

**AI/AN LGBTQ+ and Two-Spirit Communities Listening Session**  
**June 25, 2021**

DARYL FOX: Good afternoon. Welcome to the Presidential Task Force on Missing and Murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives listening session for American Indians/Alaska Natives LGBTQ+ and Two-Spirit communities, as well as organizations working with and supporting these communities. 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 presentation. Marcia?

MARCIA GOOD: Thank you so much. Good afternoon, everyone. I am sorry for our delay. We were having just a few technical difficulties. We thank you for hanging in there. My name is Marcia Good, and I am the Executive Director of the Presidential Task Force on Missing and Murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives. It is my honor at this time to introduce Vice Chairwoman Wendy Schlater of the La Jolla Band of Luiseno Indians for a traditional opening prayer.

WENDY SCHLATER: Thank you, Marcia. [SPEAKING IN NATIVE LANGUAGE] Wendy Schlater. I am a Tribal citizen from the La Jolla Band of Luiseno Indians. Currently, I am elected Vice Chairwoman for our Nation and program director of our Tribe's Avellaka Program, addressing intimate partner violence. I sit as one of the Board of Directors for the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center. I am a Two-Spirit, weh-potaaxaw, child to my parents, weh-potaaxaw sibling, weh-potaaxaw co-parent of a growing teenage son, auntie, uncle, cousin and friend. I am a soccer coach, active parent classroom volunteer. I am a tcam — human — and along with my Two-Spirit LGBTQ relatives, am worthy of above and beyond basic human rights, love, safety and justice. Respect and being a good relative is so easy when we keep it simple. As we sit here today, listening with open hearts and ears and minds, I encourage you to keep a simple thought in the back of your mind, in self-talk, that I learned volunteering in my son's classrooms over the years: How can we make our good better and our better best as we move into the future as Tribal Nations and in relationship with our U.S. government relatives? In opening, I would like to open us up with a prayer from one of our elders that I have learned. Her name is Villiana Hyde. She is in the spirit world right now, but she wrote a book, "Yumáyk, Yumáyk," and giving us the gift of this prayer. So if you could stand with me wherever you are at and just, you know, sit there in remembrance of our families and our relatives who have gone, and that we are creating visibility for them and safety here today. So I am going to go ahead and start now. [SPEAKING IN NATIVE LANGUAGE] So what I shared with you is, "Remember your relatives and children, where we have come from, where we will be going. Remember our families. To us, they are a gift, to us. They are born into this world. And remember our relatives, far away and who live close to — close to us. Remember our little ones and those yet to be born, our relatives who are now alive. Not just ourselves." [SPEAKING IN NATIVE LANGUAGE] Amen. Thank you. Thank you, Marcia. I would like to turn it back over to you.

MARCIA GOOD: Thank you so much, Vice Chairwoman Schlater. We are honored to have you here today. And thank you for that blessing starting us off in a good way. It is now my pleasure to introduce Task Force member Michelle Sauve. Michelle is the acting Commissioner for Native American Affairs at the Department of Health and Human Services. And she is from the Saint Regis Band of Mohawk. Michelle?

MICHELLE SAUVE: [SPEAKING IN NATIVE LANGUAGE] Thank you so much, Vice Chairwoman Schlater, for that prayer and that opening. That is quite meaningful and a good way to start this conversation. [SPEAKING IN NATIVE LANGUAGE] So my name is Michelle Sauve. I am a member of the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe, the acting Commissioner of the Administration for Native Americans, acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Native American Affairs for the Administration for Children and Families at HHS and a proud member of the Presidential Task Force on Missing and Murdered Native Americans or Operation Lady Justice. Since November 26, 2019, Operation Lady Justice has been working across the federal government to create resources, analyze data and work together to help bring an end to the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous persons. Despite the executive order, it is important to acknowledge that this effort did not begin in November of 2019 and is not — and it did not begin with government. The existence of this Task Force is a testament to the devoted work of Native Americans, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders who have been working to protect their people for decades, for generations. Because of the advocacy from community members like you, we know that violence against Indigenous people is a dire problem, but it is also often overlooked and under-resourced. Operation Lady Justice is a crosscutting effort that includes representatives from the Department of Justice, Interior and Health and Human Services. Our tasks are to improve coordination and collaboration, as well as to improve our external communication. We are developing resources to give to families of adults who go missing and for law enforcement agencies who must and can do better when interacting with families of missing or murdered Indigenous persons. New offices to develop processes to review unresolved cases have been established, and we are looking at existing data in new ways to better understand the crisis so we can respond. Over the past year and a half, we held virtual Tribal consultations and listening sessions in every region of the country, and we continue to work with Indigenous people, both in government and in local communities, to make sure our responses are effective, sensitive and well-informed. Under the Biden-Harris administration, we have recently begun a series of audience and topic-specific listening sessions so that community voices and needs continue to be centered in the work of the Task Force. Last month, we heard from grassroots organizations, and next month, we have a conversation focused on data needs.

Today, we want to take the time to hear directly from you about how violence impacts your community. We are continuing to build our understanding of how we can improve our response when lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, questioning, intersex, asexual or Two-Spirit+ individuals go missing or are murdered, and how we can best help increase protective factors that support our Two-Spirit relatives and reduce risk factors that increase their vulnerability. As President Biden noted in the White House proclamation on Pride Month, our nation continues to face tragic levels of violence against transgender people, especially transgender women of color. We know that Indigenous lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual and Two-Spirit people are often specifically targeted, and this fact is too often rendered invisible in terms of prevention and response. A thread that has

been raised in Task Force discussions is the lack of accurate information, especially consistent, gender-inclusive and culturally responsive collection of data regarding LGBTQIA+ and Two-Spirit people who go missing or are murdered.

At the Administration for Children and Families, we created a framework to address this crisis shortly after the formation of Operation Lady Justice. In that framework, we describe the importance of culture and tradition to help prevent violence and highlight the importance of social determinants of health, like economic stability and access to health care and education in violence prevention. Today, we are hoping to learn more about the cultural resources and traditions that you value and feel are protective, as well as the ways that social and economic conditions that contribute to violence or protection.

In 2013, an ACF grantee, Native Connections, contributed to a multicity study called Human Trafficking Prevalence and Child Welfare Risk Factors Among Homeless Youth. This study found that discrimination and exploitation in formal work made youth more vulnerable to trafficking. Interviewees spoke about hostile work environments, employers who cut hours when they found an employee was gay, and discrimination against transgender employees. Bearing in mind the workplace discrimination that many Indigenous people have reported, we can see an intersection that can make LGBTQ and Two-Spirit Indigenous people particularly vulnerable to trafficking and other forms of violence. But this one finding was from one study. We know it doesn't tell the whole story and that is why we want to hear from you. There is too little research on missing and murdered Indigenous people, and even less on the causes and effects of this crisis on LGBTQIA+ people specifically. Operation Lady Justice needs your input, your voice and your advocacy to guide and shape our work. This Pride Month, we are grateful for the time and energy you are devoting to this problem. We are honored by your participation in today's session. We know that sometimes your testimony is very personal and very difficult to share. We hope that you are able to take what we learn from — what we learn and hear from you today and apply it with an open heart like Vice Chairwoman Schlater asked. I also hope that today is just the beginning of the conversations and that you continue to engage with the work of Operation Lady Justice as we work together to end violence against Indigenous people, particularly those most at risk. [SPEAKING IN NATIVE LANGUAGE].

