Enbridge's Line 3 here in Minnesota. We are actually – and maybe, you could take this message back to President Biden, and ask him to please intercede, and send Enbridge home. Within weeks of 4,000 men descending upon Northern Minnesota, there was a sting that captured or encapsulated men that were seeking specifically underage Native American women, and out of the arrests that were made, at least two of those men were Enbridge employees. So, when Enbridge wants to poo-hoo that whole notion that the oil industry, or the pipeline industry does not contribute to sex trafficking, or violence against our women, we prove them absolutely wrong right from the start.

The other thing I just want to mention is that Minnesota houses the cold case office, and unfortunately, we have not been able to work or collaborate with that office much as – at all. We have reached out a number of times to the gentleman that's in that office. And just have not been able to build any kind of a working relationship. So, I look forward to that, going forward, as well as working with our new Secretary of the Interior, Deb Haaland. I was so very proud when she announced her office, her unit within our federal government. And I am hoping that those of us that already have established task force or groups who are working on those here across the nation, that we have that opportunity to collaborate again and directly work with that unit in order to address these issues.

This past Wednesday, we had an incredible event here at our state capital. Thousands and thousands of red cardboard dresses were on display at the front of the capital. If you Google it, you will probably find a million different pictures. And again, if you want to contact me, I am happy to work with any of you, if you have questions, how we did the legislation, what it looked like, how we can collaborate, I would be more than happy to do that. And I just really want to say [SPEAKING IN NATIVE LANGUAGE] all of you that are working on this issue. I remember as a young girl, a phone call coming to my mother from her cousins out on Standing Rock, and it was the news that her cousin Elsie went missing. And we never really knew what happened until just within the past few years, as a greater awareness of this – the missing and murdered, my family did our own investigation and found that she indeed had been very much taken advantage of, was murdered. We concede she is murdered, even though her death certificate says she committed suicide, which is one of the things that we will find on most death certificates for our deceased family members and loved ones. So once again, I just want to say [SPEAKING IN NATIVE LANGUAGE], and thank you to all of you, and so much appreciation for putting together this panel. And with that, I am going to be signing off soon because we have another rally, another MMIW rally here in St. Paul.

And I will take your spirits and your good feelings along with me. So, enjoy your weekend, and thank you much.

MARCIA GOOD: Thank you so much, Mary, we saw pictures of your event, and it was truly amazing. You have done some really fine work there, and we are honored to have you with us today. Our next speaker is Jose Villegas. Jose, are you on? Jose?

DARYL FOX: Actually that person had requested to participate at a later time perhaps.

MARCIA GOOD: OK. Sounds good. Carmen Oleary. Carmen, are you available?

DARYL FOX: I do not see Carmen Oleary in the current attendee list.

MARCIA GOOD: OK. And we have a speaker who had been on the earlier slide that I had thought she might not be able to make it but I believe is on now, if we could call them both, she would be next in this line after Carmen. Jamescita Peshlakai, are you available? I think I can hear – are you available to speak?

JAMESCITA PESHAKAI: Yes. Can you hear me?

MARCIA GOOD: Wonderful. Yes, we can hear you. Do you want to have video on?

JAMESCITA PESHAKAI: I can and...

MARCIA GOOD: I see you.

JAMESCITA PESHAKAI: Hold on, one moment.

MARCIA GOOD: We all see you. OK.

JAMESCITA PESHAKAI: OK. Yes. Let me see how I can do this. OK. I am getting ready to go to the city, and I am in my car, so please forgive the fact that I am not in a pretty constant place, but I am a state senator in the state of Arizona. And very much like our previous speaker here in Arizona, we did do a Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women's Study Committee. And that was funded in 2019, and the committee began in 2020, and was completed with a report from a consultant, just within – in December. And I can also share that report. One of the things that – I just want to say thank you to all the speakers, you have a wealth of information, and people that are knowledgeable about where we are as Indigenous women, girls, two-spirit and people that go missing.

And I just want to share a story about my family, and in 1974, my little cousin sister went missing from her home in Tuba City, Arizona. She was found about 24 hours later, within 24 hours, maybe half a mile, her body just thrown into a ditch. She had been raped and strangled, murdered. And that was in 1974; I was 8 years old. And within this year, this past two years, I had a niece here in Cameron, Arizona, where I reside, she was a welder working out in Kentucky, and she had gotten off shift, and was going to sleep, I do not – and she was just stolen out of a parking lot. And her body was found about 48 hours later in a room in the same hotel. And so, this is – I agree with everyone else that has spoken, that this is a pervasive issue. And I have – pretty much have worked, dedicated my work, to making sure that this does not continue on, and I have worked with Tribal administrations, with the President's office, and then, being a[n] Army veteran, and Persian Gulf veteran of Desert Storm, we see it in the services too, with women in the military.

This is an issue that knows no – there is no line in who you are, where you are, your income, your family background, it does not matter, it – we are sought as people that can be easily targeted, and much of what has been talked about before, but at the state level, I have found that we had – we had instituted a AMBER Alert with the state of Arizona after a young child named Ashlynnne Mike was kidnapped, raped and murdered in Shiprock, New Mexico. I think it was in 2016 or '17, and it is called the Ashlynnne Mike AMBER Alert. And in doing that work, I realized that our Tribal police, of the 22 Tribes in Arizona, we have different standards of police training. Some are trained according to state standards, Arizona POST, for example. Some are trained by – at the BIA level, so there are different levels of training, and that is – that is problematic in this issue as well. And then, also the memoranda of understanding that are – that need to be drafted, there is like one of the speakers said before, you know, the federal government stepped in during this pandemic, and there was so many waivers and exemptions made according to jurisdiction for the pandemic, and yet, we cannot do that with our missing and murdered. So, there has got to be a path forward. I am here, and listening to hear and listen out for solutions and because we all – I know we – this is a serious problem.

And then, also another issue is like one of the other speakers said, she was a former legislator in her state, and there was so much lack of compassion, empathy, or respect for Tribal communities. And that is what I find here in Arizona, when I ran legislation year after year, people openly say in committee, "Well, that is an Indian problem, we are not – well, you – you are – the Tribes have enough federal money, and get enough gaming money." So, they do not really understand that we are U.S. citizens, and that is a pervasive problem. This past session, I was – I had spoken about the need for

funding on – in my district, and was requesting \$900,000 for a county school road maintenance. And I was told, "Is it – was it in the Indian reservation?" I said, "Yes, but it is a county road." They did not want to fund it, and I – and on the floor of the Senate, I spoke, and another senator spoke after me, and said I had called her a racist. And the word had not come out of my mouth, and in thinking about that accusation afterwards, I think, as far as our greater society here in the United States, I think there is a real interracial – intergenerational embedded ethnic guilt that goes through generations from [INDISTINCT] families that they know they took Tribal lands, and they are the very ones that do not want to help our Tribal communities, or work on solutions and collaborate. And I think it is perpetuated by the fact that funding is not funneled towards education, and there is no equity in history and textbooks, geology and all the contributions of Native Americans to this land, which continues, and to compounds the problem of invisibility, which some of your speakers talked about.

So, it is a multilayered problem. And I think one of the things that really adds to it, and my point is, the intergenerational guilt of colonization. It is better to pretend we do not exist than to acknowledge that we do exist, and were – and still under attack over – now, over 500 years. And so – but those of us that are Native American, that are part other Tribes and part other races, and we understand that we are not racist, but we have this American – non-Native American guilt that is part of the problem, and keeps us from being visible. And so, I just wanted to add that to the conversation and let you know that I really appreciate all the work that everybody has done and that there is a path forward, and we have to find that path forward. And so, I really appreciate the Biden Administration, the Lady Justice Task Force for putting this together. You know, we have talked about so many problems, but now we need to keep at this and just move it forward one way or another. So, I thank you all. I did not prepare any remarks, but I appreciate being given the time to speak, and I will share our task force, our study committee's report and findings, with Mr. Newland after this. Thank you.

MARCIA GOOD: Thank you so much, I know your task force did a huge amount of work and has come up with a number of recommendations that are very – can be very instrumental in making large a difference, but thank you so much for your comments today. OK. We will go to our last slide of speakers. And our last slide of speakers, we have – let us see. Maria Haskins, I think we – Maria, are you available?

DARYL FOX: Marcia, I believe she had deferred to perhaps another session.

MARCIA GOOD: That is what I was thinking as well, which is why I called the next speaker ahead of her, I am sorry about that. So now we are going to Elaine Alexander. Elaine?

