

SaxmanOne

Moderator: Erika Goodis-Lytle
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OPERATOR: This is Conference #200355155

Operator: Your conference is being recorded.

Tara Sweeney: Good afternoon. We're going to go ahead and get started in a few minutes. For those who have an open phone line, I suggest you please put it on mute. I ask that all phones are on mute, Operator, please. Do we have any – is there an operator on the line?

Operator: Yes. All lines should be muted.

Tara Sweeney: OK. Thank you. Good afternoon, and thank you for joining us today. The Task Force hopes that you are all safe, and continuing to check the CDC's Website for the latest information, guidelines and resources. In addition, we hope that you are also checking our BIA website at bia.gov/covid-19 for additional updates relevant to Indian country.

We formally begin (foreign language). My name is Tara MacLean Sweeney. I am from (Utqiagvik), Barrow, Alaska. And I am the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs at the U.S. Department of the Interior.

Today is the ninth listening session that the Task Force has held since the beginning of our work in February 2020. We appreciate the interest of tribal leaders and others in joining this call, and that the information shared here today is very important and valuable.

In honor of the United States government to government relationship, when it comes time for questions, we respectfully request that questions come from tribal leaders for the first 30 minutes. The remaining time will then be open for additional commenters. We ask that you keep comments to three minutes,

given the number of participants. We have over 300 people registered for today's session.

The program that we are using will automatically mute a line at the three minute mark. And it is with no disrespect intended. But we are – we are being responsive to the request that has come in from tribal leaders on calls, asking that there is a time limit to ensure that we have enough time for those in the queue to make their presentations.

A couple of routine housekeeping items also include that, when you wish to speak, please use the button located in the drop down menu at the top of your screen. It has a – a figure with their arm raised.

If you click onto that icon, it will put you into the queue for speaking. Your microphone will be unmuted when it is your turn. And you can only speak if you have dialed in. At this time, Operator – I believe Erika – can you explain the use of the app and the call back number.

Operator: So if – if they are not already connected, then they would just – then they would just type in their number into the box, and then we'll call them. It looks like most everybody is connected by the line. So as she said, if you are wanting to speak, just raise your hand, and you will be called on in the order you – the hands are raised in.

Tara Sweeney: Thank you. Some will note that, over the last three listening sessions, we've had some technical difficulties. And I'm hopeful that today is a little smoother. When you are up to speak, please identify yourself with your name, spelling, and the tribe or organization that you represent.

Again, there's a three minute timer located at the bottom of the screen to ensure that we're able to have as many individuals speak as possible. For everyone's awareness, everything said during this telephonic consultation will be recorded, and become part of the final transcript.

If you wish to provide a written comment, please use the comments box on your screen. If you wish to submit more detailed written comments, you can submit them directly to operationladyjustice@usdoj.gov.

Also I'm – I'm proud to announce that we've added a new section to our Operation Lady Justice website that features all of the publicly available information on missing American Indian and Alaskan Native children.

You will find information from MC – MEC – on – on our children who've been missing less than six months, and in NAMUS if they have been missing more than six months. The link to the new section can be found on the operationladyjustice.usdoj.gov Website.

We will now share a short presentation about the executive order, and the Operation Lady Justice Task Force. And then we will turn to our participants for comments and questions. Now my honor to ask the White House personnel working with the Operation Lady Justice Task Force to provide some brief opening comments.

I'm proud to introduce the team with the Trump administration that has provided unwavering support across the Federal government for Operation Lady Justice. At this time, it's my pleasure to call on Ms Brooke – Brooke Rollins, assistant to the President, and acting Director, Domestic Policy Council. Ms Rollins.

Brooke Rollins: Thank you so much, Assistant Secretary Sweeney. It is a real honor and gift to be on with – with everyone today. I know that today your Task Force will hear from tribes from the Pacific, the Northwestern and the Alaska regions. My goodness. On behalf of the White House, thank you all, from all over this beautiful country. Thank you for joining us today.

This issue is, and continues to be, of great importance to our President. After hearing concerns from tribal governments, he knew he needed to take action, and sign the executive order to establish this Task Force on Missing and Murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives last November.

Calls like this one are just vital for the Task Force to fulfil its mission. We work so hard, every day, here at the White House to hear from all Americans, but especially those who may need the most help, and the most focus, in terms

of what we can do to accomplish getting this country back, and – and making sure we're giving everyone a shot at the American dream.

