

Operation Lady Justice Virtual Tribal Consultation, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Alaska, First Session, September 10, 2020

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: Welcome to the Presidential Task Force on Missing and Murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives Virtual Tribal Consultation for the BIA Alaska Region. I am with Leidos, Contract support staff for the Task Force, and we are very pleased that you are joining us today.

Before we begin, I would like to go over a few items so that you know how to participate in today's event. All attendees are muted upon entry into the event. If you are--if you registered and plan to attend and offer oral testimony, please be sure that you follow the following steps. You should be accessing the meeting invite through Webex. You will need to do this either using a computer or mobile device. When prompted, please enter your name identical to the way that you entered it when registering, and you will have two choices for audio. You may either join the meeting using a telephone or have Webex call you. If you use the option to join with a telephone, please be sure to enter your attendee ID. This will allow us to identify you and unmute you when you--when it is your turn to speak. We will call upon you when it is time to offer testimony, and we will unmute your line. Please do not unmute your phone, or please do not mute your phone. If you do that, then we will not be able to unmute you, and we will have to just ask you to mute your phone.

There are no time limits for remarks provided by Tribal leaders or designees. All others will be limited to seven to 10 minutes for their remarks. We ask each speaker please restate their name, indicate if they are speaking as a Tribal leader or a Tribal designee and indicate their title and name of their Tribe.

There are also a few features within Webex that I would like to direct you to. If you hover over at the bottom center portion of your screen, you are going to see a series of radio buttons. We will be using the Media Viewer, which is located under the radio button with the three dots, as well as the chat feature, and that is the radio button that looks like a conversation bubble. This event is being live-captioned for individuals that are deaf or hard of hearing. If you need to use this feature, please log in to the Media Viewer. If you are having any technical problems during today's event, please submit your question using chat, and address it to the host of the event. As a reminder, all phones are muted at this time. At this time, I would like to turn the consultation over to Tara Sweeney, Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs of the Department of the Interior, who is one of the Co-Chairs for the Task Force, and she will begin today's consultation.

TARA SWEENEY: [SPEAKING IN NATIVE LANGUAGE] Good morning. Again, my name is Tara Sweeney. I am the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs at the U.S. Department of the Interior. I serve as Secretary Bernhardt's designee as Co-Chair of the Task Force, also known as Lady Justice. Before we begin today's consultation, I would like to take a moment for silent prayer or personal reflection. Thank you.

This Task Force is also Co-Chaired by my colleague, Katie Sullivan. She is the Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Justice Programs at the U.S. Department of Justice. She is Attorney General Bill Barr's designee. We have representation on the consultation today from all of the agency--agencies who make up the Task Force, including the Department of the Interior, Office of Justice Programs, F--the FBI, the Office on Violence Against Women, the BIA Office of Justice Services, The Attorney General's Native American Issues Subcommittee, and the Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Native Americans.

We also have representation from the White House through the Domestic Policy Council and the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs. We would like to introduce an individual who has traveled to Alaska with the Department of the Interior last summer, a leader inside the White House Domestic Policy Council. I would like to turn it over now to Jennie Lichter. Jennie?

JENNIE LICHTER: Afternoon. For this important...[INDISTINCT]

TARA SWEEENEY: Oh, great. Okay. Now we can hear you.

JENNIE LICHTER: Okay. Sorry about the technical difficulties, everyone. This is Jennie Lichter from the White House Domestic Policy Council. On behalf of President Trump, welcome and thank you all for spending some time with us this afternoon for this important discussion. As you know, the plan for this afternoon is primarily for us to be in listening mode and to learn from all of you as you speak on behalf of your communities. We will then take your experiences and your suggestions into account as we continue to build out the federal government's efforts to address the issue of Missing and Murdered Native Americans.

I am going to offer just a few words of background, of context, for how we got here, so to speak, to today, to this session today. In May of last year, May of 2019, the President proclaimed Missing and Murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives Awareness Day, becoming the first president ever to do so and saying that, "Ending the violence that disproportionately affects American Indian and Alaska Native communities is imperative." After he issued that proclamation, we, on his team, had our marching orders, so to speak. We spent the next several months thinking through and talking with Tribal communities about how to flush out a program of federal government action on this issue.