DARYL FOX: Elaine is not in the current list of attendees.

MARCIA GOOD: OK. And I have looked up some of these as well. Patty Eagle Bull, I believe Patty might be on. Patty, are you available? OK. We will just go ahead and proceed to our next speaker that...

PATTY EAGLE BULL: Hi, good afternoon.

MARCIA GOOD: Oh, hi, Patty, are you available to speak?

PATTY EAGLE BULL: I am, good afternoon. Thank you for the time and for your efforts, you are putting forward to hear our voices. It is truly appreciated. I want to share a little bit. I am – my name is Patty Eagle Bull, my Lakota name is [SPEAKING IN NATIVE LANGUAGE]. I work for the Great Plains Tribal Leaders' Health Board in Rapid City. And several co-workers and I, a few months ago, decided it was time to take action and get involved in the activities of many local organizations in the Great Plains area. And we learned that there is a definite need for more voices and action. And with that, we joined forces on our own time and reached out to several local organizations and regional organizations and asked how we can help, what can we do? We set up a meeting with – at that point in time, Jeannie Hovland, who was the former Commissioner for the Administration for Native Americans and the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Native American Affairs. And we met with her, we identified several issues that we, as an organization and as a group, can pull our thoughts and actions together to try and make a difference and help the Tribes and the families and all of our relatives who are impacted and affected by the many, many missing and murdered women, children and two-spirits. Our hearts just go out to each of the families and relatives that we have.

And many of us have been personally affected as well. We have relatives who are missing or who have been murdered, and we're very aware of the numerous cold cases, I hate to refer to them as that, because while nobody is working on them, it appears, there may be in the background. It is our hope and our prayer that we can join our forces and make positive changes and affect some of the families that are suffering, that are in mourning, that do not know where their family members are. So what we have done after meeting with Jeannie was highlight some of the issues that I would like to discuss here today. One of them is the need for quality comprehensive data. While the Great Plains is thought to have one of the higher trafficking numbers in the country, we do not know that for sure because there is no data. Without having accurate data we cannot prove that, we can assume it, we know it because we live

here, and we hear the stories on a too often basis. We know that there are issues in South Dakota, North Dakota, all of the surrounding areas and across the United States, but when they tell us we have one of the highest ones, it is because we have family and friends and relatives who are raising their voices. And we need to improve upon this.

One of the ways that we know that we can help is through the Tribal Leaders' Health Board, we have an epidemiology center. And there are 12 of them located across the United States. The purpose is to help the Tribes with their data, and we are hoping that – of course, we need the funding, and we need the manning to be able to do it – that we can build a comprehensive system. With that being said, we know that that is in a reactive mode. I want to call attention to the need, and it was addressed by several of our relatives in earlier conversations. The need to be proactive, we need resources to train individuals so that we are preventing these situations. We need to go down to the lower grade levels in elementary. We need to teach our children how to be aware, what to do, how can they avoid situations. Teach them self-defense. That is one of the actions that we have taken here with our organization, several of our programs have collaborated, and we are working with other organizations to spread the word to teach our young people – even our elders. Those who are not in school, it is available on our website. Teach them self-defense, because we can prevent some of these cases if they learn to fight back.

Better yet, let us teach our police departments from the top down, let us teach them – let us show them what they can do, how they can be more effective in working with the communities, working with the families, working with the individuals who are having these issues. Training is key to this, along with having more visibility in the communities. What we have decided to help out with in partnership with other organizations is to reach out to the Tribes that we represent. Find out how many of them have an AMBER Alert. We were shocked. There were only a few out of the 18 Tribes that we represent that have any type of system available in their areas. We want to help in those – help them get that in place and work with the states so that no matter where we are at, no matter what happens to our relatives, as soon as that alert goes off, we have more people aware of it. The more people that are aware, the more people can respond and help. And that we do not have that long absences before we hear about it.

Also want to bring up the need to identify resources for those individuals and families who need help. We need to get – along with the faster response, we need to know who to go to. We had a situation with – for example, just last week, where somebody identified a website where there was trafficking going on, and there were relatives of

ours that were highlighted on those websites. We had to call numerous people before we landed at Homeland Security, before we landed at the Tribal nations in the BIA police and the Tribal police in the areas that we knew were highlighted on this website. We need to have a database that helps people react and respond faster to situations like this. And then, we need to have people who are actionable, that will get involved. That will make things happen, and not just provide lip service.

So also in tandem with that, I am going to talk about the need for funding because the resources always come down to funding and being able to supply those who need help. In – you know, in – we learn through the conversations that we have had with some of our collaborative partners, they are all – there needs to be funding for the individuals who were affected, the families that are affected, they need supplies, you know, personal care items. People who were involved in trafficking, those who have made it out need support once they get through the situations that they are in. One of the highlights that I wanted to bring was the block grants and the funding that are made available. We appreciate that you shared that information earlier in the broadcast, but I want to bring up a few points that I shared with Ms. Hovland. Some of those block grants are not designed, they are not user friendly. The individuals, the small grassroots groups and organizations do not have people who are available or do not have their individuals who can sit down and take the time to write a grant. We do not have those resources. So we have stepped up and we have offered to help in some of the arenas where we are able to, but there needs to be funding, there needs to be grants that are made available for grassroots stipulations, that do not require matching funding, that do not require that we meet the Westernized mentality.

What – one good example was, there was a grant that came out that would help build up a lot of our communities, but it was – it was so immersed in the Western mentality that our culture in our Tribes could not fit into the requirements of that grant, which excluded us right off the top. So I think there needs to be some cultural training that goes along with this. All of the individuals from the federal level to the state level down to the city level need to have some cultural training as well. Diversity training is key to us being able to work together and break down some of these barriers.

The other thing that I think is important is the policies. I know you are working on some of them. I heard them mention, I know Savanna's Act was a huge, huge component in the – some of the prior conversations, but we cannot – we cannot let that slide. We need to have more focus on – like the ladies in front of me discussed. We need to make sure that individuals who are in the – that have gone through that system, do not just get a slap on their hand, that they truly – them and the individuals that are involved in these rings that are going around, and I think trafficking has a lot to

do with the murdered and missing individuals in our area. We know that they all snowball into drug use. We hear some horror stories for individuals who – they get some women and young girls addicted, and they end up becoming part of our murdered and missing families. And we need to not just look at one sector, it is a broad sector. There are many different angles to this that need to be brought together into one arena so that we collaborate and take care of these issues comprehensively, not singly. And I think I have covered everything that I wanted to bring to the table with this. And I just want to thank you so much for this time. I truly believe that this administration, Mrs. Haaland and President Biden will follow through with this. And thank you for your time and for listening. [SPEAKING IN NATIVE LANGUAGE]

MARCIA GOOD: Thank you much, Patty. We have that same faith and belief that you have as well. One of the things you mentioned was that quality comprehensive data, and that it is something that the Task Force is working very hard on right now, to be sure that we have that underlying data so we can solve the problem that we actually have, and make sure that all of those efforts are going into the right location.

[Part 3]

MARCIA GOOD: So we have asked our moderator to kind of pull the list of names of our speakers who are left. Next one is Yolanda Francisco-Nez. Yolanda, are you available?

YOLANDA FRANCISCO-NEZ: Hello, this is Yolanda.

MARCIA GOOD: We can hear you. Do you wish to be on video?

YOLANDA FRANCISCO-NEZ: If you would like, sure.

MARCIA GOOD: Sure, just go ahead and start your video in the bottom of your screen.

YOLANDA FRANCISCO-NEZ: OK.

MARCIA GOOD: We can hear you. If you want to go ahead, it – we cannot – there we go.

YOLANDA FRANCISCO-NEZ: I think that is it. Can you hear me?

MARCIA GOOD: Yes, we can hear you and see you.

YOLANDA FRANCISCO-NEZ: OK. Great. Thank you so much for having us participate today. I want to just pull out a few facts that we have that I think may be relevant. To begin, I want to address President Joe Biden as well as Secretary Deb Haaland, and Marcia Good and others on the executive team from Operation Lady Justice. Hello and [SPEAKING IN NATIVE LANGUAGE]. My name is Yolanda Francisco-Nez and I am the Executive Director of Restoring Ancestral Winds [SPEAKING IN NATIVE LANGUAGE]. Thank you for inviting nonprofit organizations like ours at Restoring Ancestral Winds to share their comments today. Recently, we added to our family with a lovely new Navajo baby girl, Adespa. While I attended her birth, I was in deep contemplation about the world she is entering. Her identity as a Navajo spirit is strongly tied to her matrilineal heritage. As such, I ask myself, how can we protect her? How can we ensure that she will have a safe, productive, and happy life? This is – we live in a world where as many Native people are legal citizens of the United States, we experience genocide, injustice, oppression, and violence daily. Please allow me to share with you what is happening among our missing and murdered Native people in Utah.

