

## **Operation Lady Justice Virtual Tribal Consultation, Bureau of Indian Affairs Southern Plains and Eastern Oklahoma Region, August 21, 2020**

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: [The following is missing from the recording. Welcome to the Presidential Task Force on Missing and Murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives Virtual Tribal Consultation. I am with Leidos, the contract support for the Task Force. We are very pleased you are joining us today. Before we begin, I would like to go over a few items so you know how to participate in today's event. All attendees will be muted upon entry into the event. If you plan to offer oral testimony, please be sure to complete the following steps: You need to access the event via WebEx. You will need to do this using a computer or mobile device.] And when prompted after joining, please enter the--your name, identical to how it was listed in the registration. And then when you join the audio portion, you may either choose to do so using Webex or telephone. If you do call in using a telephone, please be sure to include your attendee ID number, which will appear when you join Webex.

When it is time to offer the oral testimony, you will be called upon and we will unmute your line at this time or at that time. Please do not mute the audio on your phone. If you do so, then we will be unable to unmute you. Each speaker should state their name and if--and if speaking as a Tribal leader or a Tribal designee, please provide your title and the name of your Tribe. If you are registered other than a Tribal leader or designee, you will be limited to seven minutes for your remarks.

There are also a few features that I would like you to become familiar with. If you hover over the center part--bottom center part of your screen, you are going to see a series of radio buttons. There is a round radio button that looks--that has three dots and one that looks like a conversation bubble. If you click on the one with the three dots, you can access a couple different features, including live-captioning. We are live-captioning this event for individuals that are deaf or hard of hearing. You just need to click on that and log in. If you are using a computer to listen to the event and are having a difficult time hearing, please click on the Communicate tab, which is located at the left top set--section of your screen, and then click on Audio Connection to adjust your speakers. If you are still having a difficult time hearing, we suggest that you please dial in using a telephone and you can find that information in your meeting invite.

If you are having any technical difficulties, you may submit your question or your problem to the host of today's event, who is Michelle Gorham, and you can do so using the chat box, which is found under the radio button with the conversation bubble. As a reminder, everybody's line is currently muted when you enter the event. At this time, I would like to turn it 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, and she will begin today's consultation.

KATIE SULLIVAN: Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Katie Sullivan. As Michelle just kindly said, I run the Office of Justice Programs at the Department of Justice. And Attorney General Barr did ask that I be his representative as the Co-Chair for this very important Task Force known as Operation Lady Justice. I would also introduce my Co-Chair is Assistant Secretary Tara Sweeney from the Department of the Interior, and she is Secretary David Bernhardt's designee. We work very closely together, pursuant to the President's Executive Order.

Before we begin today's consultation, I would like to take a moment for each of us to say a silent prayer. And thank you all. I know for me, I always pray and wish that the consultation is--that this government-to-government consultation does help us with our trust responsibility to you, that we do have open-mindedness, willingness, and a real engagement, and I am very grateful for everyone who joined the consultation and is on the call today, so thank you.

We have representation on the consultant--on the consultation today from all of the agencies who make up the Task Force. That includes the Department of the Interior, the Office of Justice Programs, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Office on Violence Against Women, the BJA Office of Justice Services, the Attorney General's Native American Issues Subcommittee--I am sorry, it is the BIA Office of Justice Services, Charles Addington. Sorry, Charles. The Attorney General's Native American Issues Subcommittee, and the Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Native Americans. We are very fortunate today to also have representation from the White House through the Domestic Policy Council and the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs. It is my great privilege to introduce Deputy Assistant to the President, Jennie Lichter, from the White House Domestic Policy Council to make some remarks. Thank you, Jennie.

JENNIE LICHTER: Thank you very much, Katie. Good afternoon, everyone. And welcome. I am here, first of all, just to thank you on behalf of the President and our White House Operation Lady Justice team for devoting some time this afternoon to being with us for this important discussion. For most of the session, as you know, the floor will be yours and our role is really to listen and to learn from all of you speaking on behalf of your communities. We will absolutely 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, especially women and girls.

I am also going to take just a quick moment here to offer a word of context, offer some background basically for kind of how we got here from the perspective of the White House and the President's longstanding commitment to this issue. In May of 2019, President

Trump proclaimed Missing and Murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives Awareness Day, becoming the first President ever to do so and saying in that proclamation that ending the violence that disproportionately affects American Indian and Alaska Native communities is imperative. That proclamation gave our team our initial marching orders, so to speak, so we spent the next few months thinking through and talking with Tribal communities about how to put some action behind those words.

And last fall, just before Thanksgiving, President Trump hosted a signing ceremony in the Oval Office for an Executive Order establishing Operation Lady Justice, which, as you all know, is an interagency Task Force. Katie described all the components who are involved, charged with developing an aggressive government-wide strategy to address the crisis of missing and murdered persons in Native communities. This session today, of course, is part of the implementation program for that order. The President and this whole team are committed to and really passionate about following up on that Executive Order with action and real tangible progress.

