

Operation Lady Justice Virtual Tribal Consultation, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Pacific Region, First Session, September 4, 2020

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: Good afternoon, and welcome, everyone, to the Presidential Task Force on Missing and Murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives Virtual Tribal Consultation for the BIA Pacific Region. I am with Leidos, the contract support 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. If you are planning to offer oral testimony, we ask that you follow the following steps. Please access the meeting via Webex. In order to do this, you will need a computer or a mobile device. When prompted, please enter the name identical to the way it was used when you registered. You have two options for joining the audio. You may join either by calling on a telephone or you can have Webex call you. If you use the option to dial on a telephone, please be sure to enter your attendee ID number. That is how we will be able to identify you when it is time to speak.

When it is time to speak, to offer your testimony, we will unmute your line. We will call your name, and then ask you to restate your name as well as if you are a Tribal leader or designee and your Tribal affiliation. As a reminder, oral testimony for speakers that are not Tribal leaders or designees will be limited to about seven to 10 minutes.

There are a couple other features that I would like to point out. If you hover over the bottom center part of your screen, you are going to see a series of radio buttons appear. There is one that has three dots and another one that looks like a conversation bubble. We are live-captioning this event for individuals that are deaf or hard-of-hearing, and if you need to use that, you can click in--click on the media viewer, which is the radio button with the three dots, and then log in. If you are listening to the event using your computer and are having a difficult time hearing, please click on the communicate tab, which is located at the top left of your computer screen, and then audio connection to adjust your speakers.

If you are still having a difficult time using your computer, we do suggest that you call using a telephone, and you can find all that information in your meeting invite. If you are having any technical problems during today's event, we ask that you submit that problem to the chat box--and that is the radio button that looks like the conversation bubble--and then send your question or matter to the host of today's event. One final reminder: everybody that has dialed in as an attendee is muted.

At this time, I would like to turn the consultation over to Katie Sullivan, Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General for the Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, who is one of the Co-Chairs of the Task Force. Katie will begin today's consultation.

KATIE SULLIVAN: Thank you. Thank you so much, and good afternoon, everyone. As Mary Jo has stated, my name is Katie Sullivan. I run the Office of Justice Programs at the Department of Justice, and it is a great honor to serve as the Attorney General's designee as a Co-Chair of the Task Force known as Operation Lady Justice. This is a—It is a great honor to serve with my Co-Chair, and that is Tara Sweeney, the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs at the Department of [the] Interior. Attorney General Bill Barr and Secretary David Bernhardt are the Co-Chairs of this Task Force and have entrusted Tara and myself to run these consultations, listening sessions, and implement all the great work of Operation Lady Justice. It is a wonderful privilege, and I am very grateful.

Before we begin today's consultation, I would like to take a moment for silent prayer. I do personally pray that we are able to communicate, and we are able to hear and listen, and that everything that we hear and take from today's consultation helps us in our trust responsibility to you and our government-to-government relationship. Thank you, everyone.

In addition to my Co-Chair, Assistant Secretary Sweeney, we also have representation from all the agencies who make up the Task Force, including the Department of the Interior, the Office of Justice Programs, the FBI, the Office on Violence Against Women, the BIA Office of Justice Services, and the Attorney General's Native American Issues Subcommittee, as well as the Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Native Americans.

We are also very privileged and lucky today to have representation from the White House. This is, obviously, President Trump's Executive Order. He issued this Executive Order due to the great need in Indian Country to further investigate and learn about these issues and your issues around missing and murdered indigenous people. And the White House is represented on all of the consultations through [the] Domestic Policy Council and the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs. Today, I would like to introduce Doug Hoelscher from the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs. Doug?

DOUG HOELSCHER: Well, thank you, Katie. I appreciate the chance to join you all today and to learn and listen. Thanks to Tara, as well. On behalf of President Trump, welcome, and thank you for devoting a good portion of your afternoon to being with us for this important discussion. For most of the afternoon, as Katie mentioned, the floor will be yours. We are here to listen and learn from you all speaking on behalf of your personal experience and the communities you lead. We will take your experiences and suggestions into account as we continue to build out the Federal Government's efforts to address the issue of missing and murdered Native Americans, especially women and girls. First, I am going to offer just a word of context or some background for what came before this series of virtual consultations. In May of 2019, President Trump became the first president to formally recognize the issue of missing and murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives by proclaiming an awareness day on the issue, again, the first

president to ever formally elevate the issue. He did so again this May and also held a roundtable this May in Arizona with some Tribal leaders, as well.