But first, let me also share with you our Tribal coalition, which is called Restoring Ancestral Winds located in Sandy, Utah. We offer technical assistance, training and policy and advocacy. Utah has nine sovereign Tribal nations, the White Mesa Ute, the Confederate Tribes of Goshute, the Paiute Tribe of Utah, San Juan Southern Paiute, and the Northwestern Band of Shoshone Nation, the Skull Valley Band of Goshute, and Ute Indian Tribe of the Uintah Ouray Reservation, Ute Mountain Ute, the Navajo Nation and multiple other Tribal members who live in urban settings. The population of Native people in the state of Utah is 28,515. Likely, of course, by now you have heard the nationwide statistics of violence against American Indian and Alaska Native women, men – about women and men, especially including the issue of homicide. Today I would like to share with you again what is happening here in Utah based on the very little we know in existing sparse literature. So we know that in 2008, the National Institute of Justice report used the data from 1999 to 1998, documents that the homicide rate of the Native American women in two Utah counties, both Iron and San Juan, the homicide rate in Iron County was 62.7 per 100,000. The rate in San Juan County was 9.67 per 100,000. The national rate for white women during this period was 1.72 per 100,000. When compared to the national rate for white women, Native women in Utah were 36 and 5.6 times, respectively, more likely to become a victim of homicide in Iron and San Juan Counties, compared to the national average for white women.

According to the Utah Division of Health, the homicide rate for the same period in Utah was 2.4 per 100,000 whites and 6.6 per 100,000 of Native Americans. That is from 1998 to 2003, Native Americans were 2.7 times more likely to be a victim of homicide

than whites. A more recent report from the Utah Department of Health shows that the homicide rate for Native Americans in Utah increased by 25% over the last 25 years. The Native American homicide rate was 8.3 per 100,000 from 2014 to 2018. This means that Native Americans are 4.15 times more likely than white people to be victims of homicide in Utah. According to the murder accountability report, only 21% of homicides of Native Americans were reported in San Juan County and only 28.6% in Uintah County. This represents 70-80% of homicides of Native Americans in these counties remain unaccounted for.

I have heard the question asked often by the public, "Why is this happening?" And I want to just, for a moment, have us think about the pathways that often lead us to going missing and murdered. So there are multiple pathways that we know of to becoming a victim of homicide, or going missing. Multiple intersections, or trauma, identity, social economic status, genetics, history, health and so on fuel, in various ways, the current crisis. Racial and ethnic minorities bear a disproportionate burden of violence, in particular Black and African American. However, the relationship Indigenous people have with the land also creates an additional layer of trauma to the relatively comparative disproportionate trauma that already – that is already experienced as a racial and ethnic minority in the United States. This cumulative trauma increases the propensity for Indigenous people to engage in behaviors that would place them at risk at being targeted for violence, leading to homicide, for – or for being disappeared.

The – there is a diagram that we have that I wish I could show you today. But there are, we feel, four specific factors, risk factors, that contribute to the missing and murdered epidemic. That is, of course, trafficking, intimate partner violence or physical violence, sexual assault and stalking. I am not going to go into each of the statistics on these particular areas, but I will just briefly, I will. Of course, according to the 2017 National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking, states that American Indian and Alaska Native communities are exceptionally susceptible to exploitation by human traffickers. An additional risk to this is – additional risk factors include that there is a lack of sufficient law enforcement resources over large land areas. One that comes to mind specifically is the large land base of the Navajo people. The – and the unlawful trespass of drug traffickers and human smugglers who come on to Tribal land and are aware – are very predatory because they are aware that Tribal courts do not prosecute for felony cases.

So – and when it comes to intimate partner violence, as noted, 55% of Native women and 43% of Native men experience physical violence in an intimate relationship, 55.4% of Native women are victims of IPV-related homicides, of which some 90% of

perpetrators are white men. When it comes to sexual assault, there are 56% of Native women who experience sexual violence at least once in their lifetimes. As you have heard today, it is the Diné Policy Institute that reported that of 65% Native trans individuals, who reported they were – who reported being sexually assaulted, 20% of the LGBTQI Navajo community experience sexual assault at least once in the last six months. Understanding the connection between sexual assault and the crisis – the crisis is critical to both training needs and other forms of intervention. When it comes to stalking, 48.8% of Native women and 18.6% Native men report having been stalked in their lifetime. Ninety percent of the perpetrators of this type of stalking are white men and women. The NCCAP study reported that Native trans are 2.5 times more likely to be stalked than Native trans, who are not – or Natives who are not trans. Additionally, the Diné Policy Institute reports that 24% of the LGBTQI Navajo community was followed or chased within the last six months.

The other question that is often asked is, why the disproportionality? The answer is broad, but I will just cover briefly today. Catherine Burnett, who wrote the report, “Historical Oppression and Intimate Partner Violence Experienced by Indigenous Women in the United States: Understanding Connections,” says that historical oppression describes the chronic, pervasive and intergenerational experience – experiences of oppression that over time may be normalized, imposed and internalized into the daily lives of many Indigenous people, including individuals, families and communities. Although historical oppression is inclusive of historical traumas, it is distinct in that it is localized to specific context and is inclusive of the proximal factors that continue to perpetuate oppression, including discrimination, microaggressions, that is everyday injustices, and demeaning messages that marginalized populations experience, poverty and marginalization. Indigenous communities have observed often – that often, therapies and behavioral interventions for Indigenous people are premised on systems incongruent with their collective history and trauma. Consequently, those – these foreign interventions emphasizing – emphasize an entirely different set of values, morals, meanings of self, and structure and moral valence in – of relationships, tend to be ineffective tools, as tools reconstructing, rebuilding and maintaining Indigenous peoplehood through relationality community. Rather they tend to address behavioral interventions that focus on all but the unique and most critical Indigenous historical trauma.

The Sovereign Bodies Institute explains that since first contact, subsequent generations of violence and assimilation result in significant intergenerational trauma, such as the most – such as that most Indigenous women are victims of violence, or some form over the span of their lives, especially those that are missing or murdered. The extreme frequency by which Indigenous women are taken or killed is an alarming

trend that spans multiple geographies. Yet little accurate media attention or public interest outside of the communities, those taken, call home. When contemporary expression of this trauma is the disproportionate rates of family violence, domestic or intimate partner violence, rates of missing and so on in Indigenous communities, domestic violence, incarceration and substance abuse are particularly salient, contextual manifestations of intergenerational trauma, to enter to contemporary violence against Indigenous women. And to MMIWG two-spirit in particular. The structural violence captures the external stressors unique to Indigenous people. As a distinct legal identity, structural violence often manifests itself in adverse risk factors for Black, Indigenous and people of color. Risk factors and their underlying connection to this historical trauma tends to remain unaddressed and serves as the only explanatory device for this crisis. Not addressing this unique trauma equalizes the specific Indigenous oppressions with other groups by denying the impact of the violent collective past Indigenous people have with colonization. Consequently any interventions must address this collective historical trauma.

In – well, we also are asked often, what are the challenges? So the – many of the challenges are reported in a really good document actually published in 2008 from the U.S. Department of Justice. “Violence Against American Indian and Alaska Native Women and the Criminal Justice Response,” what is known as the name of this report. It identifies some challenges in properly assessing the scope, nature and second, for addressing the problem that we face today. One of those challenges includes the unique position of American Indian and Alaska Native tribes, both as sovereign and dependent, creates problematic, jurisdictional barriers, many of which you have heard today, that sometimes prohibit an effective criminal justice response to American Indian and the Alaska Native victims of violence.

Another challenge is that complicating jurisdictional issues, even – issues even more is that of Public Law 280, 1953, which gave state governments jurisdiction over offenses committed of – committed against AI and AN on Tribal land in six mandatory states including Utah and others. Another challenge is that the complicated jurisdictional issues still produce unique barriers to AI and AN, women seeking help from criminal justice authority on Tribal lands. Additional problems are that, again, of the lack of law enforcement who are – these problems are exacerbated, especially on Tribal lands, similar, I want to say, recent experience with those of the Navajo Nation Tribal law enforcement, who have insufficient funding, inadequate training and a victim’s lack of trust for outside authority.

