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Presidential Task Force on Missing and Murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives Operation Lady Justice

Operation Lady Justice Accomplishments

The operation of the Task Force itself and the assigned tasks are divided into seven areas:

- 1) Administration
- 2) Listen and Meet [EO Section 4(a)(i)]
- 3) Model Protocols and Procedures [EO Section 4(a)(ii)(A), (B), (C)]
- 4) Cold Case Team [EO Section 4(a)(iii)]
- 5) Best Practices [EO Section 4(a)(iv)(A), (B)]
- 6) Education and Outreach Campaigns [EO Section 4(a)(iv)(C), (D)]
- 7) Reports [EO Section 5(a), (b)]

1) Administration

OLJ established a website, <https://OperationLadyJustice.usdoj.gov> to include consultation notices, read outs from prior sessions, links to resources, information about missing Native American children, and more. News of various events are also sent to the field via subscription to the website and GovDelivery.

Other administrative activities included regular briefings for the White House and the Office of Management and Budget, and participation in outside agency review of the Missing and Murdered Native Americans (MMNA) topic by the U.S. Government Accountability Office.

The Task Force also coordinated with other Federal efforts related to missing or murdered AI/AN, including:

- The Attorney General's Initiative on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons;
- The Presidential Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice;
- The Alyce Spotted Bear and Walter Soboleff Commission on Native Children;
- The Federal Enforcement Working Group on Combating Human Trafficking and Child

Exploitation in the U.S.;

- The White House Council on Native American Affairs;
- The Department of Homeland Security's Blue Campaign to End Human Trafficking.



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2) Listen and Meet [Section 4(a)(i)]

LISTENING SESSIONS

The Task Force is committed to listening. All of its work is informed and shaped by input from impacted victims, families, and communities. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Task Force members began discussing the issues with Tribes, Tribal members, and Tribal organizations as the first order of business. Listening Sessions were hosted by:

- National Congress of American Indians' (NCAI) Executive Council, Winter Session, February 12, Washington, DC
- HHS's Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Grantees Meeting, February 13, Washington, DC
- DOJ's Tribal Nations Leadership Council, February 25, by phone conference
- HHS ACF's Tribal Advisory Committee, March 2, Washington, DC
- DOI's Tribal Interior Budget Committee, March 12, Washington, DC

The first four virtual large-scale listening sessions, according to BIA region, were held on May 27, May 29, June 2, and June 3. Registration for the four sessions exceeded 1,000 participants.

The Task Force also conducted listening sessions/meetings with the Center for Native American Youth Cultural Preservation Ambassadors Project participants and youth participants in projects supported by ANA's Native Youth Initiative on June 24, 2020, NCAI's Violence Against Women's Act (VAWA) Task Force members on September 21, 2020, and with the Navajo Nation on November 9, 2020.

TRIBAL CONSULTATIONS

With in-person sessions unavailable, Tribal leaders were invited to participate in a series of 12 virtual Tribal consultations held via an online platform between August 17, 2020 and September 17, 2020. Nearly 1,000 Tribal leaders, designees, citizens, and others registered across the 12 sessions. In addition to the virtual Tribal consultations, OLJ accepted written comments until 11:59 p.m. AKDT on October 31, 2020.



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OTHER COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENTS

In addition to the consultations and listening sessions noted above, OLJ has hosted numerous other engagements with Tribal law enforcement, FBI and BIA Victim Services programs, Tribal domestic violence and sexual assault coalitions, and others to hear about field experiences.

In July and August 2020, the DOJ Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) convened Tribal law enforcement leaders from across the country to discuss challenges facing the field, share information, and identify successful approaches to effectively address missing AI/AN cases. This national "call to action" for law enforcement leaders included 10 virtual sessions on four topics: (1) The Challenges of Missing and Murdered AI/AN in Your Community; (2) Model Protocols and Procedures; (3) NamUs; and (4) Trauma-Informed Victim Services. Dozens of Tribal law enforcement leaders joined these interactive discussions to provide their insight into the local Tribal challenges and resources surrounding missing and murdered cases.

In June 2020, OLJ hosted two webinars with Tribal and State task forces, study groups, and other efforts at the Tribal and State levels, that are also addressing the issues surrounding missing and murdered AI/AN. The goal of these webinars was to share information among the task forces and begin coordination efforts among the Tribal, State, and Federal efforts all taking place. The webinars allowed for interactive engagement and exchange, including presentations from Tribal and State representatives on their local activities and accomplishments, challenges, and ideas for future coordination.

OLJ has also been working with various state Missing Persons Clearinghouses, including exploring ideas for regular coordination moving forward. Other meetings and exchanges have occurred between OLJ and representatives from the Canadian "National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls," subject matter experts in "ambiguous loss," and others working with families in cold case reviews.