As new head of the Domestic Policy Council here in Washington, I look forward to working with everyone more closely, especially on this important issue. And again, thank you for joining today's call. And really look forward to hearing your ideas and questions. Thank you, Tara.

Tara Sweeney: Thank you. And at this time, it's also my pleasure to introduce Ms Jennie Lichter, Deputy Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy. Ms Lichter.

Jennie Lichter: Thank you very much. Hi, everyone. Glad to be with you today. I want to say hello especially to those joining us from Alaska. I had the privilege of traveling to Alaska with Assistant Secretary Sweeney, and others from the administration last August. Met with some of you and your communities.

And I have to tell you how helpful those conversations were for us. At the time, we were working on the executive order that – that structured this – this initiative, and set up this Task Force.

And what we heard from the folks we met with in Alaska about this issue, as well as many others on this call, and others from other parts of the country, really shaped the way that we – that kind of put together the executive order that the President signed, and the way we're tackling this work. So thank you, thank you for that.

I am going to take just a moment here to situate this project in the context of some of the other works that the administration has been doing for and with Indian Country. First and foremost, of course, as my – my boss, Brooke Rollins, mentioned, this issue of missing and murdered Native Americans and Alaska Natives is a big priority for the President.

He established this issue as a priority last year in May, and then again this year in May, when he proclaimed Missing and Murdered Native Americans and Alaska Natives Day, and was the first President to do that, and then of course, signed this executive order in the historic Oval Office in November of last year.

Last year the President also formed a presidential Task Force on protecting Native American children in the Indian Health Service. The DPC is very involved in the work of that Task Force, alongside Trent Shores, who's a member of this Task Force and many others. That Task Force has almost concluded its work, and we look forward to launching its report and having conversations with you all about it before too long.

Last August I also had the privilege of traveling to Oklahoma to a beautiful eagle sanctuary there, to announce, alongside the interior department, an updated policy governing eagle remains.

That policy says that Federally-recognized tribes can retain found Bald and Golden Eagle remains found on tribal land under certain conditions. That's something we know a lot of – of lot of folks in the community had been asking for for quite some time, and we were really happy to be able to make that happen.

Last fall the President, standing alongside the President of Finland, announced an agreement to repatriate culturally important remains and artifacts from – that belong to 26 tribes and pueblos from the Mesa Verde region. These artifacts had found their way to Finland but they will be coming back to the United States and back into the care of the tribes and pueblos from whom they were taken.

Last September the administration was proud to host the first ever Federal tribal broadband summit to focus on the really important issue of improving broadband and connectivity in Indian country.

That event was at the gorgeous auditorium of the Department of Interior. I know many of you were able to join us for that, and we are continuing to work hard on that issue on connectivity in Indian country.

Here at the White House, on the White House campus, we were really excited to host the first ever White House conference on supporting Native American veterans last November. We hosted nearly 200 Native American and Alaska Native veterans and active duty service members here to celebrate the great

legacy of military service by Native communities and talk about pathways for prosperity post-service.

And consistent with the President's strong commitment to veterans from every generation and every community, this issue of supporting Native American veterans is something we're also going to – we continue to focus on and will continue to focus on.

And then finally, more recently the administration has prioritized support for Native Americans during the response to COVID-19, including the distribution of the largest programmatic investment in Indian country in our nation's history.

That's the \$8 billion funds that was appropriated in the CARES Act and given into the care of the Treasury Department to distribute. That money, as you all know, has been partially distributed, and work is ongoing to get the rest of that money into your hands as you continue to work to protect your communities and keep them safe during this time.

In closing I'll just say that we here in the White House are really looking forward to continuing to support and partner with Indian country, especially on this important issue that we're discussing today which impacts the safety and security of your families and your communities.

We're really looking forward to being able to visit with some of you in person when travel and in-person gatherings become a little bit easier, but in the meantime we're really grateful that you're giving us your time today on this call so that we can talk a little bit with you about what we're up to, but in particular, hear what's on your mind and how we can work more effectively to secure your communities and keep them safe. Thanks again very much, and over to you, Tara.

Tara Sweeney: Thank you very much, Jennie, for your comments. I also want to just supplement what you highlighted also with the recognition of Tyler Fish, who's with the White House Council on Native American Affairs, and certainly he's been a tremendous asset to both Indian affairs, Indian country and to the administration.