As Assistant Secretary Sweeney mentioned, I was able to travel to Alaska with her and several colleagues from the Administration last August just over a year ago, visited several communities there, and heard from a number of Tribal leaders over a few days that were truly very powerful for all of us and for me personally, both in terms of the time we were able to spend with all of you, learning about your communities, but also the really good specific, detailed, powerful feedback you all gave about what this issue really looks like in your communities in Alaska and what you think it would take to make a difference. We took that feedback to heart. We kind of figured out exactly how to

implement it, and some of it appears--is reflected in the Executive Order that the President signed last November in an Oval Office signing ceremony launching Operation Lady Justice. That, as you all know, is the entry to the Task Force Tara mentioned, which has been charged by the President with developing an aggressive governmentwide strategy to address this crisis.

So fast forward a number of months, and this session today is part of the implementation program for that Executive Order. The President and his whole team are totally committed to following up on that Executive Order. And when he signed it in November, we were all very excited to hit the ground running and get going but, of course, within just a handful of months of that EO signing, the world changed with the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting travel restrictions and public health concerns, which really changed what our plans looked like. We so wish that we could be with you to discuss this topic in person. We would have loved, and we intended to, go back to Alaska to travel across the country to visit Tribal communities again as we continue to build out--to build out our actions in this space. Of course, that has not been possible in the last few months. So here we all are on the phone.

We, in the White House, are really grateful to our partners at the Department of Justice and the Department of the Interior who have worked really hard in the last six months to keep open lines of communication and really keep pushing this project forward, despite the unexpected turns the year had taken. And again, we are also grateful to all of you for making the time to join us for this virtual consultation. We know it is not the same as being together in person, but we really do value your input and appreciate your time. You all have the commitment of the White House that we will continue to drive forward with our agency partners to make a difference on this issue informed by what we have heard from all of you in the past and what we will hear today. I am looking forward to hearing from all of you, and thanks again.

TARA SWEENEY: Thank you, Jennie, and thank you to the President, to Attorney General William Barr, and to Secretary Bernhardt for their continued leadership and support for the Operation Lady Justice efforts. The Task Force, as you know, must consult with Tribes on the scope and nature of the issues regarding missing and murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives. We had a series of in-person consultations and listening sessions set for February through July, all across the country as Jennie mentioned. We were able to host five in-person listening sessions in February and early March before the current health crisis. We held an additional four virtual listening sessions at the end of May, beginning of June. And given this current situation, we are holding our 12 virtual Tribal consultations over this next month, and they are organized by BIA Region.

The "Dear Tribal Leader" Letter and the Framing Paper were distributed on July 17 and, again, on August 11. In addition, this series of virtual consultations was widely publicized across the country. In the slide that you may see on the screen for those who are tuned in via Webex, the consultation questions are organized across four areas to encourage discussion about issues in your community. The scope of the two problems

of missing or murdered, the challenges your community may face, what solutions or resources do you have or are needed, and what specific recommendations do you and your Tribe have to address or curtail the incidents of missing persons or murdered cases with American Indian and Alaska Native communities. These are the framing questions for the consultations that we have provided during our virtual consultations across the country, and I am proud to turn it over to Leidos to call on the speakers so we can begin this official Tribal consultation. [SPEAKING IN NATIVE LANGUAGE]

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: Thank you. As noted in the registration process, you must be registered to speak in order to participate in this consultation. If you wish to present testimony, but have not registered, there are two additional consultations for which you may register. They are on Monday, September 14, and Thursday, September 17, both scheduled to begin at 11:30 [1:30] p.m. Eastern time. Please register for one of those consultations so that you can be recognized to speak.

We are now ready to hear from the Tribal leaders and Tribal designees who have registered to speak today. There are no time limits for Tribal leaders and their designees for their testimony. Please note that our list of registered speakers is current as of 11:30 a.m. Eastern time. If you registered after that time, we may not know that you registered to speak, and you will need to let us know that. I am going to call out the names of the five Tribal leaders and designees who have registered. If your name is not called, please send a chat message to all panelists and let us know that you had registered to speak.

Our registered Tribal leaders and designees are Melissa Isaac, Juanita Roubideaux, Catherine Edwards, and Vivian Korthuis. I will--we will begin unmuting the lines. We do have a large number of callers who called in and that--we cannot see your name, because you are listed as a caller, so please be patient while we unmute those lines, and then I will say each individual's name. If I call your name, you may begin to--your testimony. Please indicate your name, if you are a Tribal leader or a designee, and the name of your Tribe. Melissa Isaac. If you are on the call, you may begin your testimony. Melissa Isaac. Melissa Isaac.