MARCIA GOOD: Thank you so much Task Force member Michelle Sauve for those wonderful words. It really encompasses what Operation Lady Justice has been trying to do to assist in and help further the work that was started many years ago by Tribes, Tribal members, Tribal grassroots and advocate organizations, and doing our part, too, to see what we can do to help with that. So turning to today's topic, during the first year of our Task Force, we held about 25 listening sessions and consultations, heard from Tribal leaders and families, and grassroots organizations, and community members all across Indian Nations. And today's session, as Michelle noted, is specifically targeted to discussing American Indian and Alaskan Native LGBTQ+ and Two-Spirit communities as well as organizations working with and supporting those communities. Today's session is being recorded and a video and audio plus transcript will be available on the Operation Lady Justice website in several weeks.

This is our agenda for today. And if we could look at our next slide, we are going to, as we noted in the registration, we are going to basically call on speakers in the order in which you registered.

So we have had a really good turnout for today. We have approximately 13 registrants who have indicated that they wish to speak today, and another about 200 or so who registered to listen. So we put together that list of speakers in order in which they registered and sent it out this morning to all of the registered speakers so that they would know where they were on the list. So this next slide that will be coming up will show the order in which the speakers are going to be called upon in two columns. We will go down the first column and then into the second column. We will leave it up for just a minute so you can see the order in which folks are going to be called to speak. If you want to submit a written comment, you certainly can at [OperationLadyJustice@usdoj.gov](mailto:OperationLadyJustice@usdoj.gov). We had several written comments after our last listening session last time. If you would like to send them in to this email address, we will definitely include them on the website along with the testimony and the transcript from today.

We have not set a time limit on speakers today. We would ask you just be mindful to the number of people who wish to speak today. Given the number of speakers that we have though, and the interest that we have had, it may not be possible to get through all of our speakers today. If that happens, we will reconvene next Monday afternoon at 1:30 so that we can make certain that we hear from everybody, that everybody has a chance to present their testimony to the Task Force. And again, in addition, if you wish to submit written comments, the address is up on your screen.

So we are now ready to hear from those who have registered to speak. We will leave up the slide so you can see where you are in that list, and our first speaker today is Elton Begay. Elton, it will take just a moment for the folks to unmute your line so that you can speak, and then you need to let us know if you wish to be on video or do not wish to be on video. Either way is fine. It is completely up to you.

TAMMY SANDO: Elton is unmuted.

MARCIA GOOD: Elton, did you wish to be on video? Elton, your line is unmuted and we are ready for you to present your testimony if you would like to begin.

TAMMY SANDO: I believe his phone is muted.

MARCIA GOOD: OK. We have that double unmute.

ELTON BEGAY: OK. Can you ...

MARCIA GOOD: If you could unmute your phone.

ELTON BEGAY: Am I able to hear — can you hear me?

MARCIA GOOD: We can. It is fairly faint so you might want to speak up. And do you wish to be on video?

ELTON BEGAY: No. No. I do not. You know, I think it was an error on my part. I was registering and I may have clicked something different so I know it is — it has me as a speaker,

but I was just wanting to be a participant. So I do apologize for any inconveniences. I do apologize.

MARCIA GOOD: Absolutely no worries. If you want to just stay on to listen, that is absolutely fine. We appreciate your attendance and your being here today. Thank you so much, Elton.

ELTON BEGAY: All right. Thank you, ma'am. Thank you.

MARCIA GOOD: Our next speaker — thank you. Our next speaker is Kane Morris. Kane, are you available? And are you on the line?

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

MARCIA GOOD: OK. What we will do is we will go back through at the end after we have called on everybody and see if in fact some folks who have registered actually come back on at a later time. So next, we will look to Francesca Murnan. Francesca Murnan.

TAMMY SANDO: She chose to defer her time.

DARYL FOX: It seems that ...

TAMMY SANDO: She does not want to ...

DARYL FOX: It seems that she has deferred her time today, Marcia.

MARCIA GOOD: OK.

DARYL FOX: She is in the chat.

MARCIA GOOD: OK. Thank you so much. Sarah Emmett. Sarah, you are our next speaker up.

DARYL FOX: I cannot currently see Sarah in the list currently available.

MARCIA GOOD: OK. I will put her down on the list to call up again at the end. How about Alicia Mousseau? Alicia, are you available?

ALICIA MOUSSEAU: Yes, ma'am.

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

ALICIA MOUSSEAU: No, ma'am. I am actually driving to the Battle of Little Big Horn. Today is our Victory Day, so we are going to pay respect and also give some offerings to our ancestors who fought for us to be here. All of us, all of our community to continue to be who we are including our LGBTQ2S+ community members. So happy Victory Day and happy Pride, everybody. My name is Alicia Mousseau. I am the Oglala Sioux Tribe Vice President. I am very thankful for this opportunity to speak on this and give testimony today. So thank you for this

opportunity and for the visibility for our community, our LGBTQ2S+ community. And it is very difficult to get that kind of visibility, and I know our Tribal communities are, you know, the ones — those of us who can make our laws to protect all of our community members are working for that. So recently, the Oglala Sioux Tribe passed a resolution, which is sponsored by youth in our community, to recognize June as Pride Month. And also in 2019, Oglala Sioux Tribe also passed a marriage equality ordinance and amended our law and order ordinance to include hate crimes and LGBT, sexual orientation, gender identity into that. And just this year, we had a resolution to support the South Dakota amendment to the hate crimes that include sexual orientation, Two-Spirits and gender identity.

So we — we have been working hard with our Tribe to provide that visibility and those rights to all of our community members and to bring back our traditional teachings and understanding of the importance and, you know, just of all of our community members, especially our LGBTQ2S+ community members locally. And we appreciate the reach nationally, and we are hoping for that statewide too. It is very important to have people — Native people in positions. We have some Native people — in our state legislature who are pushing MMIP and LGBTQ2S+ legislation at that level. We are also very lucky to have Secretary Haaland in the Bureau and bringing awareness to those issues as well including the recent boarding school, you know, awareness and understanding, and trying to — trying to get more healing around that as well. Those are our missing people as well. So, just very thankful for this opportunity.

I am a clinical psychologist by training. So whenever I think about things, I think about things kind of on a spectrum or in tiers, as people who have worked in schools — the response to intervention approach where you have tiers where you can reach people who are at different levels. So, you know, trying to reach people with that large level of prevention and awareness is very important [INDISTINCT] reach. And being able to do that from a variety of, you know, perspectives, and angles, and, you know, all of our communities are different, too. So taking that in consideration is very important in getting that prevention, communication and education out about LGBTQ2S+ community members and also the MMIP around that, around that community. Additionally, you know, we have that more specific risk group that, you know, we also have to look at and look at ways to intervene and prevent in that risk group, the tier 2. Also those folks who end up going missing, how do we approach that? How do we, you know, intervene in that? And that is usually where we end up when we start talking about it, is we are doing a search. And our emergency management team for the Oglala Sioux Tribe, they do everything for us — weather, you know, disasters to MMIPs, to our COVID Response Team, which is based out of my office, so I have learned a lot about that emergency response and how to structure that. And, you know, learning more about it around the MMIP as well.

And, you know, we have a very large land base on the Pine Ridge Reservation. And so for us, the communication sometimes gets difficult. So that is one thing that would be very helpful for us is doing specific funding around those emergency — emergency broadcasts to our community, to our county. We encompass the whole county of Oglala Lakota County. That is why I mentioned county. You know, just on our reservation, being able to have those text alerts, those ways, you know, we have a — we have a radio station at home that is our local radio station, and we put everything out there. We also still hang flyers at our post offices. Like I said, we have a large land base. So it is very — you know, we also have Facebook which is one of the

other ways our communities. But we need to find a unified way to get communication out to our communities specifically and especially around our emergency responses, which includes MMIP. That would be very, very helpful. And it would also help us to, you know, get ahead of the — ahead of the search. And also we — you know, there is some time around when people report people missing. And, you know, our emergency response team, you know, when asked, they will just start to look. There is no, like, you have to wait a certain amount of time. So I think also looking tribally, we can put things in place tribally, but we also know a lot of our community members live in surrounding areas that are not on the reservation and are outside of our jurisdiction. And so how do we respond with those other jurisdictions, especially around our LGBTQ2S+ community members where outside communities may not be as accepting or responsive to that community.