So he could not join us today, but he has been engaged in discussions and working with us on the progress that we're making as a Task Force.

Moving on. The Executive Order 13898 launched the interagency Operation Lady Justice Task Force, and you can see it was signed on November 26, 2019. The primary charge of the Task Force is to develop an aggressive, government-wide strategy to improve Federal, local, state, and tribal law enforcement cooperation to combat violence against women and youths in Native American communities.

In addition to women and youth, we must always remember that there are male victims in our communities as well. We will establish protocols for new and unsolved cases, establish a multi-jurisdictional cold case team, improve the response to the investigative challenges, collect and manage data across jurisdictions.

This slide – the next few slides will introduce the Task Force members. I am currently serving as the assistant secretary for Indian Affairs, as you see, at the Department of the Interior.

I serve as Secretary David Bernhardt's co-chair designee, and over at the Department of Justice, the attorney general is also the co-chair for this Task Force, and his designee is Katie Sullivan, principal deputy assistant attorney general with the Office of Justice Programs. And sitting in for Katie today is Jessica Hart. Jessica?

Jessica Hart: Thank you, Tara. Good afternoon, everyone. As Tara said, I'm here representing Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General and Operation Lady Justice co-chair designee Katie Sullivan.

My name is Jessica Hart, and I'm the director of the Office for Victims of Crime, which is in the Office of Justice Programs in the Department of Justice. I wanted to say that I'm so grateful to everyone that's here today to speak with us, and I'm especially grateful for your willingness and your openness to discuss these painful issues with us.

I had the privilege of traveling to Alaska with Attorney General Barr around this time last year, and we visited the Bethel region and Napaskiak, and I know from that experience, Attorney General Barr really values the importance of hearing from tribal members and professionals directly.

And that's why these listening sessions, while we can't do them in person right now, they're so important for this Task Force, and it's so important that we get to hear from all you today. So thank you again for allowing me to introduce myself, and I look forward to hearing more. Thanks, Tara.

Tara Sweeney: Thank you. And representing the Federal Bureau of Investigations in Terry Wade, the executive assistant director of the Criminal, Cyber, Response, and Services Branch over at the Department of Justice. And representing Mr. Wade on the Task Force today is Jay Greenberg.

Jay Greenberg: Hello. Good afternoon or good morning as appropriate. This is Jay Greenberg. I am the chief of the violent crime section for the FBI, and it's my honor to be here to hear your perspective in the place of Executive Assistant Director Wade as well as Director Christopher Wray.

We – there is nothing more important than the jurisdiction that's entrusted to us in Indian country, and I look forward to your input on what we can do differently and how we can be better. Thank you.

Tara Sweeney: Thank you. And representing the Office of Violence Against Women at the Department of Justice is Laura Rogers. She is the acting director. Representing her today during this listening session is Frances Cook.

Frances Cook: Thank you, Assistant Secretary Sweeney. Hello, all. My name is Frances Cook and I am representing Laura Rogers, the head of the Office on Violence Against Women within the U.S. Department of Justice today. She asked me to send her deep regrets that she could not be here today, and share that she is so appreciative that the President included her on this Task Force.

OVW brings the perspective of making the connection between domestic and sexual violence, including sex trafficking, and the disappearance or murder of Native people.

We have heard heartbreaking stories at our annual government-to-government consultations on violence against women in tribal communities, stories about the connection between escalating domestic violence and homicide, as well as the disappearance of Native women and girls related to sex trafficking. We are grateful to be a part of the critical work at this Task Force and I am pleased to be here today on Laura's behalf. Thank you very much.

Tara Sweeney: Thank you. And we have with us today Charlie Addington, the director of the Office of Justice Services with the Bureau of Indian Affairs. I am pleased to turn it over to you. Charlie?

Charlie Addington: Well, good morning everybody out on the West Coast, and my name is Chuck Addington. I'm the director for the BIA Office of Justice Services. And we oversee the BIA direct service programs and work closely with tribal law enforcement programs and public safety officials throughout the Indian country.

And we're just so pleased that this executive order has been signed, and all of the support that we're getting from the White House and from our administration at the Department of Interior and Indian Affairs, to address this very crucial topic.

And I was pleased to be on a couple of trips with the assistant secretary up to Alaska here in this past year, and it was very eye-opening to see and hear from some of the folks in the state of Alaska as well as the tribes in the north-west region.