TARA SWEENEY: Maybe Melissa Isaac, Michelle.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: Melissa Isaac. Juanita Roubideaux. I am sorry, Shaunta. Shaunta Roubideaux. Shaunta Roubideaux. Catherine Edwards. Catherine, I do see you on the call. We are going to unmute your line. Give us one second and we will do that.

CATHERINE EDWARDS: Hello--excuse me. Hello?

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: Hi, Catherine. We can hear you. You may begin.

CATHERINE EDWARDS: Okay. I am Catherine Edwards, Tribal Leader from Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska. [SPEAKING IN NATIVE

LANGUAGE] I am the sixth Vice President in Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, and I am also the Co-Chair of our Violence Against Women Task Force that we created in 2018. Our Tribe has over 30,000 Tribal citizens. We represent 22 villages in Southeast Alaska and three urban populations in Anchorage, Washington, and San Francisco. Thank you for having this listening session today, and we appreciate the opportunity to be here.

I am here again--and I have done this a few times at several other places with DOJ, I am here once again to talk about how marine mammals get more protection in Alaska than women and girls. If one of my relatives shoots one of these protected animals, they are carted off to jail immediately. However, if one of our girls goes missing and turns up dead, her body lays for days before law enforcement can get there. And then by then, the scene is too contaminated to determine the cause of death, so it is marked unknown. In Kasaan, it takes one and a half hours to drive to the Post Office, and one and a half hours to drive back from the Post Office on a long, dark empty road.

This year, when the pandemic hit home and people were trying to stock their cupboards because of the need to hunker down, store shelves were completely empty of needed supplies because people were already stocking up because of the cutback in our ferry system, because traveling in Southeast Alaska is by plane or by boat. And the ferry, the most affordable form of transportation, is what people use to do their shopping, and they go to either Juneau or Ketchikan to do that. However, those routes were cut because of budget cuts. So if we cannot get mail, and we cannot get groceries, how do we get justice? How do we keep people safe? Law enforcement can take up to three days to get to Kasaan or Kake. And however--and I said that I also represent Anchorage, Washington, and San Francisco, and you may remember from the report, if you have seen it from Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women from the Urban Health Institute, that Anchorage, Washington, and San--Seattle and San Francisco are also in the top 10 cities for missing and murdered indigenous women cases.

Last year, my own daughter had to flee home, leaving a good job, family, and friends because of a stalker. She went through all the appropriate places and jumped through all the appropriate hoops. When in court, looking at the stalker, the judge informed her that she was "just too nice." Meanwhile, there was an ongoing case with the stalker with another woman who was able to get granted, with the same judge, get granted her long-term protective order. She was granted her protective order; my daughter was not, and had to flee. This person--the person, the stalker, sits on the Juneau Human Rights Commission and uses his position as bait, so these women are not--are not his only victims. He is--the victims' advocates in Juneau know of this person because of things that are being reported. But these two women were the only ones with the courage enough that it takes to bring it to court. One was successful, and the other one is suffering PTSD because of the way the judge treated her. The system protects--the system protects our rape and abuse culture for our women and families, and they are afraid to come forward and are further victimized by the system when they do.

Today, Tracy Day, a Tribal citizen, acquaintance of mine, remains missing, and no one is looking for her. She has been missing for a year, and somebody knows exactly where that body is. Her family will never have the closure they need, and this is a tragedy that has been repeated throughout our history and known by way too many of us for far too long. Last week, we were able to meet with Senator Sullivan. And in our meeting, he informed us, was very excited about, the office being opened in Anchorage that is going to be looking at the cold cases. And this was a step that was celebrated. We were happy to have the office and were celebrated, by all of us.

However, I have another reason for being happy about this. And I know that Tara knows some of this, that--having that office, one office in Anchorage that is going to serve Nome, Kasaan, Dillingham, Bethel, Juneau, and Fairbanks, you will be able to see firsthand just how difficult it is to deliver services or be able to do things in Alaska with only one office. And speaking with our newly hired Tribal or victims' advocate, she let me know that, recently, through their efforts, and having victims' advocates, that the state troopers were able to serve a protective order in Sitka. When they went to serve the order, they found that the perpetrator was not actually in Sitka; he was on an island located off of Sitka. So they got in a skiff and took the skiff over to this island, which is something that is unprecedented, but this is because the advocates helped push this forward. And it is probably unsustainable because it is going to probably take more money because law enforcement, while we did get the \$10 million, it was--it was still cut in Southeast Alaska. And we did inform Senator Sullivan that Southeast Alaska was not successful in getting any more law enforcement through that--through the additional funds that were offered to Alaska.