So how do we open up that communication and education to the outside community about, you know, how we understand the importance of that community to us. They are our family. They are our friends. They are relatives. They are our community members. Every one of our community members is important to us. And so how do we do that communication, you know, especially for some of our reservations and Tribal communities that, you know, the communication with outside jurisdictions is — can be a little tense at times. So maybe sort of try to figure out how to bridge that and especially around the LGBTQ2S+ community.

So another piece is just the education. You know, how do we get this education out in our community? And — because I think the prevention piece, it will do huge for our community members, especially our youth who have, you know, since the pandemic, we all have access to the internet. I mean, not all, excuse me. I will take that back. You know, we have expanded our access to the internet and use of the internet, and, you know, mobile devices and such. And that can be a place where there — our youth are — especially our LGBTQ2S+ youth who may not necessarily find the community locally due to our distance sometimes — but look for community and look for places to find community. But those can also, you know, figuring out what is a safe place on the internet for those community members. So we have been trying to figure that out, that piece out about how do we create those safe spaces online for our Native LGBTQ2S+ community members and especially our youth to find, you know, find community support, find other supports, other Native supports that are safe. And that — and then how do we also intervene on those ones that aren't safe. And so just really promoting that safety online because that is something that we have expanded. You know, it is something new. And we know our youth and our community is using the internet. So — but other than that, I believe that is all I have for our testimony. I am sure we will provide a written testimony as well. But once again, thank you for this opportunity. Happy Victory Day and happy Pride. Thank you.

MARCIA GOOD: Thanks so much for that statement. It is given me so many ideas. And I know that the rest of our Task Force members are also taking notes. First, the idea that it was one of your Tribal youth who put the resolution together for sponsorship, I think, is an amazing way to get youth involved in government and in issues that are relevant to them. We will be interested in seeing what your legislation and your resolutions look like. And I will be in contact with you to get copies of those. You have become, obviously — taken great steps towards inclusion. And in, you know, making sure that all the voices are heard. There is one resource that we are going to

put in the chat. I know you cannot see it and so we will make sure that you get a copy of it out to all the folks who are on this listening session today.

In terms of communities that are struggling with the alerts that you talked about or getting messages out to cellphones and to people in the community, there is a program that is really fairly low cost called IPAWS. It is a — basically a public awareness system that is similar to the AMBER Alert or a Silver Alert or something like that, but it is something that the Tribe can do completely on their own. It works through the cell system that you have within your area. And you can decide what kind of alerts you want to put out, what are the criteria for that, how it's going to work. So we definitely want to get that into the chat. I know that one of the folks who works in our Task Force is putting that together, and he is going to put it up. And we will make sure that it gets out to you as well, because it sounds like that would be a need that you have. So thanks so much for all of those comments. And, you know, the reminder that we also include safe spaces for our youth and our adults in this area so that they can feel like they have a place to be and a place that it is accepted. So thank you so much for that. Very much appreciated. OK. Our next two speakers apparently are not on, so we will go over to Sadé Heart of the Hawk. Are you available?

SADÉ HEART OF THE HAWK: I am.

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

SADÉ HEART OF THE HAWK: No, I am fine. Thank you so much.

MARCIA GOOD: Okay. Thank you.

SADÉ HEART OF THE HAWK: [SPEAKING IN NATIVE LANGUAGE] Good afternoon, relatives. I am Sadé Heart of the Hawk. I am Mi'kmaq First Nation. And I am representing today not only myself but the Society of American-Indian Government Employees and the Zero Suicide Institute. I am making my 74th rotation around Grandfather Sun, and I am one of the elder founders and the Medicine Keeper of the New England States Two-Spirits Society or NESTS. And you know what happens in a nest. The young ones are taken care of, they are fed, they are kept warm, and they are taken care of. And that is what we hope to do. And the Two-Spirits societies and alliances all over Turtle Island are doing the same. I am calling in from the Traditional Homelands of the Quinnipiac Nation in Connecticut. And I pay homage to the ancestors of this land as well as the land of the ancestors on whose lands you live, work and play for we are all on Indigenous lands. I also pay homage to the spirits of the babies, the victims of the residential boarding school era. This terrible effort at genocide of Indigenous people who are being found on a regular basis these days, it's numbing to us. Many of us are really suffering with this finding of these — of these babies. The ancestors, though, are finding a way to let us know that we should never forget and that in remembering, we have to come together. We have to come together to heal and that all life is sacred.

Not too long ago, about a month ago — a month or so ago, I was asked to write a piece for a newsletter. And I need to let you know ahead of time that this may be triggering to some, so I really want people to be able to take care of themselves. If you have some sage, please light it up



because these are not easy words. I was asked to write a piece and to provide some information about how Two-Spirit — if there was any information at all about how our Two-Spirit people were treated as children in the residential schools, residential schools on my side of Turtle Island in Canada, and the boarding schools down here on this side of Turtle Island, all one island though with artificial borders. And I directed the person to the Truth and Reconciliation Report, which I got through four pages before I had to close it, and my PTSD was kicking in. But there are some stories about our Two-Spirit ancestors and how they were treated. But I also have an auntie up in one of the reserves in Nova Scotia, not too far from my own. And she was in the Shubenacadie Residential School with my mother.

And so I decided I would call her, she is 94 years old, and interview her basically to see — get some first-person account on how our people — our Two-Spirit people were treated, if she knew anything about that. And I want to read what she said to me. It's not long. But I want to read. This is a 94-year-old woman. And I had one of my cousins with her, taking care of her because even at the age of 94, this was very difficult for her to talk about. So this is — this is "Interview With My Auntie Mary Augustine, Who Is 94."

What she said to me was "I do not like to talk about those times. I try to forget as much as possible. They were very bad times, and bad things happened to all of us there at that place. Many of us were from the areas around that place, so many of us spoke Mi'kmaq, but we had our mouths washed out with lye soap or they beat us bad if they heard us. So we would try to sneak and talk Mi'kmaq together. I do not know what Two-Spirit is, not the way you're using it. But there were children in our community who fit the description you gave me, but we did not know that until they took us away to the residential school. I don't remember if the elders even had a special name for those children. We did not treat them any different than we did any other Mi'kmaq, except that the elders always seem to want them close. We did not even know they were different until we got to the residential school. When we'd do our ceremonies for the changing of the seasons, they were always close to the old ones. I remember two in our community, who my gran always told me that Creator had special jobs for them. That's what they told us. The agents took my brother and me after threatening my parents to put them in prison if they didn't let me and John go to school.

"I went — we got to Shube. They made us take off all our clothes. Girls in one room. Boys in another. And then they made us wash in tubs with lye soap and cold water. I remember the nuns being upset because this little girl was really a boy. And they called to the priest to come and get him. I remember them coming for him and then hearing him cry. We were all about 5 or 6 and that was about — that was the first beating we heard. There were many more. I remember that every day, the priests and nuns would make that child stand in front of the room where we ate the mush they gave us to eat every morning. And they would make fun of this child and push him around, slap him and call him names. When we first got there, we all spoke only Mi'kmaq or the language we had when we were taken from our people. So we didn't understand, but we were kids and we learned very quickly. They would tell us to laugh at him and call him names, too. They even told us that we should hit him when we passed him. Most of us were very frightened and we did as we were told. Pretty soon, we began to believe that there was something very wrong with these children, because that is what the priests and nuns told us every day. And we kept up the abuse even when the priests and nuns were not there. There were always a few who

were receiving this kind of humiliation and extra abuse throughout our entire time there. It makes me sad even now to know we were part of that. They taught us to hate ourselves. But they taught us to hate these children even more. I can't talk about this anymore." And that — that is how we ended that interview.