Another challenge is that, although Tribal governments do not have jurisdiction to prosecute non-Native – non-American Indian and Alaska Native offenders in criminal

courts, they do have the authority to enact civil orders against them, including personal protective orders, PPOs, which we know that there are PPOs often issued by Tribal judges within Utah Navajo. And when we have victims who are going off of the Navajo Nation, we have county and state law enforcement not enforcing those protective orders. In addition to legal barriers that may impede AI and AN women from obtaining justice, there are also barriers, including social isolation that many Tribal lands, including those in Utah, that preclude some American Indian and Alaska Native women from obtaining adequate medical care, including the availability of rape kits being performed by trained medical staff to aid in prosecution.

I want to go now to the conclusion. Again, there are nine federally recognized Tribes in the state of Utah, and Indigenous people constitute 1.5% of the population here. Indigenous people are overrepresented in data collected by the state in homicide and Indigenous – state in homicide an Indigenous person is four times more likely to be a victim of homicide in Utah, comprising 14% of Native females and 16% of Native males. Additionally, the gaps in the data reflect an underreporting of homicide by 38.5% across the state. For Uintah and San Juan County, 70 to 80% of homicides are not reflected in law enforcement data. Additionally, these specific data collection strategies render Indigenous people invisible in criminal data, and thereby hiding the disproportionate rates of murdered and missing Indigenous people. Nearly all data strategies, including Tribal strategies, struggle with or fail at legitimizing the precarious position of two-spirit and LGBTQI Indigenous people, who also suffer at disproportional rates – disproportional – disproportional rates within Indigenous communities. This tends to compound the tremendous Indigenous community's violence or – in communities already being experienced. The consequence of this lack of data results in little to no policy movement to address the structural and specific forms of gender-based violence experienced by Native and by Indigenous people.

In summary, I would like to go back and quote Burnett, who cautions about the implications of the current problem that focus on the disproportionate rates of violence and health disparities experienced by Indigenous people can overshadow the remarkable resilience, transcendence of oppression that have been demonstrated. Moreover, the concerns are about the scarcity of research of protective factors relating to violence and health disparities. This problem can – this problem focus can marginalize already oppressed groups and overlook the deep strengths of Indigenous communities, families and individuals which have sustained them for centuries. As a Tribal coalition, we hold the many personal horrifying stories of missing and murdered sacred and with enormous care. Today, we purposely chose not to share those personal stories of the numerous unresolved crimes against our Indigenous people. With intention, we have shared the systemic, although minimal, evidence of what we

face. With this we invite you, President Biden, Interior Secretary Haaland, Marcia and U.S. government policymakers to not only dramatically increase the financial support with public funding and mandating or amending federal laws, but to take a microscopic look at the systems which seriously hinder Tribes' ability to adequately protect and empower Native people and families, including children like Adespa. Adespa, along with many, many others deserve a life of safety, harmony, joy and peace. Thank you [SPEAKING IN NATIVE LANGUAGE].

MARCIA GOOD: Yolanda, that was absolutely moving. And just so many beautifully said points that we really need to keep in mind as we are moving forward with these. And you talk about being invisible in criminal data and invisible across all of these issues, it is something we need to really think about and how we can bring up visibility to the issues and to American Indian/Alaska Native people. Thank you so much. We have three speakers left that we want to call on today. And our next one is Jordan Marie Daniel. Jordan, are you available?

JORDAN MARIE DANIEL: I am.

MARCIA GOOD: Wonderful. Do you wish to have video on?

JORDAN MARIE DANIEL: No, thank you. I am good.

MARCIA GOOD: OK. OK. Great. Thank you. We can hear you well.

JORDAN MARIE DANIEL: Awesome [SPEAKING IN NATIVE LANGUAGE]. Thank you so much for hosting this listening session and opening it up to the advocates and the really important voices that need to be centered within this work and for creating this virtual space. My name is Jordan Marie Brings Three White Horses Daniel. I am Lakota citizen of Kul Wicasa Oyate, the Lower Brule Indian Reservation in central South Dakota. I currently reside on occupied Tongva lands, also known as Los Angeles, California. I am a professional runner and I use my running platform to help raise awareness of our missing and murdered Indigenous relatives by dedicating a prayer for every mile to a missing and murdered loved one. And I am also the founder and organizer of Rising Hearts. And a really big important initiative of our work and our community organizing space is to really center and help raise awareness collectively for missing and murdered Indigenous relatives.

So I just want to start with saying that the heart of this work and movement are the families and advocates at the grassroots level. And I really want to place heavy emphasis on this as the representation of those voices is severely lacking across

multiple platforms. And heartbreakingly, we are doing this work every day. As a survivor having to constantly always speak to my own story and having to carry this trauma while simultaneously trying to heal from that trauma can be a lot. And I know that that is happening for so many other of our relatives within this space. And this hard work that is happening every single day, it does not get the visibility and the resources and support that it needs. It is the families that are the ones pushing for justice and demanding accountability. They are the ones leading and organizing the search parties with community and sometimes, ally support. The lack of resources and allocation of funds to permanently be available contribute to this ongoing trauma and perpetuates this violence. As one of my role models perfectly stated, Annita of Sovereign Bodies Institute, that our relatives go missing three times, in life, in data and in the media, which makes this fight three times harder. Families and advocates are met with institutionalized racism within law enforcement and racism that is clearly visible within this country that contributes to this crisis. The response time from law enforcement, outside organizations and agencies is lacking and really disappointing. Then we have the jurisdictional loopholes that exist and allows perpetrators to get away with murder and other crimes. The funds to support the families are mostly out of pocket or fundraised through community events or donations.

And just recently, this has been a big week for all of us. Many of us on this call have yet to even begin processing the last 10 days going into this week. For the week of action leading up to May 5, National Day of Awareness for our missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, true spirits and relatives, and honoring and continuing, Hanna Harris's legacy, it has been a lot and it has been heavy. With all of the hard work that went into this, the trauma and the stories and the families, this is a day of mourning, of collective grieving for our communities, and a memorial for thousands of relatives who have been silenced by this violence.

Then May 6 happened. In the early hours of the day, erasure, we continuously see of Indigenous peoples, happened. The removal, deletion and censorship of all of what happened on May 5, all of what we put our heart and soul into, erasure is just another form of genocide. All of it was gone. And it was not just Indigenous advocates and families and voices, it was our allies that were also targeted. This was re-traumatizing and triggering. And many of us still doing the work to ensure our community is OK and speaking to press and mobilizing as much as we can to get all the content that was mostly lost back out there. This is further proof of the violence continuously happening on Indigenous peoples. It does not help when you have someone like Rick Santorum further pushing that narrative, and no one, not even the government pushing for accountability and allowing this to happen. All of this work is at the emotional, spiritual and physical expense of the families and the advocates. We do not need anyone to

reinvent the wheel, we know what can be done, we know what we need, we just need the support and to cultivate community and meaningful relationships to give us somewhat of a break from the heavy lifting.

We need the United States to recognize that this injustice for people of color and marginalized communities began on the soil in 1492. That led to the theft of these lands, the genocide of our people and so much more. Indigenous peoples are invisible within the term BIPOC [Black, Indigenous, People of Color]. It is further erasure. We also need to include this injustice and violence when we speak about climate or environmental justice. They are directly linked and the fossil fuel industry contributes and perpetuates this ongoing violence with oil pipelines and the man camps there, and now as it has been said before a few times by the really passionate voices before me, this industry, it has shown the spikes of sexual and domestic violence our women and girls and relatives are experiencing. Fleeing man camps and having human sex, drug trafficking happening. It is all connected and it is intersectional. I appreciate that a platform exists such as Operation Lady Justice. I was really hopeful to see when it was announced in the prior administration. And other agencies being created like Missing and Murdered Indigenous Unit and having someone like Secretary Deb Haaland being able to be a voice and representing us is really inspiring to see and implementing programs to address this injustice.