The President also signed an Executive Order on the issue of missing and murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives in--right around Thanksgiving of last year. And the President's Team spent a good deal of time thinking through and talking with Tribal leaders and Native American community advocates how to develop a program of federal action on this issue set. And when the President signed an Executive Order in the Oval Office last November establishing the Operation Lady Justice Task Force and the work that is ongoing, including today's consultation call, an interagency Task Force was formed and charged with developing aggressive, government-wide strategy to address the crisis of missing and murdered persons in Native American communities.

Today's session is part of the implementation of that program for that Executive Order. The group, including the folks on the call today, continue to take input from Native American leaders and community voices, but we have also already taken action on issues where there is clear consensus on more resources for community safety, on forming several offices around the country, Operation Lady Justice Offices, to focus on collaboration and coordination in cold cases. And so, again, we are going to continue to take action where there is clear consensus, but we want to keep learning from each of you, which is why today's discussion is so very important.

We also want to make sure that we continue to make progress on other issues, and next week, I think, we will have some exciting news on a cultural item that is important to Tribes in the southwest part of America, and we want to continue to keep making progress on behalf of the citizens we serve. We are very grateful here at the White House for the strong leadership at the Department of Justice and the Department of [the] Interior and other federal agencies who have worked to keep open lines of communication with our partners around the country and also keep driving forward day in and day out, despite the unexpected turns this year has brought upon us with COVID-19, and, again, we are grateful for your presence today for the virtual consultation.

You have the commitment of the President and the entire White House Team that we will continue to make progress, in partnership with you, with our agency liaisons, to make a difference on this issue of missing and murdered Native Americans, so these individuals are forgotten no more. Again, I thank you very much for your time, and we look forward to hearing from you today.

KATIE SULLIVAN: Thank you so much, Doug, and to just continue on, the Task Force must consult with Tribes on the scope and nature of the issues regarding missing or murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives. We did have a series of consultations and listening sessions that were set all across the country between February and July. We were only able to host five in-person listening sessions in February and early March before the health crisis brought a halt to travel. We held an additional four virtual listening sessions at the end of May and beginning of June, and after a lot of deliberation and discussion with Task Force members

and stakeholders, we decided that we would hold the 12 virtual Tribal consultations over the next month, and we are organizing them by BIA region. The “Dear Tribal Leader” letter and Framing Paper were distributed in July 17 and again on August 11. In addition, the series of virtual consultations were widely publicized across the country.

You can see on your screen that we have highlighted the talking points and consultation questions. They are organized across four areas to encourage discussion about these issues in your communities: What is the scope of the two problems of missing or murdered? What are the challenges that your communities face? What are some solutions or resources that you either have or you need? And what specific recommendations do you have to address or curtail the incidences of missing persons or murder cases within American Indian and Alaska Native communities? So, as Doug said, this day is really for you and for us to listen. I turn it back over to Mary Jo to call on our first speaker. Thank you all so much.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: Thank you. We have two speakers scheduled for today. I am unable to identify them based on the names listed, so we are going to unmute two of the lines that are caller lines, and if I say your name, I will give you a few seconds, and you can respond, and I will let you know when the lines have been unmuted. So the one individual is Beatriz Arakawa, Beatriz Arakawa, and we have Dorothy Wait, Dorothy Wait. If either of you are on the call, the lines have been unmuted, and you may begin offering your oral testimony. We would ask that you restate your name as well as your Tribal affiliation. All right. It does not appear that they are on the line. Beatriz Arakawa and Dorothy Wait, if you are on the line, you may begin your testimony. Katie, it does not appear that they are on the call, and those are the only two individuals that registered to offer testimony today.

KATIE SULLIVAN: Well, thank you. This is a--We do understand that this is somewhat of a difficult day, as most of America is celebrating a long weekend. We appreciate those who have called in. I am hoping that everybody does go to the Operation Lady Justice website. We also have an email address. Both are listed on the slide in front of you. If you want updates from Operation Lady Justice, please subscribe to the website and know, as well, if you were not signed up to testify or to give comment today, we are receiving written comments through September 30 of 2020, and I really cannot express enough how important it is to get your formal feedback. Our listening sessions were extremely helpful, and moving, and impassioned. The consultations are more formal, and your formal written comments would be just terrific and help us so much. Any written comments can be sent to the Operation Lady Justice website, and that would be answering the questions or giving us some information around the Framing Paper, and I would like to thank everyone who called in today. And for the two people who were signed up to testify, they can join another consultation time, and we certainly would love to hear from them, so thank you, everyone, and have a wonderful weekend.