So we are just so pleased to be a partner with the Department of Justice and we look forward to hearing some good feedback and have some good discussion with everybody on the phone, so thank you.

Tara Sweeney: Thank you. And representing the US Attorney's Office for the northern district of Oklahoma and Task Force member at the Department of Justice, Mr Trent Shores.

Trent Shores: (Foreign language). My name is Trent Shores, I am a citizen of the Choctaw nation of Oklahoma and I am also, as Tara said, the United States Attorney here in northern Oklahoma. Thank you, Assistant Secretary, for the introduction.

I also have the honor of chairing Attorney General Barr's Native American Issues sub-committee at the Department of Justice that is representative of the 53 United States attorneys who have Indian country within their districts and have government to government relations and trust responsibilities to Indian country.

This topic of missing and murdered Native Americans is one that we have been discussing for quite some time and seeking solutions and engagement with tribal leaders. This is so crucial to our people and to finding a solution that matches the threat that we are seeing on the ground.

I am very interested to hear not only from tribal leaders but from the experience of victims and their families, of grassroots organizations that have been working on the ground to identify challenges or lapses in protocol, and then to work with our Federal, state and tribal partners to develop nation-wide protocols.

So I'm very curious to hear the comments today about what you are seeing and hearing when it comes to missing and murdered Native Americans in your specific community, and where you think we can best focus our efforts, whether it's on investigative protocols, data collection, or all of the above. Thank you.

Tara Sweeney: Thank you, Trent. And our final Task Force member introduction is a woman that I've had the pleasure of working with, and is a dear friend to Indian Country as well, Commissioner Jeannie Hovland.

Jeannie Hovland: Oh, thank you (foreign language). Good afternoon, my relatives, I greet you with a good heart. I'm Jeannie Hovland and I'm a member of the Flandreau Santee Sioux tribe.

It's an honor to be here this afternoon with team members from the White House, the Assistant Secretary Sweeney who's been such a strong advocate for this issue of murdered and missing Native Americans, and my other colleagues on the Operation Lady Justice Task Force from Interior and Department of Justice.

I'm so appreciative of the President's support on this important issue, and making this a priority of his administration, and I also want to say to the tribal leaders and tribal members on the phone today, I want to say thank you from my heart (foreign language) for your years of advocacy to remember your relatives who have gone missing, to bring justice and healing to our families and communities. Thank you.

Your voices have been heard and there is a lot of work done, and we are committed to doing that, but we need to continue to hear your voices, receive your guidance on how we can best address this through this multi-disciplinary approach, through interior investigations and Department of Justice investigations also, but also through Department of Health and Human Services, how we can support prevention, how we can support intervention, how we can support bringing services to bring healing to our communities and families and our survivors that have been affected by being missing, whether it's through human trafficking or domestic violence, being victimized.

We're here to learn from you, to support what we can do to truly make a positive impact and change the story of our missing and murdered relatives.

So thank you for letting me be part of today's conversation and I really look forward to hearing how we can support efforts in regards to this topic. (Foreign language) thank you.

Tara Sweeney: Thank you, Commissioner Hovland. To date, the Task Force has held nine listening sessions, and we will continue to aggressively consult with Indian country.

The information and the recommendations we gather from these sessions will help guide the Task Force in developing protocols and recommendations. The

Task Force launched a website that will be regularly updated on important aspects of our activity, including progress to date, and upcoming events.

We have developed several working groups which have been aggressively collaborating on the various aspects of the charges of the Task Force. The Task Force launched several projects geared towards improving wrap-around services, legislative fixes and community involvement.

We are also maximizing our efforts by coordinating with other Federal Task Forces and commissions such as those listed here. I'm sorry, I – there seems to be some technical difficulty. My mouse is working now, Marcia, thank you.

And so we have – this slide represents the two reports that are due to the President. The first is on November 26 2020, and we are charged with submitting a report that outlines the activities and accomplishments of the Task Force to date and including the status of the projects the Task Force has not yet completed, in addition to specific recommendations for future action for the President to consider.

The second report will be due November 26, 2021, and it is designed to be the final written report to the President regarding all of the activities that this Task Force has accomplished.

To help guide the discussions during our listening sessions and consultations, this slide represents the questions that we've – we have developed as a Task Force, and they're geared towards proposing potential solutions.