The oppression of our Indigenous relatives including those of us who identify as either Two-Spirit or LGBTQ+ is rooted in a very colonial mindset and has dangerously perpetuated the invisibility of our people in society and muffled or completely silenced our voices. That mindset has fueled oppressive mind- and spirit-numbing discrimination and has led to the invisibility of Indigenous people in general and Two-Spirit people specifically, in leadership, in work and in the public consciousness. We speak a lot about intergenerational and historical trauma, and I believe they've become buzzwords for many folks who are doing trauma-informed work. But because there is so little coverage, that's our invisibility of modern-day trauma faced by our relatives all over Turtle Island, things like the tar sands, the #NoDAPL Movement, food deserts, undrinkable water supplies and our missing and murdered Indigenous relatives. These levels of trauma rarely make the news. We have been marginalized. We have been demonized with — everything that you could possibly do to discriminate against a group of people has been done to us. Many of our people — and we need to promote this more and more. And just yesterday, just yesterday, I did a workshop for the National Indian Health Board on Two-Spirit people and on suicide prevention. That is what I do for a living. I still work full time. I still work full time because our Two-Spirit babies are dying. They are dying because they don't believe that they have a place in many of our societies. They are dying because our — some of our Tribes are so colonized that they don't feel like they have a place in their ceremonies, in their ways, in their — in Tribal life. We need to change that.

I — it took me years upon years to put the blame solidly where it belonged, on the — on the era of the residential and the boarding schools. We really need to perpetuate that today. We need to do education for folks around that. We need to educate our own people around the sacredness, prior to colonization, of Two-Spirit people. And that's what I teach. When I teach about Two-Spirit and suicide prevention, I talk about our history and many people know it. And for some, it's review, but you know what, it's OK to get review. We need to hear about every so often that we are a sacred people, that we were considered a great gift from Creator prior to contact. We need to return to that. We need to return to that. We need to wrap our arms around each other and provide safe spaces for our children to grow up. As I said, I work in suicide prevention and I can tell you that many of our Tribes rarely collect information, surveillance data on gender identity or sexuality at all. At all. And depending on how colonized the Tribe is, how acculturated, I will use the good word, how acculturated they are, they don't collect that data. And so they are certainly not going to collect data around Two-Spirit people, around the children but we get anecdotal information. Why? Because we have a strong network. We know each other. Even — I know folks who are in — across the country in California who are doing — I know the — who the Two-Spirit societies and alliances are. We know each other's names. We know who's doing the work in the community. We need to continue to build that framework for ourselves so our children don't end their lives. We need to let them know that they are — they are important because at the age of 74, I want to know who's going to continue on teaching our languages and doing our ceremonies and becoming pipe carriers and lodge keepers. But not only that, going into psychology, I am ABD in a Ph.D. in clinical psychology but that's not my most important—

that is an academic achievement but that's not my most important achievement. My most important achievement is the work that I do to keep our children safe. And for me, you don't have to have a Ph.D. to do that. All you have to have is the heart and the passion.

So to see that this effort is happening on this side of Turtle Island, and I have to say, it has been going on in — on my side and I don't always agree with Canada. You know, I don't — I don't even call Canada Canada because, you know, we are sovereign nations. We are — we live on treaty land and we have much the same challenges as our relatives here on this side of Turtle Island. However, what the country of Canada has been doing has been using the term Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Two-Spirit People since 2016. So they — we have advocated as Indigenous people for a very long time to get that — to get that agenda on the table, and it's on the table. And it should be on the table because when you are looking at a group of folks who have 85 percent of Indigenous Two-Spirit women have — will tell you that they have been victims, or they are survivors of serious assault or attempts on their life that we need to do something. And I would say as a person — as a person who has lived over seven decades, I would say to you that education is the key because that workshop I did yesterday, people told me they were crying. People told me they had never heard these things and I have done in-person workshops. I did one for National Indian Health Board again two years ago, the last live one that they did. And there were elders in that room and they came in and folded their arms, and those of you who know how to read body language will know when people fold their arms, they are not there — nothing's getting into the heart. And all of a sudden, you know, as I was talking and I was talking in a way that was not accusatory, but that was gentle and that told the real story, it's fact. They uncrossed their arms and, at the end, I was — I remember I was wearing a jean jacket over my ribbon skirt and at the end people came up to me and these elders came up to me and my jean jacket on the shoulder was wet from people crying and telling me, I always knew there was something very special about my son but I didn't understand. I didn't understand. The residential and boarding school era did a number on our people. We need to go back. The tree grows from the roots. We need to go back to the root system, to the ways of our ancestors. I am so honored to be able to speak in this forum today. And I hope that these few words from an old woman, from an old Two-Spirit woman will enter the hearts, and the minds, and the spirits of those who have the opportunity and the bandwidth to make a difference. So [SPEAKING IN NATIVE LANGUAGE] to all of you. Thank you.

MARCIA GOOD: Anything that I could say at this moment would just be superfluous, and your eloquence just needs to stand alone and be recognized and be honored. Thank you so much. Several of our next speakers were unable to join us today, so our next speaker would be Charlene Sleeper. Charlene, are you available?

CHARLENE SLEEPER: Hello?

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

CHARLENE SLEEPER: Sure.

MARCIA GOOD: OK. You should be able to go to the bottom of your screen and hit start video.

CHARLENE SLEEPER: My video. OK, let me get my end set up I guess.

MARCIA GOOD: There you are.

CHARLENE SLEEPER: Can you see me? OK.

MARCIA GOOD: Yes, we can. Thank you so much.

CHARLENE SLEEPER: Oh. I wonder why — I am so used to doing Zoom and you can usually see yourself. All righty. Good morning and afternoon, depending on where you are located. I am thankful Alicia Mousseau went before me as I will be seconding much of their input. Thank you for your work in Oglala Country, Alicia. I have noted a number of missing people in your region. Sadé Heart of the Hawk is correct in her assertion that there's an LGBTQ Two-Spirit data collection and support is needed. Thank you for your work, Sadé. I'm not sure exactly how I can be of support to both of you, but you are both free to contact me if needed. It is difficult for me to separate grassroots work from the LGBTQ Two-Spirit work as they are interconnected in my living experience. My testimony will be a blend of both. If you compare the participants and activities today to last month's OLJ meeting, you can see the evidence of the disadvantage and lack of support LGBTQ Two-Spirit people are working with, within our MMIP work.

My name is Charlene Sleeper with Missing and Murdered Indigenous Peoples Billings located in Montana. My Indigenous name is Red Eagle Fan Woman, given to me by my mother before my fourth Sundance ceremony. I am enrolled at Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho from Oklahoma and was culturally raised Crow. I do not have preferred pronouns. I identify as transgender non-binary pansexual, and I reside on the unceded territory of the Crow people. It was my privilege to embrace my LGBTQ Two-Spirit ways with the support of my Oglala Lakota friends during my time on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. Thank you for this opportunity to offer a testimony about the United States Missing and Murdered Indigenous People's crisis as a Montana-based LGBTQ activist and MMIP advocate. I would like to thank all of the Presidential Operation Lady Justice Task Force members and community leader participants for attending this important listening session this Pride Month 2021.