Alaska's geography is different. It is extreme and wild. Alaska's weather is extreme. The hours of daylight and darkness are extreme. And leave the body too long--if you leave a body too long, it is the true definition of leaving it to the wolves because our wildlife is not domesticated. And oftentimes, you hear about bodies that the animals have--or people are trying to keep the animals away from the bodies while they lay there and wait for law enforcement.

We are--so we are invited to listening sessions so that you can begin a study and create some additional educational materials and train law enforcement and judges. We are here as Tribal leaders because we want to end this pandemic of our relatives and women and girls and boys being targeted. We want to end them from going missing and ending up--being ended up founding murdered. I am left to wonder in looking at some of this, how come law enforcement is not already trained as--as, in this, as part of their job, and why do judges need training if it is already a part of their job? I do know, and I would offer this one suggestion, that people that are going to become judges definitely need to take some courses in federal Indian law. Whether they have Tribes in their states or not, they do need to be more aware of the--what those laws are and how they affect us.

We know it is a jurisdictional nightmare when addressing these problems, but your federal system has paralyzed not just yourselves, but us, in dealing with this system.

You offer a database system as a solution. For the family in Kake, once they enter her name in the database, does that bring her home? Does it make her just another data point? And we are thankful that you want to create a better data system, but just cleaning up data does not bring Tracy Day home, nor does it find her body, nor will it provide relief to the family.

What we need is swift justice to solve the cases, and bring our relatives home, and make it harder--or make it just as hard to kill a girl and woman in Alaska as it is to kill a marine mammal. You have asked some questions on your Framing Paper, so that you can be in compliance with EO 13898. I would like to offer that there is a study that was just recently released by the Sovereign Bodies Institute. It is called "I Will See You Again in a Good Way." It addresses many of the things that you are looking for. It is going to be a really good resource for you. If you have not already seen it, I suggest that you look at it, and go to their website, and pull it up. It also lists several resources, books, and other places to go to get--information that will be helpful for your folks and your staff to gain a better understanding of this work and the space in which we are now embarking.

And I believe what we have is a clash and a collision of viewpoints that you have even changed the name of the work from MMIW to Missing and Murdered Native Americans and Alaska Natives that further demonstrates the disempowerment of our families by changing this name to something as simple. And like I said, for most of your questions, I am going to refer you to the bodies of work already done, the one report that I said when--"We Will See You Again in a Good Way," by Sovereign Bodies Institute. And the other one on "Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women & Girls" by the Urban Indian Health Institute, which I am sure that you guys have already--are well aware of. And as to your challenges, and I--we know that Tara knows these challenges, too. As I stated earlier, in Alaska, the challenges are geographic, with extreme geography, weather, with extreme weather, distances, you know.

In Southeast Alaska, it is 22 islands. They are not connected by road. The ability to travel, the, you know, by plane or by boat, those are expensive, and now we are seeing a decrease in that travel by boat. Broadband and internet--you are lucky to get an internet connection in some of these places. Financial, it takes a lot of money to be able to do anything in Southeast Alaska. The lack of law enforcement because, you know, because of the very other--these other reasons I have already mentioned, it is probably difficult to hire people in Southeast Alaska to do the work. And then, in those systems, when you hire somebody in the community, there are chances that the VPSO is related to the perpetrator, so some of those cases do not even get reported. Just systems that support the rape and abuse, the lack of accountability, and not enough people to work with to support the victims. Too bad we are not marine mammals. And that concludes my testimony.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: Thank you very much. Our next speaker, Tribal Leader, will be Vivian Korthuis. Vivian Korthuis, give us a moment. We need to unmute several lines. If you are on the call, once we unmute your line, you may begin testimony.

VIVIAN KORTHUIS: Can you hear me?

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: All right, Vivian. All the lines have been unmuted. Yes, we can hear you.

VIVIAN KORTHUIS: This is a sound check. Operator, can you hear me?

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: This is--hi, is this Vivian?

VIVIAN KORTHUIS: Yes. This is Vivian.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: Hi. You may go ahead and begin your oral testimony. Please restate your name. Let us know if you are a Tribal leader or a designee, as well as the name of your Tribe.

VIVIAN KORTHUIS: Good morning. My name is Vivian Korthuis. I serve as the Chief Executive Officer for the Association of Village Council Presidents, with headquarters in Bethel, Alaska. I am Yupik and a Tribal member from the Village of Emmonak on the Lower Yukon River. Thank you for holding this consultation this morning and the previous listening sessions on Missing and Murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives. I do have prepared testimony this morning so I am going to proceed with my testimony.