But we need to ensure that there is interagency collaboration. When laws are being developed and proposed, we need our government to uphold their federal trust responsibility to Native nations and calling up on state and local governments to get these laws passed that are literally going to save lives and make a difference and be part of the new rebuilding of our future of all people that is safe and thriving. Not only for us today but our next generations. We need to address what true and meaningful Tribal consultation is versus Tribal consultation. We ensure that those discussions include the families, survivors and advocates. And while it is great to see Native representation at the federal level, and me having that experience a few years ago as, you know, a federal contractor within the Administration for Native Americans, you know, experience that really made a difference and an impact in my life. I want to see more of that. And in part of the creation of Operation Lady Justice, there has been a lack of involvement, you know, with families and advocates. And I speak with my relatives and families and survivors from a publicly released statement that was released on May 5, drafted by Sovereign Bodies Institute and those that support the families and the advocates addressing this injustice within this initiative where the harm has been inflicted since the creation of it and the exclusion of their voices being heard. For opportunities for families and grassroots advocates to be – have

meaningful participation has been low. Families and advocates had no opportunity be – to be part of the design or the development of this initiative.

Some examples that we have seen and want to address, no significant outreach done to invite impacted families and advocates to participate and testify in these listening sessions. The number of sessions have been inadequate, and prior to COVID-19, in-person meetings were to happen but families and advocates were expected to cover their own costs and spend upwards of 12 hours or more to get there. These listening sessions have been inaccessible because of the complicated virtual system that we are now in, lack of internet or unstable connections or poor cell reception. And the limit of testifying for three and a half minutes is not as available to get a spot to speak. Forcing families to compete with each other to have their story and loved one heard. And some organizations have or communicated that this listening session should have been scheduled during a different week, as much of us are and have been focused on all of the events leading up to May 5. And with events still happening even today with – and other search parties that are happening and rallies and more throughout the weekend, and supporting the families and survivors and advocates, we are burned out and emotionally drained.

The federal cold case review teams created have seem to have failed so far to make meaningful or noticeable impact, but I also believe that there is change happening and I always like to stay optimistic as possible. And now with this new administration and this new focus to help and support our communities, our Indigenous relatives to help right the wrongs and really fight and seek justice, accountability, visibility and healing for our relatives that are no longer here or our relatives today and for our future generations, I think that is happening and I think it is changing. So I wish for us to be part of this in a more impactful way and I really am grateful and appreciate that this day was made possible to invite the advocates and organizations to be a voice. And I know many of you care and I want this injustice and violence to end, we all do. We need this visible, we need the resources to support the families and advocates, we need these cases to be solved. We cannot be these statistics and we need the targets on our backs eliminated and we need a safer future for our next generations.  
[SPEAKING IN NATIVE LANGUAGE] We are all related. Thank you.

MARCIA GOOD: Jordan, thank you so much for those words. We have a lot of hope going forward too. I feel like we are making strides in this area, and we are trying much harder I think to collaborate with families, with grassroots organizations knowing that you are the folks who are out there in the field. And seeing exactly within your own communities what needs to happen and what needs to be done. So thank you so much

for that powerful testimony. We have two more speakers. Our next speaker is Angi Cavaliere. Angi, are you still on?

ANGI CAVALIERE: I am here, can you hear me?

MARCIA GOOD: We can hear you, yes. Do you wish to have your video on?

ANGI CAVALIERE: No, thank you.

MARCIA GOOD: OK. Thank you.

ANGI CAVALIERE: [SPEAKING IN NATIVE LANGUAGE] I am Angi Moon Cavaliere. I am a member of the Stockbridge-Munsee Community Band of Mohicans from the Turtle Clan. I currently work as the Supervising Staff Attorney for the Yurok Tribal Court. And it is on behalf of our project that we have started that I am speaking here today. Our project, To' Kee Skuy' Soo Ney-Wo-Chek, is "I Will See You Again in a Good Way" and we issued our year one report last year in conjunction with our contracted partners. Issued statistics on missing and murdering Indigenous women in Northern California or who originated in Northern California and were found elsewhere. Some of those statistics should give everybody pause because you will only find them in the report that we have issued as a – I will speak later about why that is so. But California is the fifth highest state, MMIWG2 cases, with a total of 165, trailing behind Montana, Washington, New Mexico, and Arizona. If we were just to take out Northern California, meaning from the West Coast above San Francisco which is not really Northern California even though we hear that a lot, but if you were to take from Mendocino County north and all the way to the border, that state, if we made it its own state, would actually be the fifth highest state itself. It has 105.

So what it is, is that in our project, we were – became aware that we have quite the crisis, an epidemic and as spoken before, the data that was out there previously just did not add up. There were only 24 points being checked in NamUs, and NamUs is only for law enforcement to use and they did not track Tribal affiliation until three years ago. They did not make it forward-facing, meaning the public could get that information until last year and that was then due in great parts of listening sessions that I myself and other grassroots advocates took part in and told them, "You know, you have to – you have to give that information up." And what is on their website now in their listings is not accurate if you look for how many missing Yurok. If you – as of the last check, you get two people. One of them was found shortly after he was put into NamUs and the other one has been missing for over 35 years. The discrepancies were highlighted in an article by Trish Tingle from the BIA and the Roll Call newsletter

that actually came out today. She did actually give a topic because they initially funded our project that we were able to use to start with data, which we are still collecting, and grow it out to identify the issues, use those issues to make suggestions and hopefully create change.

I will probably be echoing some points made previously so please forgive me if, you know, others have spoken about this. But it should be – that should only reflect the fact that these continue to be issues no matter where you are in Indian Country. The issues that we mostly identified in our report were the big issues with the law enforcement engagement with the community. I do not know if any of you are familiar with the Yurok Tribe but it is the largest Tribe in California. And it resides near the north – the northern part of the state – about 40 miles south of the Oregon border, on the Klamath River and it runs all the way down to the Hoopa Tribe's reservation, from the mouth of the river in Hoopa. That mouth of the river is not flat. It is in the middle of the redwoods. And the geography is very hard. So law enforcement does not really – when they do come to the reservations, they do not tend to interact any positively with people. Yurok has Tribal communities that are cross-deputized, which does make that a little bit easier for our law enforcement to interact, but there is still that severe disconnect when you are talking city law enforcement, sheriffs and even the state-based law enforcement. If they come to the reservation, it is never for help or assistance, it is never to give guidance, it is never to reach out and build a relationship. They are coming because there is a problem that they see they can fix in a way that they are – they know.

The other issue that we found is that part of why law enforcement engagement with the community is a big issue is because we are a P.L. 280 state. And so therefore in order to protect ourselves, we are pretty limited. We've got to call the county and Weitchpec, which is near Hoopa, is in the middle of a valley. It is by – if we could all fly like birds, we would probably get there in 20 minutes but we cannot. We have to drive over the river, through the woods and end up at grandma's house almost two hours later. Unfortunately, that also means that if you call somebody for assistance like your local law enforcement, the odds are that two hours is going to take four hours, five hours, six hours. And it is even complicated now because if you look in the news, Last Chance Grade, which is next – Highway 101 to – from the Klamath City to Crescent City has made it so that that two to four to five hours, just from the – what used to be 20 minutes from the city, this city – it now could take all day. So geography is a huge issue and it means that law enforcement will not be able to get to you in a timely fashion.

California also has legislative issues. Right now, there are no bills passed that address this epidemic and every bill that has been proposed sits in committee and usually dies in committee. We do have some hope this year with Sen. Ramos, sorry — Rep. Ramos getting his bill off the ground to address this. But we had that hope in years past and we have been left out in the cold. Someone previously mentioned visibility and I will definitely say that is an issue as well. If you do not know the history of California Indigenous people — Northern California during the time of the Gold Rush had a huge issue with indentured servitude. So Indian children, especially Indian women and men as well, if they were found to not be using their time wisely by the majority of the community, then they were sent to the indentured servants for the white community and this is sanctioned by not only law enforcement but the justice system at that time. The only laws that were on the books to deal with Indigenous people were how to handle us and how to enslave us. Fortunately, while those laws have been, of course, repealed, there have not been laws put in place to protect us and to serve us, which is what we see on most law enforcement, you know, [INDISTINCT] and badges. But unfortunately, you do not see actually in action. We are invisible unless we are needed to fix something for somebody. We are invisible unless we are needed to make a point that somebody can save us.

If you look at two recent, you know, big screen movies — well, I guess one was not a big screen if it was released strictly to Netflix, but still "Murder Mountain" that came out on Netflix is filmed in Humboldt County, and Humboldt County has one of the highest rates for missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in the entire state if we were to break it down county by county followed only by Del Norte. That movie's set in Humboldt County. It talks about the illegal growth situation on the mountains up in the redwoods because it is harder for law enforcement to get to and enforce the — those who are growing illegally without getting, you know, their permits and everything. So they hire people to trim their marijuana and people go missing all the time. But the local population is mostly Indigenous up in those hills and when they go missing, nobody comes and makes a movie about it. "Murder Mountain" focuses mainly on a white gentleman who was murdered on the mountain and we are a footnote in that movie. Another more popularized movie that came out starring Jeremy Renner, "Wind River." It is based on a true story, it does take place, you know, on a reservation. But again it portrays Indigenous people as needing somebody from outside their community to help save them or give them justice or bring them peace. As was stated previously, we know how to bring justice to ourselves and give peace to ourselves. What we need are the tools to be allowed to do so.