So as we begin our discussion today, and throughout the life of this Task Force, if members would like to submit written comments, we also ask that you take a look at this slide and incorporate any recommendations that you may have.

And the final slide will show the contact information for the Task Force. The website address operationladyjustice.usdoj.gov, and you can see the email is operationladyjustice@usdoj.gov.

Now, during yesterday's listening session, several participants asked about their experiences talked about their experiences as community advocates, and the impact of extractive industries as it relates to missing and murdered Native Americans.

Many questions have been posed about the Task Force and it's mission, and I want to, again, point back to our website where you can find a copy of the executive order and the tasks and mission of the Task Force. It's very, very specific.

To help us complete those tasks, we do need to hear from you on the specific problems and challenges that your communities face so that we can begin to formulate solutions. We wanted to also provide Commissioner Hovland an opportunity to share the information that she provided at yesterday's session about this subject. Commissioner.

Jeannie Hovland: All right. Thank you for this opportunity. Yesterday, we had a listening session with the Great Plains area. And the concerns of when there are large gatherings, and extraction industry, and the Native communities that are in those areas that could have a higher risk of human trafficking was a concern.

And at the Administration for Native Americans, we have partnered with the Office on Trafficking in Persons. And they're a program that's under the Administration for Children and Families.

And we are working to have community based, culturally appropriate training on what human trafficking is at all levels, from youth, to be able to identify it and be able to respond, to family members, to community members, to our providers in the community, and just everybody that's in the community that either is a tribal member, or works with our tribal members, educating on what is human trafficking, how do we respond to it, how do we reach out to help.

And so there have been lessons learned from the extraction industry on how communities – the turns that have been seen with large groups that come in with man camps, and lessons learned from that.

And so at ANA, and the Office of Trafficking in Persons, we'd be happy to meet with community members that have that concern, to talk about prevention efforts, and just really strengthening our communities that feel vulnerable or susceptible to human trafficking.

So I want to offer that. You can reach out to me at any time, and we'd be happy to work with your tribe in setting up some kind of training on human trafficking. I think there's always prevention in education. And so even if that isn't a concern, just getting that education and awareness out there is something that we do want to offer to you and to our tribal community members. I'm happy to answer any questions.

Tara Sweeney: Thank you, Commissioner Hovland. At this time, we would like to open up the lines for comments and questions. Operator, can you please remind folk how they can get in the queue to provide testimony. Thank you.

Operator: Thank you. When you're ready – when you're wanting to speak, just go to the top of your screen, and you will see there a hand or figure. Press the drop down to raise your hand, and we will call on you in the order that you – that they were received.

And I will open your line. I'll let you know that your line is open and you are ready to speak. And after three minutes, the line automatically cuts off. So first on the line, I have Vivian. Vivian, your line is now open. You can go ahead and speak.

Vivian Korthuis: Good morning. Can you hear me?

Operator: Yes, we can. Go ahead.

Tara Sweeney: Yes.

Vivian Korthuis: Thank you. Good morning, everyone. My name is Vivian Korthuis. I serve as the chief executive officer for the Association of Village Council Presidents in Bethel, Alaska. AVCP is the largest consortium in the United States, with 56 Federally recognized tribes.

Rural Alaska is in a public safety crisis. The U.S. Attorney General declared a public safety emergency last summer while he was visiting – after he was visiting. He did come here to Bethel, and we are very grateful that he did. Tribes across Indian country in the lower 48 are building systems for law enforcement to respond to the crisis of missing and murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives. This includes best processes in reporting, investigating and prosecuting crimes.

However, in rural Alaska, the public safety crisis is a reality. So infrastructure is missing. We cannot design systems that work when the basic infrastructure is not there.

It's the truth and the reality of our villages. It is not acceptable. At least one in three Alaska villages have no law enforcement. In May 2019, 98 tribal communities in Alaska had no state funded law enforcement. About 70 of those communities had actually no law enforcement of any kind.

Therefore, it is impossible to develop systems to increase the investigation and prosecution of these cases when villages have no public safety officers or public safety buildings. It is hard to develop these systems when existing public safety officers have not received training, do not have the right equipment, or do not receive adequate pay or benefits.

To successfully protect the most vulnerable in our villages, we are asking three things. First, appropriate public safety resources, infrastructure and funding to protect our communities. Second, tribes must have the authority to protect tribal members in their villages.