But of course in the intervening months since the Executive Order signing in late November, the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting public health concerns and travel restrictions have changed our plans fairly significantly and have limited the types of activities we have been able to engage in. We so wish that we could be with all of you in person to discuss this sometimes difficult topic face to face. But of course, that is not--that is not possible right now and our partners at the Department of Justice and Department of the Interior have worked really hard to keep open lines of communication during this time despite some of the limitations, and to keep moving forward despite the unexpected turns this year has taken. We are really grateful for their hard work and, again, we are really grateful for your presence today for this virtual consultation.

You 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 first and foremost by what we hear from you today and from others and in the other sessions that we are holding in the next few weeks. I am looking forward to hearing from you and, again, thanks for joining us this afternoon. Back over to you, Katie.

KATIE SULLIVAN: Thank you, Jennie. And--just to add on to what Jennie said, pursuant to the President's Task Force and this huge Administration commitment, we must consult with Tribes on the scope and nature of the issues regarding Missing or Murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives. We have had a series of in-person listening sessions--we had a series of in-person consultations and listening sessions that were set between February and July across the country. Of course, because of different restrictions in the country regarding travel and visitors, we were able to ultimately host five in-person

listening sessions, and now also an additional four virtual listening sessions at the end of May and beginning of June. We did think it was very important to continue our work and hold these more formal consultations.

We have 12 virtual Tribal consultations scheduled over the next month and they are organized by Bureau--the Bureau of Indian Affairs region. The "Dear Tribal Leader" letter and framing paper were distributed on July 17 and again on August 11. In addition, the series of virtual consultations was widely publicized around the country. And the consultation questions are organized across four areas to encourage discussion about issues in your communities. The scope of the problems of missing or murdered, the challenges your communities face, what solutions or resources you have or are needed, and what specific recommendations do you have to address or curtail the incidences of missing persons or murdered cases within American Indian and Alaska Native communities.

As you know in this government-to-government consultations and with our trust responsibility, we cannot do this without your input. And so at this point, I will turn it over so we can listen to our Tribal leaders and designees that have signed up to speak at this consultation. Thank you very much.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: Hi. Thank you, Katie. We do have two Tribal leaders and--or a Tribal leader and a designee that are registered to speak. However, we are not finding them listed on the attendee list. So we are going to mute all the individual lines--or unmute, excuse me, to see if you are on the call. It will take us a little bit of time to get through all the individuals who--that are muted, so please be patient. If you are one of the people that are supposed to speak or offer testimony and you have the ability to access a computer right now, if you could go ahead and log in through Webex, we can go ahead and we will be able to identify you at that time.

Our--the first person that is supposed to speak is Nita Battise. So if you are on the line, please you may begin your testimony. Again, we are going to systematically go through the list of individuals and try to unmute everybody. It will take a little bit of time to get that completely finished. We appreciate your patience. And it looks like at this point in time, all callers are unmuted. So Nita, if you are present, you may go ahead and begin your testimony. Nita Battise? If you are on the call, you may...

NITA BATTISE: Yes. Nita Battise.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: Great. Wonderful. Thank you. You--please state your name and your Tribal affiliation as well as your title.

NITA BATTISE: Okay. I was--okay. I am on now. I am sorry. I was talking away. My apologies. [INDISTINCT]

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: Go ahead. You may begin.

NITA BATTISE: Okay. Thank you so much. Thank you so much. My apologies. My name is Nita Battise. I serve my people, the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas, on Tribal council and the officer position of Secretary. What I would like to share right now, it will be very short. However, I will be sending a written testimony.

In this time and age, which find us not only developing a new normal, if whatever considered as normal before, our concern here in my area is the almost self-isolation of our people. And when that--when that happens, we have higher incidents of abuse. We have higher incidents of missing, or they will say they are out and about.

I would like to--I have been listening in on the National Congress of American Indians, Violence Against Women Act Task Forces, which I proudly serve, where there is much frustration because I feel as if we are trying to reinvent a wheel that has been developed but yet it is sitting idle. It is my hope that we can--that this Task Force with Operation Lady Justice--that we can all come together on a common ground with common interests and to engage all the individuals, all the pioneers who have been leading this charge for so, so many years. This all--this is what I have to offer. Thank you.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: Thank you very much, Nita. We will go to our next caller. Again, that individual is not listed as being dialed in, so we are going to unmute each person. And Olivia Gray, if you are on the call, you may begin your testimony as soon as we get all the attendees unmuted. So Olivia Gray, if you are on the call, you may begin your testimony. Olivia Gray, we have unmuted your line. If your telephone itself is muted, please unmute it and you can begin your testimony. All right. We do not have a response from Olivia. Therefore, I do not believe that she has called in to the meeting, to the consultation. That is--those are the only people we have registered that wanted to offer oral testimony.

KATIE SULLIVAN: Okay. Thank you very much, Michelle. And if you could put the Operation Lady Justice contact information slide up. Operation Lady Justice does have a website and an email address. Both are listed here on this slide, which we will leave up for a minute. If you would like to receive updates from Operation Lady Justice, please subscribe to the website and please also note everyone on the call and for everyone in your Tribes, we are receiving written comments through September 30 of 2020 on these topics and the framing paper. They can be sent to the Operation Lady Justice website. I

want to thank everyone who called in and I appreciate, Nita, very much, your testimony.  
So thank you very much. Have a great day.