I would think that as a listening session and as a Presidential Task Force that, you know, I know it was started over a year ago. But when we first attended these listening

sessions, we were begging, begging, for people to contact us, we were begging for people to give information to our topics. And we only heard from the communities the actual Indigenous people who are affected by MMIW each and every day. And I can tell you because I go to many conferences and I go to many, you know, Native events and you could take four of us randomly and put us in a room and I would bet money, I would bet my pay check that all of us either know somebody who is missing or murdered or we are, you know, directly one step related to somebody who was missing and, you know, murdered. It is very hard to walk away from this epidemic when it takes up your entire world every single day of your life. When I have to teach my daughter that because she is Indigenous, she is more likely to be sexually assaulted, trafficked, or God, you know, God forbid be murdered, just because of her race and her gender, it breaks my heart and it should break everybody's heart that has to deal with this issue.

Finally, I will say that NamUs, not only does it have issues with, you know, accuracy in numbers, it has identification issues. If you were to be able to see me, I am not at my home so it is not – that is why I am not turning the camera on, actually, I am staying at someone else's home today. But if you are able to see me, you would think, "Oh, Angi passes for white pretty well." Nobody who actually knows me would probably say that to my face. But if I were to go missing today and my brother whose house that I am at were to call me in to the local police as missing, he would identify me to the police as Native American. If I were found somewhere and my body was stripped of most identification, the police would not put me as unidentified race. Instead, they would put me as white. And I may be out there missing, but yet found and just in the coroner's office for time – for many, many years to come.

Last week, there was just a story in the news about an Indigenous woman who was finally located because a coroner identified her body as white 15 years ago. And her family had to fight for a DNA test to prove that A, she was not white; B, she was Indigenous; and C, it was their family member that they had been searching for. These issues of misidentification start with law enforcement taking reports of missing person or law enforcement finding bodies and they go up the chain all the way into NamUs, which is a law enforcement entered database, but instead of putting unidentified for the race category, you just see them all listed as white. And if you – if you do a search in NamUs for white unidentified bodies, it is going to be humongously large. If you do a name – if you do a search in NamUs for unidentified bodies that are Native American, it is relatively short because they are not testing those bodies to find out who they are.

I would say that the biggest point that is lacking is the contact from not just the Task Force but from law enforcement. When you look at contact, what do I mean? Well, I

served for years as the attorney for children in foster care in the L.A. County's ICWA [Indian Child Welfare Act] court. So my clients were a good majority of Native American children. In California, the Foster Care Law says that "Attorneys of children, if they go missing or run away, must be notified in 24 hours." I served over 1,000 children in my years there. I got one notification in 24 hours in the — in the time that I was there for over 1,000 kids. That is unacceptable. And then, as I continued to serve, I found out, because when I would be notified, sometimes it would be days, weeks later, I would call the child's Tribe because that is their people, that is their community. And I would say, "You know, my client, your child in your community, has run away or is believed to have run away, or has gone missing." And they had never heard from county social workers. So there is no rule that said anywhere in [INDISTINCT] state, it was that I am aware of that says if a child who is in foster care goes missing, that the Tribe should be notified. How are we to protect our children if we are not even notified when they go missing?

AMBER Alerts and the Red Alerts and the different alerts like that, those are great tools. They are difficult to find in Indian Country, they are even more difficult to get started. And then when you couple that with the fact that we also have a disproportionate rate of our children in foster care that Tribes are never notified of, what good is an alert that we do finally get started in our counties but we do not know the kids are missing because the state social workers are not required to notify the people who the child came from. I really wish that more Tribes had the ability, but I am not ignorant to the own fact that they do not. Some Tribes struggle just to have running water, electricity. You know, we have to have grants to get broadband out to our people in the reservation who cannot get a cell signal, who cannot get a landline, who do not have a toilet. And we expect them to take part in these types of discussions and to know that their, you know, their kids are missing when they cannot even pick up a phone to call them in.

You need to go to the people where they are. We go out and we talk to the people. We go out to every convention and event and we talk to people outside of these listening sessions. And, yes, I am aware there is a pandemic. I have not had anybody from any law enforcement reach out to our project and say, "Hey, can we meet with you?" I have not had anybody in legislation say, "Hey, can we meet with you?" And nobody from the Task Force has contacted us and said, "Hey, can we meet with you?" We have — we show up at these listening sessions. We, you know, we call law enforcement for interviews or just for help. We had to get myself as an attorney involved that time to get information that, you know, they should give with one simple Freedom of Information Act request, but that takes the threat of a lawsuit to get. And we are left here all alone with nobody contacting us. And we are a — the largest Tribe in California

and we have that problem. I will say that, you know, a Mohican out in California, if I did not work where I worked and something happened to me, I would never expect to be contacted. That has just been my history. And the families, they need your support. They need everybody's support from the law enforcement to the legislator to Task Force like this. And they need Task Force like this to have some teeth, to have some bite behind them that actually gives us the justice and peace, or gives us the tools to find justice and peace on our own.

MARCIA GOOD: Angi, thanks so much for those words. I took several points from this that I think are incredibly important and it is the problem with people making assumptions about race and misclassification, which I think is a huge thing. And then also the challenges in Public Law 280 jurisdictions, completely hear that. So we are working on a number of tools that we are hoping to be part of the solutions working on those with Tribes right at the moment and want to continue these conversations that you have started here today. We have one final speaker, Nathan Phillips. Nathan, are you still on?

NATHAN PHILLIPS: Yes, I am. Well...

MARCIA GOOD: Wonderful. Do you wish to be on video? We can hear you.

NATHAN PHILLIPS: I will be OK without it.

MARCIA GOOD: OK. Sounds good. Thank you so much. Go ahead.

NATHAN PHILLIPS: Hello. My name is Nathan Phillips. I am the Executive Director of Native Youth Alliance. I am from the Omaha Nation and I ask all my elders to excuse me for speaking in front of them like this. I feel like this is a very important issue. And when I pushed the button to say I would speak, I did not have any idea that I would be able to speak, so thank you for this listening session and thank you for letting me speak here.

I would like to just say that when Horace Greeley said, "Go West, young man," that was on Omaha territory out there in Nebraska. And they started and the Omaha Tribe had peace treaties with American government. But even despite that, we were taken down to less than 1,000 individuals. We are back up to about 10,000 now but that is because of the man camps. And Nebraska used to — their logo used to be where the West began. So when they started their westward migration, they started right on top of the Omaha Nation. And we suffered greatly from that from smallpox to just plain murder, land theft, and all of that, you know. So — but what I wanted to say also is that for

myself, I was in foster care. And there is a – there is a need to keep the Indian Child Welfare Act, you know, intact and to – and to enforce it. The children are needing a safe place. Sometimes they come through these places like myself. I was in a horrible situation. Mother's Day is coming up and that is the day I ran away from my foster home. When I ran away, I found myself somewhere between Lincoln, Nebraska and Topeka, Kansas. And a man picked me up and he tried to have his way with me. A gun was pulled out and one of us got shot in the leg. And me, I continued my run away but I just wanted to say I was – I was close to being missing that night.

You know, we need to reinforce our families, our Indigenous families, you know. My mother and my father, if they had received a little bit of support somehow, someway, we could have stayed together. So then, about the same times, I had a friend and she went missing, and she is still missing. We do not know where she is at. She went to the West Coast and we have never heard of her. And then I was at Haskell Nations Indian College. It was a junior college when I went to it in the '80s. There was a cluster of murders of Indigenous men. And one of the men went missing and we search parted for him. One of the hardest things I have done. We recovered his body and we had a Native American church service there at Haskell. And I stood security outside that tipi all night – all night long for them. Whenever I have traveled – I have traveled, I have gone to Colorado. I have done search parties there, I have done search parties in oh, Wyoming out west, other places. It is not a good thing. You know, if the search parties had a little bit of help, maybe some drones, you know, some support like that to help them. You know, it seemed like we was out there all by ourselves looking, no help. Now here we are, you know, decades later, and it seems like the situation is still the same.