Alaska tribes' criminal jurisdiction over Alaska Natives within the village boundaries will allow a better response to crimes involving missing and murdered Alaska Natives. Third, tribal law enforcement officers must have access to adequate training – complete and adequate training – that they need.

We can improve the response to missing and murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives if we listen to what our tribes need, and –

Tara Sweeney: Thank you for – your comments, Vivian. I would encourage you to also submit them to the operationladyjustice@usdoj.gov Website. Operator, next participant.

Operator: Next we have Donna McNamara. Go ahead.

Donna McNamara: I'm assuming you can hear me.

Operator: Yes.

Donna McNamara: Ok, great. My name is Donna McNamara – M-C-N-A-M-A-R-A – and I'm here today representing the Suquamish Tribe. And Chairman Leonard Forsman sends his greetings. He is not able to be here today. But he has authorized me to – to speak at this listening session. I've been the chief prosecutor at Suquamish for 22 years.

And I am – I'm glad to say that, at the moment, the – there are no missing tribal members that law enforcement is aware of. But that doesn't mean we don't have an interest in prevention and education for the tribal community.

And I'd like to direct the Task Force's attention to their fourth goal, about addressing the need for greater clarity concerning roles, and the sub – bullet point under that, of facilitating formal agreements or arrangements among Federal, state, local and tribal law enforcement.

I feel that this is a huge need, and something that doesn't necessarily get enough attention. As everybody knows, the TAP program – Suquamish was the second tribe to take advantage of that program.

That – it has offered tribes the opportunity to input information into (the CMS) databases. But there is still a problem, at least here in – in Washington state, that not all state actors can see the information entered into the Federal database.

Specifically, protection orders that are entered into the Federal database are not seen by state court judges. And I'm also told by our deputy chiefs of

police that certain dispatch centers – law enforcement dispatch centers – do not see the Federal database either.

So for this Task Force to be able to really make a difference, I mean, it's really important that these formal agreements are pursued, and the states and encouraged, and the counties are encouraged, to participate, because I think it's going to be necessary to make it all work. Thank you very much for your time.

Tara Sweeney: Thank you for your comments. Operator, next presenter.

Operator: Next on the line we have (Renee). (Renee), your line is now open. Go ahead.

(Renee Bork): Is that (Renee Bork)?

Operator: Yes.

(Renee Bork): OK. Hello. My name is (Renee Bork). I'm a citizen of the Muscogee Creek nation of Oklahoma. I've been providing boots on the ground, direct victim services for victims of crime in Indian Country for over 16 years.

Recently, I previously served as a Federal victims specialist with the BIA for over five years, and worked first hand with many families of those who were missing, and later found murdered.

I can only speak today of the families' needs, of those that I served. And I by no means speak for everyone. And as you know, we cannot cookie cut the approach in Indian Country. Now that we have a platform to bring awareness, we may need to revisit the term "missing" as a crime, based off of information brought forth by families.

We need to ensure that when someone is reported missing, that law enforcement is responding with a sense of urgency. Reports must be taken seriously, and at best, a report must be made each time a family makes contact. This will help to provide documentation and data.

Law enforcement is our first line of contact with most victimizations, and our lives depend on law enforcement response, belief and support. There must be

more education and training for our law enforcement, in terms of policy, and response to victims who are reporting missing loved ones. Law enforcement U.S. Attorney's office must keep open line of communication with family members in these cases.

This would mean direct communication from the FBI, the BIA and tribal law enforcement to families in regards to case status updates. Not investigative information per se, but having that law enforcement contact is imperative to assure families that something is happening.

Providing more victim specialists to law enforcement has proven to bridge this gap. I've worked alongside BIA and FBI agents on many of these cases, and having that victim specialist liaison absolutely makes a difference. It also upholds the mandate for Federal law enforcement under the Victims Rights and Restitution Act, which requires law enforcement to provide victim services.

We need more funding for tribal communities to have training and education, and the ability and funding to develop their own response which best suits their community needs.

What works on (Fort Burfill) reservation is not going to work within the boundaries of the Muscogee Creek Nation. We have to make sure that we allow our Nations to guide these responses that best suit their needs.

In areas in which BIA is the law enforcement response, we expect more from the Federal entity to protect our communities and our people. Sending untrained or disciplined detailed agents to work on these labor intensive cases sends a negative message to our Nations. We deserve better, and we need better.