The Association of Village Council Presidents is the largest Tribal consortium in the nation, with 56 federally recognized Tribes. We are a Tribally-owned nonprofit created by our member Tribes over 55 years ago to provide government health services to our entire region. Our Tribes are located in 48 villages along the Kuskokwim River, Yukon River, and Bering Sea Coast in Western Alaska, and an area the size of the state of Washington. Our villages are located in rural Alaska and are remote, and are not on the road system. I describe our location as extremely rural.

As we have mentioned previously, rural Alaska is in a public safety crisis. Research and reality shows that Alaska is the deadliest state for women, with approximately 59% of women experiencing intimate partner violence, sexual violence, or both. Alaska Native women experience the highest rates of domestic violence in the United States. Tribes across Indian Country are building systems for Tribal law enforcement to respond to crisis of Missing and Murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives. This includes best practices in reporting, investigating, and prosecuting crimes. However, rural Alaska is behind the curve, and we need your help. In rural Alaska, the basic public safety infrastructure is missing.

At least one in three Alaska villages has no law enforcement. In May 2019, 98 Tribal communities in Alaska had no-state-funded law enforcements, about 70 of these communities had no local police of any kind. This is unacceptable. It is impossible to develop systems for reporting, investigating, and prosecuting crimes when villages have

no public safety officer, public safety buildings, or platforms for reporting and investigation. Rural public safety officers receive minimal training to no training. They do not have the right equipment and do not receive adequate pay or benefits. The basic building blocks to lay a good foundation for public safety systems in rural Alaska is missing. To successfully protect the most vulnerable members in our villages, Tribes in Alaska need your help.

I am going to describe three things that we are asking for. The first is basic law enforcement and public safety resources to protect our communities. This means funding for hiring law enforcement officers in our villages. It means public safety infrastructure, including jail cells, public safety housing for officers, domestic violence shelters, Tribal court buildings. It means increased support for training. Law enforcement officers need training, Tribal courts need training, and we also need training to provide wraparound services. Second, Tribes must have the authority to protect--to protect Tribal members in our villages. Alaska Tribe's criminal jurisdiction over Alaska Natives within the village boundaries will allow a better response to crimes involving Missing and Murdered Alaska Native--Alaska Natives. This will allow--will also allow Tribes to be more proactive in creating preventive services and provide educational resources for the most vulnerable in our villages. Three, we are asking for collaboration with federal, state, and local partners. This is--this is needed in order to allow our Tribes to network and develop practical platforms to address and help our missing and murdered Tribal members upfront.

The BIA has opened several cold case offices addressing the cases of missing and murdered indigenous women, one of which just opened in Anchorage. We look forward to seeing the Anchorage cold case office making a major difference in this crisis and we look forward to collaborating with the staff. We hope to become more involved in collaboration at all levels in helping to bring innovative ideas like the Anchorage cold case office to rural Alaska, where it is needed. I think opening an office in rural hubs would enhance the collaboration with Tribes even further. We can improve and respond to missing and murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives if we listen to what our Tribes need and support them. We know what will work in our villages and communities.

In closing, thank you for the opportunity to consult with us. We are standing up for ourselves and the protection of our families in all of rural Alaska. We are not asking for anything more or anything less than any community in Alaska or the United States. Thank you.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: Thank you very much for your testimony. Before we move on, we are going to check and see if the remaining Tribal leaders have--or designees have joined the call. Once again, we will unmute the lines. It will take us a little while to do that. We are looking for Melissa Isaac and Shaunta Roubideaux. Melissa Isaac and Shaunta Roubideaux. The lines, we have one more. All the lines have been unmuted. Melissa or Shaunta, if you are on the call, you may begin your testimony. Please restate your name, if you are a Tribal leader or a designee, as well as your title, and the name of your Tribe.

FEMALE: She made a [INDISTINCT] I know that...

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: Was that Melissa or Shaunta?

FEMALE: No, uh uh.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: All right. At this time then, we are going to go ahead and move on to the other individuals that have registered to speak. As noted previously, you must be registered to speak in order to participate in this consultation. If you wish to present testimony but have not registered to do so, there are two additional consultations that you may register for. They are going to be held on September 14 and September 17, both at 1:30 p.m. Eastern time. Please consider registering for those consultations so that you have a--so that you can be recognized to speak. As a reminder, there is a seven- to nine-minute limit on speakers that are not Tribal designees or leaders.