My work with the MMIP movement — excuse me — women's movement began in 2018 during the Billings Women's March, which featured the MMIW crisis. Being a non-binary transgender person of color, I changed my own language to MMIP to reflect my support of all people suffering from this crisis. This crisis impacts men, women and transgender people who do not identify as a gender, including myself. Moving forward, I will refer to the movement as the MMIP crisis. I have raised awareness for the crisis through social media, supporting regional protests and vigils, supporting search and rescue operations and doing extensive community engagement in Billings and surrounding regions.

The suspicious death of northern Cheyenne Tribal member Henny Scott was my first official active case with which myself and several Democratic progressives became involved. Since then, I have assisted with Indigenous people's MMIP cases, Hub Williamson, Tamera Bear Comes Out, Kaysera Stops Pretty Places, Selena Not Afraid, Mildred Old Crow and Arden Pepion. I have also assisted with non-Indigenous peoples cases Lori Bray and Amelia Brooks. For me, we

are all God's children, and MMIP Billings does not discriminate. This work has been arduous, challenging on multiple levels and heartbreaking. I truly am thankful for the many people becoming involved with solution-seeking in hopes of resolving this crisis that is harming our respective homelands. I will be addressing four main topics: Indigenous community organizing, cross-cultural relations, law enforcement relations and residential school victim recovery healing support. In closing, I will have six immediate asks of the OLJ Task Force.

Under Indigenous community organizing: Community organizing is a difficult task in and of itself because it's volunteer resources. In my region, there is a lack of Tribal LGBTQ Two-Spirit awareness, support and representation at urban, border town and reservation levels. There is also a lack of MMIP strategic planning, post-awareness, protests and Task Force meetings. From discussions, we are having a difficult time developing leadership and coalition building. Some of these issues stem from Indigenous prejudice against white culture and lateral violence within the MMIP movement. There is also intertribal historical animosity and personal life animosity, which sows itself amongst the ranks. This creates barriers to change and progress. MMIP Billings is currently in development phase and is considering new strategies to see to its vision in light of these difficulties.

Under cross-cultural relations: During my time cross-culturally building relations, MMIP Billings has worked alongside the Billings City Council, the Billings Gazette, the First Congregational United Church of Christ, the Elk River Intertribal Center, the Global Peace Foundation and with Black — local Black Lives Matter activists. During the Billings Black Lives Matter George Floyd protests, Billings City Council Mayor Bill Cole stated in the Billings Gazette article the need to address Indigenous relations issues. Montana does not have a huge Black population; our race relation issues are between cowboys and Indians. Mike Yakubovich, who is also Billings Deputy Mayor and Councilman, is overseeing a cross-cultural pilot project under the Global Peace Foundation. The Billings Gazette has dedicated themselves to longer — long-term coverage of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Peoples cases. Billings Gazette reporter Anna Paige of the arts and entertainment beat has dedicated herself to authentically portraying the Indigenous narrative. The First Congregational United Church of Christ, under Reverend Lisa Hartman, has done extensive work in supporting Indigenous and LGBTQ Two-Spirit peoples in Billings and surrounding regions. To name just a few of this church's accomplishments, UCC is home to the 406 Pride Resource Center, which supports LGBTQ Two-Spirit Indigenous peoples; the Elk River Intertribal Center; White Eagle Recovery Talking Circle; and has a memorandum of understanding with the Native-American Development Center. The Elk River Intertribal Center under Nelle Evie is a community initiative to create a cultural center for Indigenous peoples in Billings, Montana. There are several Billings' professional leaders, white and Indigenous, who are proactively creating relationships and projects to support Indigenous peoples in our region.

Under law enforcement relations: As a graduate of the Billings City's Citizens Police Academy, I entered the MMIP movement partially out of concern that Indigenous peoples feel they aren't receiving law enforcement support in regard to unnatural suspicious deaths and missing persons. As a supporter of the 2014, 2020 and 2021 safety mill levies, which is the local option for funding city law enforcement, I engaged urban border town and reservation Indigenous peoples to understand the issue at ground level. Billings is a commerce hub for rural communities so our



local law enforcement issues overlaps with the surrounding regions. At the base level, there are three main community components contributing to the inability of law enforcement to properly process active investigations. Those are communities and families reporting in a timely manner, complying with active investigations and maintaining active investigation confidentiality. There are issues with law enforcement offices not utilizing resources on investigations. There is a community confusion as to why resources are exhausted in some cases and not others. Many feel discrimination, such as racism, nepotism and lateral violence, is at play in these resource allocation decisions. There are also police brutality incidents that need accountability. Communities do not understand the need to report a suspicious death or suspicious missing person in a timely fashion.

The runaway phenomenon in our state complicates matters in that it's difficult to discern when an individual is escaping an abusive situation or is genuinely missing. When law enforcement is investigating, sometimes important information is withheld from officers out of fear of retaliation. There is one California-based organization which is complicating matters for our state. The Sovereign Bodies Institute, under Annita Lucchesi, becomes involved with active investigations, which thwarts law enforcement agency's ability to thoroughly investigate active investigations. Raising awareness via social media and news media for an active case at onset of the active case gives suspects the ability to flee and create alibis. It also diminishes the ability to maintain confidentiality and protect witnesses. The Sovereign Bodies Institute is also not sharing its data with law enforcement agencies, and many community members don't understand what this data is being used for under this institute.

The Black Lives Matter movement has caused some confusion among MMIP activists and advocates. I stand in solidarity with urban Black people as they contend with police brutality in their communities. The two movements can work together on certain issues. However, it's difficult to ask for improved law enforcement assistance in one hand while holding law enforcement accountable for police brutality incidents in the other. It's a tricky and difficult line to navigate, one that even myself struggles with on occasion. The Northern Cheyenne Search and Rescue under Theresa Small is currently funding their work with small grants, donations and sometimes out of pocket. They have a list of needs to oversee reservation search and rescue operations, including training, equipment and funding for room and board costs. Last, Chief St. John of the Billings Police Department is in need of support resources for police officers. This department lost a police officer to suicide. BPD officers are subjected to consistent trauma; are currently understaffed, which adds to their stress; have a high turnover; and are currently contending with increased crime due to the pandemic. The current funding for our city police department does not meet the need of our current city demands. Chief St. John has been open to cross-cultural relationship building and does consider ideas to improve his police department. However, these ideas take funding, which is difficult to obtain in our region.

Residential school victim recovery and healing process support: The Canadian and U.S. residential school victim recovery is having a collective traumatizing and healing effect on our Indigenous communities. Indigenous peoples have known that our ancestors were inhumanely mistreated at these institutions of genocide for centuries. In fact, there are still residential school victims alive — victim survivors alive today. I am a first-generation survivor in that my mother attended an Indian boarding school. The recognition of our plight as Indigenous people of this

continent is imperative to resolving the MMIP crisis. The onset of this crisis began with colonization, our genocide and the assimilation process Indigenous peoples were cruelly subjected to in our homelands. The dehumanization of Indigenous people set off a long line of inter-generational trauma, which we still see present today in our communities. It's my hope that with support of Indigenous community-organized initiatives and building respectful cross-cultural relationships centered on collective healing that we begin a better — building a better future for the next generations. However, acknowledging the pain must come first, and it's going to hurt us all deeply. It would behoove the United States government to be proactive in providing mental, spiritual, emotional and physical support to Indigenous peoples as we work through the trauma it subjected us to, which we are still struggling to heal to this very day. We cannot erase our history. We can simply learn from it and work towards improving our collective futures together.