This past May – now President Biden, he signed a – signed a proclamation making May 5 National Indigenous Missing Woman's Day and like that, you know. So that – this morning – that morning I was here in Washington, D.C. I went down there by the Martin Luther King Memorial and I did a sunrise ceremony there. The sun peeked out just a little bit for me but then it went hiding and went missing, kind of made me feel like that, you know, what the day was about, you know. So I did a prayer walk from there. I went to prayer walk over to Interior building. And there at 9:00, you know, when people were going to work, I went out there with my [INDISTINCT] sacred pipe. Some people call it the chanupa. I took that pipe then and I – and I loaded it, and I smoked it there in front of God and everybody in front of the Interior building on May 5. You know, I prayed for all the words that were said here, prayed for Lady Justice, I prayed for the President, you know? Thinking that, you know, it would have been nice, you know. I was out there all by myself like that, you know. So I guess that is how the Creator wanted it for me, you know, just go after and just – so I would not be interrupted in my prayer, so I could just focus on this issue. So that is what I did. And for the next four

years, I would like to be able to return and continue a ceremony there on May 5 here in Washington, D.C.

From here, I am going to take off to Line 3 where they are talking about the man camps and how Enbridge, you know, is looking for young women, you know. I gotta go over there and stand security for the women who are standing up for the water. It is a tough job, having to fight for our future, having to fight for our women and fight for our children like that. So I say thank you. Thank you for this opportunity to say something. And, you know, I do not want to take too much time because this is an important thing and what we need to do is from here to go and do the work. Like my brother, Mr. Frank Ramirez said, "There is work to be done. We have to go out and we do it." And me, I cannot be afraid anymore. I cannot be afraid of people threatening my life and stuff like that. I – I have been getting that here lately for some reason. People been threatening my life and I do not understand why sometimes. But, you know, I make a stand for the people. And I say I would – I would do this for them. So anyway, that is my words. And I say we have – you know, when I was taken away from my family, I was – my language was stolen from me. Otherwise, I would have introduced myself in my language. But I know how to say my – I can start my prayers in my Omaha language and I can end my prayer in Omaha language. And that is, you know, what I am going to continue to do. I am going to continue to help look, you know. In everything that was said, I just want to reiterate everybody's words, you know. And like I said, that was enough, so I am going to say that is enough. Thank you.

MARCIA GOOD: Nathan, we really appreciate you being willing to speak today. Your words are absolutely enough. And the ceremony that you did is such a wonderful way to honor that day and we hope that it is the possibility that you can do that again in the next year, so thank you so much. I have found out that we have neglected one speaker who has been waiting all afternoon and we definitely want to have her on. She has been instrumental in some of the task force work of another [state] task force with Tribes, and that is Letara Lebeau. Letara, are you able to be on? Letara, can you unmute?

DARYL FOX: Marcia, we are just working on it on our end really quickly. We will be having her unmuted...

MARCIA GOOD: Thank you.

DARYL FOX: ...very shortly here.

MARCIA GOOD: Sounds good. Thank you.

DARYL FOX: One more short moment, Marcia.

MARCIA GOOD: OK.

DARYL FOX: Letara, you are unmuted.

LETARA LEBEAU: OK. Yes. Can you hear me?

MARCIA GOOD: We can hear you. Do you wish to have the video on?

LETARA LEBEAU: I am OK with just being on audio. That is fine.

MARCIA GOOD: OK. Great. We can hear you well. Thank you.

LETARA LEBEAU: OK. Thank you so much for getting us through this and thank you for sponsoring this roundtable of a conversation here for all of Indian Country. Again, my name is Letara Lebeau. And I really want to thank you, Nathan, if you are still on for sharing your story with this roundtable. As you were speaking, you know, I was feeling myself getting emotional for you because I could feel that turmoil, you know, I could feel that fight like you were talking about for the future for our younger generations and our women and ourselves. So I really thank you for that ceremony, you know. And that was really heartfelt.

Again, thank you for having me today. I represent the Wind River Reservation Task Force and I have done a lot of work in the past two to five years on this. And I would say five with the long term I have been in it, I am doing my own personal studies and research and data collection. And when the initial for the Wyoming task force came about here for the Wind River Reservation, it really caught my attention being that I have several generations of family in law enforcement and advocacy work. So, my experience has really come from the grassroots generation of continuing that work. I have also really been involved with a lot of the data collection working with Wyoming Statistics and Analytics Center. One of our essential individuals, Dr. Emily Grant, I would really like to thank her for all the work she did from her side and her team for collecting that data and allowing me to work side by side with them getting through that process and really identifying the information that we really needed to initially create that Wyoming MMIP report. And I am really thankful to be a hand in on that growing up and identifying and watching how our law enforcement really moves about throughout the community.

So, I was really on that side of the fence in the beginning of this initiative and then when I started to connect with the communities and listened to different stories about missing and murdered Indigenous people, it really opened my mind towards, you know, looking at it in a different perspective of the victim's side. And once I started to hear stories from that side, it just – it broke my heart and it really – it really – it was a driving force for me to step up and use my voice. And growing up, I was kind of victimized in my way, you know, as being a Native woman out here in a predominantly white community. It was really difficult to get through, you know, school, it was really difficult to get through my community to, you know, believe in myself and continue to succeed and be a strong Native woman but I think without those experiences, I would not have found my resiliency as strong as I am today. And I use that strength to really promote it and put it towards helping my community members.

So with that being said, you know, I listened to each speaker today, you know, and got to hear their side and with this task force that was developed, you know, we are really lucky to have the legislature process on our side to create three different subcommittees that contribute towards that task force with the victim services here in our state capital. And Cara Chambers was an essential piece to that who really helped to coordinate that effort and to help bring that, you know, central location down for us to really connect to bring all jurisdictions and departments together to give us a really big step towards communicating and opening a discussion for each department and different alliances and even community members, you know.

It all started off with the volunteer basis and I had a gal that I started out with and, you know, I really appreciate her efforts and helping to involve me with this process and, you know, once I really understood the direction I needed to go with this, I found myself stepping into a lot of different trainings and a lot of different conferences and different MMIP task force trainings as well as just on a national level. So once I was able to take the opportunity and listen and learn, it helped me to really develop a strong sense of ability of what needs to initially be done, you know, not only on a state level, federal level and a local level, but on a community level. And I think those connections are really important to take the time to listen to as the community. Sometimes when we are dealing with the community members and listening to them and sitting with them and walking with them through their journey and their paths, you know, we really identify with them as far as how we can help especially when we are in a leadership role. Or when we come from an advocacy background or when we come from, you know, helping – learning how to – or knowing how to help the community in that sense. I really want to mention that in this past year, it has probably been the most difficult for me to continue those grassroots efforts because initially, we have had

some local politicians here in Wyoming, on Wind River Reservation, that really want to start to interfere with that movement.

And it is not – and I am just going to be blunt about it, because when we work with our victims in our advocate – on our advocacy level, we are connecting with those victims and their families. And it is not for ourselves or our own credibility, it is for those victims and the families. And I have gotten a lot of pushback from a few individuals that just do not really see eye-to-eye with some alliances that are really working hard and that have done the work to really push forward on this process of jurisdiction issues, on this process of bringing those families into the circle and connecting with them and hearing their story because that is how we – that is how I think the biggest movement is made is when we sit down with the victims and the families that have been affected by this tragic epidemic. And when I – when I started to experience that pushback and started to feel a little isolated there for a moment, it only motivated me to push harder and to really, you know, use my strength and remember my resiliency as a Native woman in my community of what direction I am moving in. And I made a lot of connections with a few individuals that really meant a lot to me because they really helped to encourage me to continue my work from the grassroots effort and to really continue to understand that this is not just about oneself, this is bigger than anybody that – that is going – you know, that is working on these tasks to – that – on the – on the department side or on the alliance side because it goes beyond that for – especially for people that have missing loved ones, especially for those that have lost the loved ones. My heart really goes out to them and that is what kept my strength going and my persistency to keep going on working on these individual family issues with different people that I was working with.

And, you know, I was really disappointed in our leadership for not stepping up and continuing to work together. Initially, that is my point in bringing that up is when we work together, we move together, and this process is a lot easier. And I think those who that really – you know, that really did the work for this effort here in Wyoming, you know, I think that that credit needs to be put there for them because it is initially hard. You know, I just – we just held an event here in Riverton, Wyoming. And it was the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons March for Justice. And it is the second one we have done here locally for the Wind River Reservation community members. And it was for the community, to show the community that is going through this issue that we support them. I support them. And those who that are in leadership support them. And that we are there for them. I had a handful of people approach me at that event as one of the founders and, you know, they had poured hearts out to me and a lot of them cried to me. And it just – it almost broke me, but I had to remember how strong I was because I think I have healed in a lot of ways to be able to promote that healing in a

positive way. Because that is my initiative, is to try to help them heal, try to help them give direction, you know. Give them direction to what resources we have.