Also, our list of registered speakers is current as of 11:30 a.m. Eastern time today. If you registered after this time, we may not be able to--we may not be able to know that you have registered to speak. And if you would like to speak, we ask that you please submit that to the chat box and address it to all presenters, and then we will add you to the list. We do have five people currently registered to speak. I am going to say their names, and then once I say everybody's name, I will call on the first speaker. So our speakers are going to be Wanda Friday, Eileen Arnold, Paulina Standfire--Standifer, Ingrid Cumberlandidge, and Billi Miller. Wanda, we do see that you are on the call. We are going to unmute your line. After we unmute your line, please restate your name, your title, as well as the name of your Tribe. Wanda, your line has been unmuted. You may begin. Hi, Wanda?

WANDA FRIDAY: Hello. My name...

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: Go right ahead, sorry.

WANDA FRIDAY: Hello. My name is Wanda Friday. And I am a Tribal designee, and I am a Traditional Health Coordinator for the Organized Village of Kake here in Southeast Alaska. I have to admit that I have registered unknowing what was expected of me. So if it is okay with you, I will just stay on to listen, and I will register for the next upcoming consultation. I apologize for not being more prepared. But thank you.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: That is fine. Thank you very much. The next individual that has registered is going to be Paul--Paulina Standifer. Paulina, we do see that you are on the call. We are going to unmute your line. Please restate your name, your title, as well as the name of your Tribe. Give us one moment to get you unmuted. Paulina, your line is unmuted. Paulina, if you can hear me, you may begin your testimony.

PAULINA STANDIFER: Okay. Well, my name is Paulina Standifer, and I am with Indian Creek Health Department. I really did not mean to sign up for a testimony to speak. I just wanted to listen, so I apologize.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: That is all right. Thank you very much.

PAULINA STANDIFER: Thank you.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: All right. And the next individual that we will be calling upon is Billi Miller. Billi Miller, your line--oops. I see Billi on the call, but it does not look like they have called in. They are on in the meeting, but I am not seeing any indication that they are dialed in. So we are going to go ahead and open up the other caller lines, and we will go through and see if anybody else has joined. Give us a moment to do that. We are going to be looking for Eileen Arnold, Ingrid Cumberlidge, and Billi Miller. So if you are one of the callers, your line will be unmuted, and you can begin your testimony. Again, Eileen Arnold, if you are on the call.

FEMALE: My gosh, yeah. I mean, that is just a trashy place.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: Okay. Ingrid Cumberlidge. Ingrid, if you are on the call. And Billi Miller? All right. It appears that they are not on the call, and that would be--I do not believe we have any other speakers at this time. So Tara, I am going to turn it over to you.

TARA SWEENEY: Thank you. And thank you to all those who called in to listen and to those who registered to provide comments. I just want to make one comment about the changing of the name or why--provide some background on why we are using Missing and Murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives, or the term Missing and Murdered Native Americans. While our discussions originally had centered around missing and murdered women and children, as we went across the country separate from the Operation Lady Justice Task Force but as the Department of the Interior, we traveled across the country, hosting, Reclaiming our Native Community Roundtables. There was an overwhelming request from participants that we also not forget our men who are missing and murdered as well. And so being cognizant of that, and respectful of those requests, we opted, as a Task Force, for the terminology Missing and Murdered Native Americans, or collectively--or Missing and Murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives.

We heard today some comments about swift justice in our community. Certainly, the challenges that Alaskans face, whether it is because of remote communities, funding, and the sort of environmental challenges that we have with being remote in Alaska, high cost of energy, high cost of living, long distances, or no roads that connect our communities. In addition to that, I also heard a advocacy for wraparound services and the authority to protect Tribal members. All of these comments that have been shared today will go into our internal discussions as a Task Force.

I want to direct your attention to the Operation Lady Justice website. It is OperationLadyJustice.usdoj.gov. And you can choose “subscribe” on that website to receive email updates. If you are interested in submitting written comments, those written comments will be accepted through September 30, 2020. And you can send them to the Operation Lady Justice email, and that email address is OperationLadyJustice@usdoj.gov. And for those who would like to register to speak, the next consultation will be held next week. We encourage you to sign up, register, so that you can provide your verbal testimony. Again, I appreciate the opportunity to engage with the Alaska region and those who may be listening from across the country. Thank you very much. [SPEAKING IN NATIVE LANGUAGE] And we will talk again at the next consultation. Thank you.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: This concludes our consultation.