The six immediate asks I have for Operation Lady Justice are as follows. First, we need a Canadian tariff waiver and grant for Canadian MMIW/MMIP resources. Canadian First Nation peoples are at the forefront of many movements, and they have created resources to support multiple facets of the healing process. These resources are currently tariffed, which prevents Indigenous peoples and allies access to their knowledge. Two examples of local places which cannot access these materials due to their high expense are the 406 Pride Center at First Congregational United Church and the independent bookstore This House of Books. It is my hope that access to these resources will assist with Indigenous community organizing, healing and cross-cultural relationship building. Second, I would like the U.S. government to invest in Indigenous-tailored community education, which teaches the importance of complying with law enforcement investigations, maintaining investigation confidentiality and reporting in a timely manner. Third, we need Indigenous-tailored community search and rescue volunteer training and resource support. Community members will volunteer. However, SAR operations are expensive and at times unavailable, which thwarts rescue and recovery efforts. Fourth, we need economic housing, water and food security and investment in all communities. Lack of access to a means to provide for basic needs and the basic needs themselves contributes to violence against all people. Fifth, we need to begin focusing on missing and murdered Indigenous peoples prevention measures. Lastly, in gracious light of the recent residential boarding schools being exposed, Indigenous communities are going to need to access quality health services to help with long-term healing process. We have the health care structure under urban and reservation Indian health systems. They need to be properly resourced to help communities cope with the long-term healing process. In closing, I would again like to thank the OLJ Task Force members and community leader participants. And I would like to thank the Lord for bringing us together to see to the sacred work as we heal our communities together. This work is challenging, but I'm grateful for our combined efforts to see to our collective futures as Indigenous Nations and allies. It's initiatives such as this that give me hope in our collective future. Thank you for listening.

MARCIA GOOD: Thank you so much for the words that you just spoke to us. I just rarely had somebody who so succinctly gives us the specific ask, and the things that you believe in your experience would be helpful from the Task Force to help work on these issues. It's incredibly helpful for us to hear some very basic specifics, especially about things like the Canadian tariffs that we don't have first-hand knowledge of. And I think especially your last point about accessing long-term health healing processes is based on what has happened just recently in the

news is incredibly timely and something that we definitely need to look into. Your work in Billings I know has, you know, garnered a lot of attention that is a place where I called home for 20 years and worked as a federal prosecutor there. And there is some, you know, some amazing community resources that you have. And your partnership with the Billings Police Department, I think, you know, significantly helps when everybody works together on these issues. So thank you so much for those comments today. OK. Our next speaker is not on the call right now, but we believe that we have Carmen Harvie on. Carmen, are you on to be able to present testimony today? Carmen?

CARMEN HARVIE: Yeah. Hello?

MARCIA GOOD: We can barely hear you. Are you on?

CARMEN HARVIE: Yeah. Can you hear me?

MARCIA GOOD: Yes, we can hear you now. Do you wish to be on video?

CARMEN HARVIE: No. I will just talk.

MARCIA GOOD: OK. Thank you. Go ahead.

CARMEN HARVIE: Well, my name's Carmen Harvie. And I am Choctaw Hualapai, and I am the President of the Oklahoma Central Chapter MMIP. And I've been doing this work for about six years. And, you know, Pride Day is going to be tomorrow. And I am participating in the parade in Oklahoma City in representation of our LGBTQ and, you know, our Two-Spirit and our MMIWs, MMIPs, MMIRs are going to be representing and helping lead that parade tomorrow and to bring some awareness to the city. And, you know, it's, you know, it's hard for our gay population, especially our Native people, are always worried and always looking behind their backs and, you know, worried about what's going to happen to them. You know, I worry about my own family as, you know, I have, you know, people coming out in my family. And I have to be, you know, aware, and educated, and tap resources, you know, to help them and be ready and be prepared. But I do see a lot of my friends and people I have met along the way do — have been affected by violence. And, you know, we have to, you know, support them and advocate for them. Because, you know, a lot of times there's — the resources aren't available. But we know that, you know, they have been counted in, you know, in our numbers. And we come across, you know, law enforcement not wanting to look for them when they are missing or thinking that, you know, they are just party people and it's their lifestyle. And, oh, well, we aren't going to look for them. They're not important to law enforcement. So, I, you know, I believe, you know, in, you know, the history of our Native people, our Two-Spirit people — are very sacred. Very sacred. They're the ones that carried our prayers. They had the gift. And like Alicia was saying earlier that, you know, we need to go back to where they were, you know, they were the highest respected people for us. And, you know, I agree with that, and, you know, and then with our historical trauma that has a lot to do with what's happening with our Native people. And, you know, my mom went to boarding school back in the '30s. You know, she never talked about that, but that has a lot to do with what's happening to our Native people in how they carry themselves, and how, you know, they know that [INDISTINCT] they remember it. And then —



and then being gay is, you know, they have more, more hurt, more pain that comes against them. But I think that, you know, I'll continue to, you know, work with the MMIP Central Chapter in Oklahoma so that I can, you know, be that advocate for our gay population. So they'll know, you know, that they can come to — come to us if they need help. But I just wanted, you know, to know if, you know, somehow we could all, you know, be able to reach out to each other [INDISTINCT] what Alicia has. And if there is a way that we can contact [INDISTINCT] to share that our contact information with each other so that if there is someone that lives in [INDISTINCT] and we are working with them would have our work to able [INDISTINCT] this is the thing because that happens a lot here in Oklahoma and [INDISTINCT] information to share that, that would be great. But I just wanted to say that part that, you know, we need more resources for our [INDISTINCT]. But thank you.

MARCIA GOOD: Thank you so much, Carmen, for being willing to offer some testimony here today. We are working on putting together kind of a resource handout that we can send to all the participants here. If you are willing to have your contact information included in that, or if you have additional information that you think that might be helpful, definitely put it in the chat or you can send an email to the Operation Lady Justice email address that is here because we would like to be as inclusive as possible. I think Carmen, what you are mentioning, kind of the lack of resources in this really specific area is, we have heard, kind of, just repeatedly. And we have also heard comments about the feelings that family members or loved ones feel, like that law enforcement might not want to look for their loved one because of what they consider to be their lifestyle. And, you know, everyone deserves to be looked for. It makes absolutely no difference. So, in all the training that we are putting together we are making certain that that is one thing that is kind of front and center in all of the work that we do. So thank you so much for your words here today. Our next speaker is going to be Vice Chairwoman Wendy Schlater who offered our opening prayer. Vice Chairwoman Schlater, do you wish to be on video? There you go.

WENDY SCHLATER: Thank you. You know, in listening to everyone today, you know, I just want to, you know, just reiterate too, like a gentle reminder that MMIW, MMIP, MMIW-IG, MMIW-IR for relative — you know, it doesn't happen overnight, and it doesn't happen in an instant. It happens on an escalation of violence, right? Of lack of services, and resources for folks that are experiencing physical and sexual abuse that are being discriminated against. And so, you know, in that same breath, you know, I would like to share that, you know, we need dedicated funds and Tribal-specific resources to address this — these issues in our community that don't take away from Title IX of VAWA, that don't take away from HHS Family Violence Prevention Services Act. We need additional funding to address the Two-Spirit LGBTQ issues in our community. We need real-time data on youth suicide and services there for prevention as well because we know that there are stigmas in our community around Two-Spirit LGBTQ folks as well, right? You know, LGBTQ folks as being referenced as a stigma of being pedophiles. And so, you know, I want to make that really clear that an adult who physically or sexually abuses a child is a perpetrator and is using criminal behavior that is not connected to gender expression or sexual orientation. Breaking the stigma of being LGBTQ or Two-Spirit because someone has been sexually or physically abused, right? And really uplifting the value of our Two-Spirit and LGBTQ folks in the community as we did pre-colonialism, pre-U.S. — pre, you know, pre-contact. And then one of the other things too, and I don't see Elizabeth Carr here anymore from

IHS. But, you know, I would really encourage Indian Health Services to make available safe medical services for our transgender relatives, and medications that go with that.