In closing, I would also encourage the support to re authorize VAWA to restore the inherent rights of tribes to prosecute crimes of sexual assault, as domestic and sexual violence have a direct correlation with all crimes –

Tara Sweeney: Thank you for your comments. Operator, next participant.

Operator: I'll remind everyone that the lines do automatically cut off at three minutes. Next we have Ralph Jefferson. OK Ralph. You should be on the line. Go ahead.

Ralph Jefferson: (Inaudible). Hello. My name is (Desumptin). My English name is Ralph Jefferson. I'm a member of the Lummi Nation. Like many other Native communities, our Lummi families have suffered through the disappearance of a beloved daughter, sister, or mother.

I'm speaking today to ask for a different and better response from our Federal partners in law enforcement. Sometimes it looks and feels like the Federal government doesn't really care about our loved ones who are missing, and that they seem to lose interest when a murder can't be solved in a few days or a couple of weeks.

Such was the case we had at Lummi, where a little girl's mother, a man's wife, and a parents' daughter disappeared on her way home from work. The initial Federal response was almost non existent. And when her body was found months later, the Federal response was hurried, and the assigned agent's reports read as if he couldn't close the case fast enough as "unsolvable".

When that agent had the evidence destroyed for a case he considered closed, he also destroyed any hope of convicting anyone of the murder. So when new evidence promised – promoted the reopening of the now cold case by local law enforcement years later, the missing evidence ensured there could be no charges.

That murder didn't take just one life. It destroyed an entire Lummi family. That victim's grandchildren still suffer with the generational trauma of the loss. We understand that not all murder investigations result in an arrest. What we don't understand is when the Federal response delays justice, or even causes injustice, for the victim, the family, and even the entire community.

I'm asking the Task Force to ensure the new response start and continue with the victims, and those they left behind, in the front of every person's mind, and in all of our prayers.

Please, truly allow this new response to grow from Indian Country for Indian Country. And that it not be just more layers of the same people and the same bureaucracy that has too often resulted in a disservice to the Native people.

In closing, please accept my gratitude for listening, and my encouragement that the government learn to respond in a different way. Because until they, and we, learn to do that, we risk having only more of the same results, and no one getting the peace they need and deserve. (Foreign language) Thank you.

Tara Sweeney: Thank you for your comments. Operator, next presenter.

Operator: Next we have Annita. Annita, your line is now open. Go ahead.

Annita Lucchesi: Hi, everyone. Good morning. My name is Annita Lucchesi. I am executive director of Sovereign Bodies Institute. And we're based in northern California, but we serve families and survivors nationally and internationally.

I have a couple of questions to share today. I think the biggest one is we have several PL-280 states in this region, and those states are really heavily impacted by this crisis.

And I'm wondering how the Federal government, and how this Task Force, is going to work with PL-280 seats to ensure that families and tribes are still being heard, and – and that good things are happening and progressing in those areas, knowing that the Federal government does not have jurisdiction over tribal lands in those seats.

My other question is just – and I voiced this in – in another one of the listening sessions as well, but I wanted to share it again here, because I'm – I'm Indigenous. I'm a survivor of trafficking. I was trafficked in Washington. And I currently live in California, so I'm really invested in the movement in this region.

And I'm wondering how this Task Force is going to hold law enforcement accountable for their complicity in this silence. When I was trafficked, police officers solicited me. I experienced police brutality.

One of my friends was murdered by Spokane police. And with all the national dialogue that's happening now around police violence, I think the Task Force has a critical moment to step up and say, "We're going to address how law enforcement has failed Indigenous communities." And I don't see that happening yet. So I'm wondering when it will. Thank you.

Tara Sweeney: Thank you for your questions, and sharing your background and story and your experience. With respect to PL-280 states, the – you aptly recognize that this is a jurisdictional issue that requires a congressional fix. Which is why these types of listening sessions are so important. We welcome the opportunity to review your suggestions on how we can create concrete solutions for tribal communities in these PL-280 states.

And I certainly understand the – the challenges, as I come from Alaska. I know Marcia Good, the executive director, may have some additional insight there. Marcia

Marcia Good: Sure. This is Marcia Good. I'm executive director of the Task Force. The way the executive order is written, it talks about American Indian and Alaska Native communities. It does not talk about anything different between Public Law 280 or non Public Law 280 states.