That was our next initiative of that march, was to share local resources because sometimes when these families are going through this emotional process and this devastating process, they just do not know where to go sometimes. So that was a priority when we ran that march, was to make sure that we were offering local resources, not only local but on national, too. We gave national information as well. So we really want to make sure that if they had questions, those questions could be answered by utilizing these different numbers and different emails that we gave to them. And we handed those out throughout the crowd and it was really empowering to walk with the community, to walk side by side with them, and help guide them through that – through this – through the streets of the city because it is initially a border town of the reservation. And we had – we had great collaboration between the police department there. They were really essential in that movement to help us get that march going downtown. A lot of the local alliances were essential on that, that really helped get us through that march, to walk us downtown and I have seen a few of those leaders there, you know, that really gave pushback on what our initiatives are as a grassroots movement. Not as a political movement, but as a grassroots movement because, again, this is about community. And this is about those who are suffering from it. And it really touched my heart to be able to make those who joined us feel comfortable in their environment, to encourage them in their environment. Because it is, it is hard.

It really is hard and I have heard a lot of testimonies today where a lot of this legislative process has not even begun. A lot of the jurisdiction conversation has not even begun. And it pushes me even more to continue to reach out to those or they can reach out to me and, you know, I am willing to take that step with them and walk with them to get them through it. Because initially what I think we need is that continued support, that continued effort of collaboration in a positive way, you know, I think that is essentially what a priority is when we step into this leadership position to be able to share that equally, you know, and not make it about ourselves but it is about the people, it is about, you know, I am going to say community several times through this testimony because that is what it came down to. What am I doing as a community leader? What am I doing as a Tribal leader to help my community? You know, and it would give me the initiative to connect on that level, to be there for them and to stand with them and I think that when we, you know, stand together, that helps to progress this process. It helps to progress this movement.

You know, there was still some issues that, you know, we were dealing with as far as, you know, as this issue, I think, receives more attention it is, you know, it is more evident that it is complicated by, you know, by the dismissive behavior of some law enforcement, you know, some lack of coordinated data collection, you know, and that is between Tribal, federal, state and local or law enforcement, you know, and the complexities involving human trafficking. I think there is a lot more to discuss in that level, you know, and I really just – I just really feel for everyone that is going through this. And also I want to give a – you know, an applause to those who are taking the initiative to have a voice to stand up to this movement and help, those who are taking the time and volunteering because a lot of this comes from a volunteer basis, you know. And those who are in a seat that are getting paid to do this, I hope they are making those connections. I hope they are reaching out. I hope they are doing it, you know, genuinely. Because when we have individuals like myself that are volunteering our free time because it is coming from our heart and we appreciate the community we live in, you know, it is a different story when you see somebody in a seat that gets paid to just connect. And they are not doing anything about it, or they show up when the credit's due, they show up that last minute, you know, and they make it about – you know, they try to claim it for themselves. And I do not think that is right. I do not think that is right in some sense when lateral violence is in – put into effect, to influence their position, to make others feel left out, you know, and I know there is some – there is a handful of people I talk to that have felt that way in my community, when they just want to help and they just want to help support.

So, you know, with that being said, – I am really pushing hard to continue this movement here in the Wind River Reservation in the state of Wyoming for my people, for the Tribal people. And I want that to be a ripple effect, not only for my state to this–but to my surrounding states. Montana, Idaho, Utah, Colorado, the Dakotas, you know, I really want to–want to pray for all those areas and make sure that, you know, that they come to a recognition and a, you know, a happy medium where they can, you know, really start to step in and have the opportunity as much as Wyoming has to gather and collaborate because I think that is the best effort I have seen is what that task force did here in Wyoming, was they all came together and they took the opportunity to create collaboration. That way, no one felt left out, you know. But when it came down to our local environment, things changed in the last year and I hope that – I hope it can change for the better. And I hope it can progress in a positive way.

I think that is – you know, I think – I think that is kind of all – I really have to say as far as just continuing our efforts in the community level and continuing to support everyone around me, you know, when they need it and I appreciate, you know, really essentially being a part of every conversation that has happened throughout the state and on a national level to be able to explain that or communicate that. And, you know, I

think there is a lot of individuals that need that time and opportunity to do so as well, and especially those that suffer from this issue.

MARCIA GOOD: Letara, your...

LETARA LEBEAU: And...

MARCIA GOOD: ...strengthen and your resilience just show through so much. If you have any other concluding remarks, we would be happy to listen.

LETARA LEBEAU: Yeah. I do not know if Nicole Watts is still online – on here. But she is one of the gals that is from here, from the Wind River Reservation. And is she still on here? I would like her to be called on next after me and maybe she can have some closing remarks on that as well. She has been an essential part in here and she has gone through a lot as well as far as her losses. So after I conclude mine and close up, I think if you can call on Nicole Watts to have a moment. And I know it is – I want to be appreciative and respectful of everybody's time and, again, I just appreciate, you know, really getting the opportunity to help out and help out in any way I can, especially to just support my community because that is what I think it is about.

MARCIA GOOD: Thank you so much for that. The comment you made about it not being about politics, that it is about the victims and the families, and supporting each other and working together, is truly the heart of what I think all of us are trying to do in this area for all the years that we have been working on these things. Is Nicole on? I'm not sure that I see her in the attendees.

DARYL FOX: I do not see – yeah, we do not see a Nicole Watts.

MARCIA GOOD: OK.

DARYL FOX: There is a Nicole W., another Nicole W., Wagon, but accessing via phone. So if you did want, we could try to unmute that person to see if that is the one. But no Nicole Watts in the attendee list currently.

MARCIA GOOD: OK. Well – and I want people to know that this will not be the last opportunity that you have to weigh in on these issues. I mean, we certainly – we have written comments and we would love to even have a copy of your written comments, the statements that you gave today sent to the email that is here. And we just need to continue these conversations, so you can look forward to more conversations with us about that. So we will go to closing now. I would like to introduce Michelle Sauve.

Michelle is a Task Force member. She has been working with us for the last year. She is with the Administration for Native Americans. She is currently the acting commissioner for the Administration for Native Americans at HHS. Michelle, if you could take us to the closing in a good way.

MICHELLE SAUVE: [SPEAKING IN NATIVE LANGUAGE] So I just introduced myself to you in Mohawk and told you that I am a member of the Snake Clan. So – and Marcia told you my name. Thank you so much, everybody, who participated today and shared your stories, all the work that you have been doing for so many years. It is incredible, it is needed, and, you know, I want to acknowledge the pain, the anger, your frustration. But also, you know, the hope that we can make a difference, that every day, you are making a difference. We – for those of us who are Indigenous, you know, we have been fighting to continue to exist for centuries on our own land, and, you know, we – so many people have said it today that we know the answers, that your communities know what you need, but you lack the resources and the support, you know. I agree with so much of everything that has been said, and that we, you know, continue to – we need to fight against the invisibility of this issue. And I know that all of – the members of the Task Force are committed to that as well as to acting on the very thoughtful recommendations that you have provided while we spent this time together. And I just want to thank Marcia for organizing this and doing all of the outreach. And I want to thank my fellow Task Force members who joined us today and, you know, once again, you know, I want – I want to honor the time that you spent to speak to us today and all of the work that you are doing. It is – it is, you know, the violence in our country is, you know, woven into the fabric. And it is going to take a long time to unravel it and redo it and it may, you know, take us generations, but that is no reason not to start and to keep fighting. So thank you.

MARCIA GOOD: Thank you, Michelle. We are honored for those final words. It is hard sometimes to know what to say after hearing everybody today. In the years that I worked with victims and families as a – as a prosecutor in Indian Country, it is one of the hardest things to do. And it is also the most important work to do. And I just want to thank you all for being here today, for allowing us the privilege of listening to you, to hearing your stories, to hearing your pain and your grief, but to also hear your hopes, for how things can be different and for the work that we can all do together. So thank you so much. Please submit written comments. Please know that we are going to continue these conversations. Thank you to all the Task Force members who were here today and thank you so much to all the participants who both spoke and were here to listen. Thank you so much.