I was at a site visit at the Urban Indian Health up in Sacramento a couple years ago, and I almost fell off my chair. And it was with good intention that the director was sharing with us that they were servicing their transgender patients with trial medicines, because they could not get safe medicines, or medical services that were available on IHS's schedule. And so, you know, we need to make that available. You know, I don't even know if there was research done on what the status of those folks' health is today. They had went through those trial-era medications from those pharmaceutical companies. And so, you know, that's a reproductive injustice in itself as well, right? And so, you know, let's see, I was taking a lot of notes as I was listening to folks speak. And then, you know, lastly, and I know Leslie Hagen is on this panel as well, we need training for our district attorneys and judges that are — that for our folks — our Two-Spirit LGBTQ folks that are coming through the justice systems, either through tribal court or the Western court system need to be seen as real relationships. And really focus on the crime that has happened, the violation that has happened. And, you know, a few folks have said it earlier, Marcia, you just reiterated it as well, that everybody deserves justice, everybody deserves to be safe. And, you know, it doesn't matter what color we are coming to the justice systems, or what our gender expression is, or our sexual orientation is. At the end of the day, if we experienced a crime, a violation, then we deserve justice. We deserve resources. We deserve services, right? And so, you know, you heard today from a few folks about prevention, intervention, and then you know, the crisis work that is out there. And, you know, bringing all the systems together. And I know that it won't happen overnight. It's a work in progress. And these are the first steps in coming together and how — we are going to figure out how we move together forward into the future. So thank you. I would like to thank everybody here today that attended this important webinar. I would like to thank the Operation Lady Justice Commission for having these listening sessions and for actually having a Two-Spirit LGBTQ session. I was really surprised when Marcia had reached out to me and asked me to do the opening prayer. I was surprised and I was honored as well. And so I hope that these are continuing conversations that we'll continue to have in the future. So thank you. Thank you, everyone for your time. Be safe and be well. Thank you.

MARCIA GOOD: Thank you so much, Vice Chairwoman Schlater. Just so much appreciate you being willing to come on and offer some comments. We will make certain that the comments that you have made get to IHS, so that they are aware of the concerns. I know that Leslie Hagen, who is our National Indian Country Training Coordinator, and who coordinates all of the training for Operation Lady Justice along with her training working group, is on as well, and is planning some additional training within this area, which I think is really well-timed and well-placed. Leslie has done a ton of good work, has literally trained thousands upon thousands of folks during Operation Lady Justice on a number of areas. And we are really proud to have her working with this team. OK. We have Sharon Day. Sharon was on, and we have to take just a moment because she is on a phone. So we have to figure out of the phones that have called in, which one is Sharon, so they are going to mute and then unmute some of the phone lines. So Sharon, you will be next up. Sharon when your line is unmuted, you can go ahead.

DARYL FOX: I am just taking one more moment, Marcia, as I unmute the lines. All lines are unmuted for the caller-ins.

MARCIA GOOD: OK. Sharon, if your — if your phone line has been unmuted you can go ahead. And for those who are not Sharon you might want to put your phone on mute. Sharon, are you available to speak? Let us go ahead and mute those lines for right now. And we will try it again in a moment. I think what we will do is look at the chat. There are a couple of things I wanted to bring your attention to. Matt Lysakowski from the DOJ's COPS Office, the Community Oriented Policing Services, he is a special adviser to the Task Force, and the acting Director of the COPS Office, Rob Chapman, is also a Task Force member, is on today. He put a note in the chat about opportunities for grant funding for both Tribal and non-Tribal law enforcement officer positions, including law enforcement, mental health and wellness projects that are currently open. So be sure to take a look at that.

We also have from Elizabeth "Betsi" Griffith. She is with BJA, and she is on for the acting BJA Director who is a Task Force member. And she noted a significant item here, that they have resources available to address hate crimes, including those due to perceived or actual gender, sexual orientation or gender identities, and combating hate crime is one of the top highest priorities for the Department of Justice. There are currently three funding opportunities out there right now. Sounds like the part one application is due June 29. Final applications are due July 13. So if you have any questions about that, certainly go to the link that she has got in here so that you can make sure to take advantage of those resources.

And then we have some other — some other resources that are in the chat. Elton talked about NAICJA's webinar, LGBTQ Two-Spirit Ethics and Issues for Tribal Judicial Systems. That sounds like an amazing webinar on Tuesday, it hasn't happened yet. So you still have time to sign up on Tuesday. And there's a registration link in there. Sounds like an amazing resource.

So thanks, everybody, for those contacts and information in the chat. Let us try one more time to unmute so that Sharon Day can speak, if she can. Sharon, are you available to speak? Negatory. It does not sound like we have been able to find Sharon's line. Sharon Day, if you are on, would you put a note in the chat so that we can try and locate you and make sure you are able to speak? Is there anyone else who has not yet offered testimony, who either deferred, or who was on this list who might have called in a little bit later? Or anybody else who wishes to offer testimony, we are absolutely willing to listen. We have set aside this afternoon to hear testimonies. So if you have not signed up, we are happy to take your testimony today. Or you can submit written comments, either way. So if in fact you wish to, just put a note in the chat, and then we will get you lined up to be able to present testimony today.

DARYL FOX: Marcia, I do believe Francesca Murnan is on the line wishing to speak.

MARCIA GOOD: Sounds good. Let us go ahead and — Francesca, if you are able to, let us know you are available to speak.

FRANCESCA MURNAN: Yeah. Already unmuted. Go ahead and share. And thank you for allowing me to defer time to our Tribal leadership and our LGBTQS relatives in this room today.

I appreciate all the comments that have been provided so I will not take up too much time, but I will just share a few of the things that we are thinking about here at Seattle Indian Health Board. We are one of the 41 Urban Indian Health Programs in the country, providing culturally attuned health care services to American Indian/Alaska Native people living in urban areas. We are based out of the Seattle area, but we do have a national reach through our policy and advocacy work and our data evaluation and research work that happens under the Urban Indian Health Institute, one of the 12 Tribal epidemiology centers in the country.

In that role, we have — we have been a pretty active member of the MMIWG movement through our data evaluation research. In 2018, we released a first-of-its-kind report looking at the rates of missing and murdered Native women and girls, and Two-Spirit relatives in urban cities, which was the first time that data had been looked at or even attempted to look at. But a lot of what we found is the data crisis around how data are collected, analyzed and reported back or not reported back to Native communities. So a lot of my comments today are really focused on our inaccuracy and inability to collect race and ethnicity data, but also gender data. And if we don't have good data, our decision-makers, our Tribal leadership, our urban Indian programs and survivors and families most impacted as well as policy-makers don't have the adequate information to do data-driven decision-making and allocate resources appropriately. So we will submit some written comments, we have submitted comments before on many of the data issues. But for today's call, focus a little bit more on some recent work that came out of the Urban Indian Health Institute. Just a few months ago, they released a report called "Supporting the Sacred," where they did a national survey of about a hundred femme-identified individuals, Native individuals in the country. It was focused on COVID-19 and the impacts of domestic violence/intimate partner violence because we know the pandemic has placed extra strain on our survivors. We have seen an 8 percent increase in DV and IPV during the — during the pandemic, about 7 percent of the folks identified in that survey did identify as LGBTQ2S. And the main results or the main outcomes of that survey data really show that we are — our survivors are in desperate need of culturally specific organizations and care. So as an urban Indian health program, we understand that well. We know that our relatives feel safest and when they have access to things like traditional Indian medicine services, culturally attuned behavioral health services, whether that is substance use disorder, services for mental health, as well as just appropriate medical care, dental care, pharmacy, all these things that our folks need to be well.