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3) Model Protocols and Procedures [Section 4(a)(ii)(A), (B), (C)]

The OLJ Model Protocols and Procedures Working Group worked together with the DOJ Attorney General's Initiative on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons (MMIP Initiative) to develop the protocols. The Task Force and the AG's MMIP Initiative received input on the model protocols and procedures from Tribal leadership, Tribal law enforcement executives, and many others. Based on feedback, draft guides were developed that will provide a resource for Tribal communities that wish to develop their own protocols (guidelines) tailored to each Tribal community's needs, resources and culture.

The guides are in draft format, and include the following:

Guide for Developing a Tribal Community Response Plan for Missing Person Cases (overarching plan) plus:

- Guide for Developing Community Outreach Guidelines for Missing Person Cases
- Guide for Developing Law Enforcement Agency Guidelines for Missing Person Cases
- Guide for Developing Victim Services Guidelines for Missing Person Cases
- Guide for Developing Public and Media Communications Guidelines for Missing Person Cases
- Training Plans to support Tribal communities and law enforcement executing these guidelines

These guides are being piloted in six locations through cooperation of the U.S. Attorney's Offices and Tribes, and, after evaluation and review by Tribes, will be disseminate to all Tribes.

4) Cold Case Team [Section 4(a)(iii)]

The Cold Case Team Working Group has compiled and presented training for the new investigators and other team members on various topics, including:

- all relevant forensic disciplines with a focus on the use of DNA including advanced methodologies;
- available forensic resources including NamUs, the FBI lab, Violent Crime Apprehension Program, and leveraging DOJ grants (such as the Sexual Assault Kit Initiative) to help with investigations and forensic testing; and
- victim services including victim-centered, trauma-informed, culturally appropriate responses



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In addition the working group has drafted standard operating procedures and protocols that govern the operation of the teams and developed guidance for victim-centered, trauma-informed, culturally appropriate guidance for team members while working with families involved in cold case investigations.

In July 2020, as part of OLJ, DOI established the first of seven teams dedicated to reviewing cold cases involving missing or murdered AI/AN. The Cold Case teams are staffed by newly appointed criminal investigators from BIA-OJS. Each team may include other partners, including Tribal law enforcement and DOJ.

The Cold Case Teams are situated in the following locations:

- Bloomington, MN: announced July 27
- Rapid City, SD: announced August 4
- Billings, MT: announced August 6
- Nashville, TN (Winter 2020/21)
- Albuquerque, NM: announced August 11
- Phoenix, AZ: announced August 13
- Anchorage, AK: announced August 26

5) Best Practices [Section 4(a)(iv)(A, (B)]

OLJ efforts around these issues include establishing a JusticeConnect site on FBI CJIS LEEP for training which is law enforcement only sensitive and sharing of knowledge and resources regarding the handling of missing and murdered AI/AN cases. Through online forums and blogs, law enforcement officers can communicate with experts, share information and ideas, and receive feedback with criminal investigations.

Volunteer Engagement for AI/AN Missing Persons Cases

As a special project under the COPS Office's Collaborative Reform Initiative Technical Assistance Center (CRITAC), the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) is working with the OLJ to develop a training and technical assistance project that will support Tribal police departments in managing volunteers to support missing persons cases. This work will build upon the IACP's Volunteers in Police Service curriculum and will include a four-hour workshop geared toward Tribal leadership and an eight-hour training for Tribal law enforcement and other staff who will develop the program and manage volunteers.



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The curriculum development for the two trainings is complete and is going through the final review stages. Following review, there will be a presentation to two pilot sites virtually, in late 2020. In addition to the two trainings, pilot sites will receive tailored technical assistance to support the development and implementation of a missing person volunteer program that meets the Tribe's needs.

The OLJ Training Working Group is in the process of gathering all law enforcement and non-law enforcement training that can assist with missing or murdered AI/AN cases. Once compiled, this information will be placed on the OLJ website and be marketed through other outreach opportunities.

6) Education and Outreach Campaigns [Section 4(a)(iv)(C), (D)]

The OLJ Education and Outreach Workgroup focused in 2020 on development of the OLJ website, and the OLJ public awareness campaign. The OLJ website includes a description of the Task Force, its accomplishments, all outreach events, read outs from prior sessions, links to resources, and other information. A significant section of the website contains fact sheets and resources for the field, including resources for law enforcement and family/victim services. There are more than 20 fact sheets included on the site with numerous others under development. For example, fact sheets on the various missing persons alerts, missing persons databases, and victim services provide vital information for all stakeholders. Additionally, OLJ sends regular GovDelivery emails out to approximately 1,900 subscribers on the website, in order to share significant developments and activities of the Task Force in real time with Tribes and Tribal communities.

An entire issue of the DOJ Journal, a scholarly publication for the field, is being dedicated to the issues surrounding missing or murdered AI/ANs. The January 2021 edition will feature approximately 25 articles on the topic, with numerous Federal, Tribal, and other authors covering a wide range of topics that impact the response to these cases.

OLJ Task Force members and support staff worked to engage national and local media to raise awareness of the OLJ Task Force through publication of op-eds in national and other opportunities.



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