We also see a big need for addressing the social determinants of health. So it's not just what happens in the clinical facility, but what happens through housing stability, homelessness prevention and response, our youth engagement services, and our elders programming. These are all areas where we know greatly influence our survivors' ability to thrive in community. And so when looking at what Operation Lady Justice can do, we really are advocating for things like blended funding strategies. This is a really unique opportunity for our federal partners to think about how you fulfill the federal trust and treaty obligation to American Indian/Alaska Native people by combining the resources that you have and thinking creatively about ways to address social determinants of health. Breaking out of those silos and really thinking about how do we funnel resources to community in ways that make sense that meet our needs.

In relationship to that, we still see a lot of need around grant eligibility. I appreciate some comments made earlier today around not wanting to divert resources, the deeply needed

resources that are already allocated through Tribal set-asides, through things like VAWA and other programs. Those resources are already chronically underfunded. We see a need to increase those resources significantly and increase the eligibility of Indigenous organizations that would be eligible for those resources. So Tribal epidemiology centers, Tribal organizations, urban Indian organizations, these are all unique and distinct codes under the federal law and would need to be explicitly included in grant eligibility to be able to access additional IPV-related resources. So we would love to continue to work with folks on how to do that, so that resources adequately reach all American Indian/Alaska Native people regardless of where we reside. The second component of that is around robust Tribal consultation and additional urban confer policies. We are seeing this administration really invest in re-invoking the government-to-government Tribal consultation policies. But there is still a need to ensure that urban Indian organizations have opportunities to engage with our federal partners. And IHS is still only the one federal agency that has an urban confer policy. So those are just a few of the things that I would like to share in the space today. And last, I will just highlight a couple of other kinds of policy and assistance changes that we are working on here at SIHB that we would like to share with our partners around systemic data reforms. So Washington state just passed a Task Force on MMIP and we will be helping implement that in partnership with our travel partners and survivors, families most impacted, and some non-Indigenous government partners from the region. And the Task Force will focus on many of these recommendations, how we actualize these things at a state level. We are doing similar work with the local law enforcement agency looking at data systems, both at the city and the county level, looking at how data are collected, how they are analyzed, and shared back to our communities. So we will — keep your eyes open for some new resources coming in the near future, some toolkits that we'll be producing, and I hope what you see in the theme here is that our communities are doing the work. So many of our grassroots advocates are out here leading the work every day and we are really looking forward to working with our federal partners to find ways to elevate and amplify and leverage the expertise that already exists within our community. So thank you for your time today.

MARCIA GOOD: Thank you so much, Francesca. I am glad that you were able to speak. We have got another really specialized listening session we are going to do in late July that I am hoping that your agency will be on. It is really specifically related to data and all things data. So some of the comments that you have made here really transfer to that as well. I think one of the things that you mentioned in terms of like solving the problems we actually have is very important. Daryl, were you able to get Sharon Day on?

DARYL FOX: Unfortunately, she was having some issues. She did send a note to us. I had emailed it to you, if you want to review it. And we also are going to let her know to submit written comments with any comments that she does have.

MARCIA GOOD: OK. Sounds good. I will read out her comments so that our folks who are on can hear it. She sent an email saying, “I was on the call waiting to testify. My comments are basically to not forget our relatives who are suffering from addiction, mental health issues and the unsheltered. We have had an outbreak of HIV here in Minnesota as a result of the opioid. COVID has exasperated the alienation of our relatives. We need more data. We have not had good qualitative research since Dr. Karina Walters did her research almost 20 years ago. We need data to affect policies. We need culturally specific services in every area. If our



heterosexual Native populations get a cold, well in the queer Native population, we have pneumonia.” Yes. I am glad that she was able to submit those comments so that we can also have them written into the — into the testimony today. We have got a couple other comments in the chat. Another note from Betsi Griffith at BJA about the Emmett Till Program Solicitation that would be available. It is closed for this year, but it is available again next year. And then Candace has indicated — well, it sounds like an amazing resource here, a trans and gender-affirming care in I/T/U facilities — strategic vision and plan, and then she actually has a link in the — in the chat to the plan if people are interested. And then Sadé has put in a link for Zero Suicide in Indian Country — and toolkits. There is just an amazing amount of work that has already been done in so many of these issues that we just really, really need to pull together. We’re doing that on the Operation Lady Justice website as much as we possibly can, and there is a bunch of great new resources here today that we want to put together and put up there so that we aren’t reinventing the wheel, but we are making sure everybody has got access to these resources. I guess the other comments that Francesca made that I think our Task Force has talked about is, you know, the funding strategies, combining resources, making sure that we are looking at intervention and prevention as well, and hopefully expanding the availability of the funding that we have, increase eligibility for organizations. So very, very timely comments. Do we have anybody else who is in today in the listening session who would be interested in speaking? Either who was not called on or who was not able to call in, or who maybe didn’t register to speak but you wish to speak? Now is a great time to be able to do that. Again, just note it in the chat if so. And you can also submit written comments to the website that is listed here below. OK. And for our facilitators, have you had any requests from other folks to speak or to submit written — or verbal testimonies today, Daryl?

DARYL FOX: There is nothing currently in the queue.

MARCIA GOOD: OK.

DARYL FOX: And also to update, nobody in the list previously passed on has not joined, so we are current.

MARCIA GOOD: OK. OK. Sounds good. I do feel like I need to offer everybody an apology. This has been a very moving session. I try fairly hard not to cry during these sessions, but sometimes it’s very difficult. So I thank you for bearing with me today. It is a — it’s a very difficult topic and it’s — there has just been so many wonderful speakers with so many great ideas, but so many sad stories. So thank you for bearing with me. And I think at that point now, we are going to our closing speaker. We have a Task Force member, Jason O’Neal. He is Director of the BIA’s Office of Justice Services and Jason is going to close us out today. Hopefully your computer is still working OK, Jason, and that you are on to be able to close us out.

JASON O’NEAL: Yes, thank you, Marcia. And good afternoon, everyone. As Marcia said, my name is Jason O’Neal, and I am an enrolled member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation of Oklahoma. I am also the Director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs Office of Justice Services, as well as a Task Force member for the Presidential Task Force on Missing and Murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives. On behalf of the Operation Lady Justice Task Force, I do

want to thank all of you who chose to speak today during our listening session for American Indians and Alaska Native LGBTQ+ and Two-Spirit communities. The information shared will certainly enhance the work we still must complete. And it's important we heard from you about what is working and what is still needed to reach our common goal of safe and healthy American Indian and Alaska Native communities and people. Your testimony and stories covered a range of topics that included community organization, communication, outreach, intervention, online safety, safe spaces, needed services and resources, as well as needed healing and support. Your comments were heard, heartfelt and appreciated. As Interior Secretary Haaland stated on June 14 when she raised the Progress Pride Flag over the Department of Interior headquarters in Washington, D.C., despite many hard victories, there is still a long way to go to ensure full liberation, peace and equality for the LGBTQ+ community. Thank you once again for your comments and testimony today. Marcia, I will turn it back over to you.

MARCIA GOOD: Thank you so much, Jason, for being on the Task Force and for your leadership role at the BIA Office of Justice Services and for closing us out with those words here today. Just really thank you so much to everybody for joining today for your testimony, for the written comments that we know will come in. Know that we have heard you, know that we will look very carefully at the recommendations that you have made and do our very best to implement things that you have suggested and that we believe can really make a difference in helping Tribal communities and Tribal people work on the issues surrounding LGBTQ+ and Two-Spirit people in the communities in which they reside. Just thank you again — submit written comments, if you are interested. And we look forward to meeting with you all again. Be well, be safe and have a wonderful weekend. Thank you so much.