So we will have some additional collaborative work to do with PL-280 states, but that's certainly something that's within the Task Force mandate. It also doesn't make any differentiation between urban and rural, so all of the – the areas and all of the work will be included.

Tara Sweeney: And then, Frances Cook, are you available to provide some answers or some insight on human trafficking?

Frances Cook: Sure, I'd be happy to do so. I appreciate your comments very much and I can tell they're very heartfelt and based on personal experience. That sounds terrific.

I know that we have funded under our office, although the focus, as you likely well know is not specifically human trafficking, we do address within the context of our tribal grant program the issue of sex trafficking, and we have

funded extensive technical assistance for coordinated response teams to work with law enforcement on this issue.

I don't off the top of my head know that they address specifically the issue that you have raised, but I'm certainly happy to look into that and I do know that our technical assistance providers who work on this issue have additional materials available on their website. In particular the Tribal Law and Policy Institute has quite a bit of information about some of the training for law enforcement related to human trafficking.

So, I appreciate your comments very much and I'm certain we'll take them back to the office as well, to see if there's more that we can do. Thank you so much.

Tara Sweeney: Thank you. And Commissioner Hovland.

Jeannie Hovland: All right. Thank you – thank you for sharing your personal testimony. My heart goes out to you and thank you for sharing that.

I just want to say that at the Administration for Native Americans, we currently have our social and economic development strategies funding available. You can go to grant.gov.

The deadline for applying for that funding is July 15th. I did add additional bonus points for applications that include human trafficking efforts to combat human trafficking in our Native communities and Native populations. Our funding is up to \$350,000 a year, up to three years.

So there's that current opportunity. You can address it. There's so much flexibility in our funding, however you would like to, as long as it's community – community based. Either tribe or travel organization or Native non-profit is eligible for the funding.

Also the office on trafficking and persons has a funding opportunity to also address human trafficking in Native populations. Their funding can also be found on grants.gov and both funding opportunities are currently open and I can get that information to (Marcia Good) and send it on over.

Those opportunities are available on the Administration for Native Americans Facebook, and on our website also. Thank you.

Tara Sweeney: Thank you. And then finally, I just want to touch upon the question that was raised, how does this Task Force plan to hold law enforcement accountable?

While that is outside the authorities and jurisdiction of this Task Force, these sessions are recorded and there is a transcript that we will all be reviewing as we continue our work as a Task Force, and this is an issue where we can come back and have a conversation about it.

And so it takes a lot of – I think it takes a lot of courage to step up and to share your story, and to raise these issues, because, again, as I have said in every listening session, the conversations that we have here, the information that is exchanged, helps guide our internal discussions and helps guide the work products that we are required to put forward to the President. So I apologize that I don't have an answer for you, but certainly it's going to be part of the deliberation process.

Operator, please, next participant.

Operator: Next we have Emily. Emily, your line is now open. You can go ahead.

Emily Washines: Hello, can you hear me?

Operator: Yes, I can, go ahead.

Emily Washines: My name is Emily Washines, a Yakama nations tribal member and scholar in the north-west. I am founder of Native Friends and a project, Native Women in Action. I also have a project called Warcry.

From March 2020 to June 1 2020, the Yakama nation reservation has had six homicides. These are three different cases with three different suspects. Four of those six victims are Native, three of the six are women.

We have over 40 cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women or Yakama women since 1855. In fact, our first murder report to the US was in 1855, and the United States' response was a three-year war.

Our second report about murdered about murdered Yakamas went to the President and Congress in 1856. Those are about a separate case. Those reports have yet to be responded to by the Federal government.

Still, I remain a part of this process and appreciate this Task Force listening session. I have three questions. 1) How many homicides have occurred on reservations throughout the US or even in the northwest in 2020, in which Natives are involved?

The second question is, NCIC had 56 Native missing women in Washington. 20 of those were on the Yakama reservation. I don't have access to those names of the missing Native women. Only law enforcement does. If we're trying to find these women, then why are their names withheld from the community?

The third question is, we have one woman from the 1980s, and she hasn't DNA taken. She was found and she was buried without that process, because that process did not exist. In order to exhume her body would cost at least \$5000.

The county sheriff has been co-operative in this process, but they have listed cost as the main barrier to collect that DNA. And so, is there a Federal process or mechanism to support, you know, that justice dream? That is all I have today. Thank you.

Tara Sweeney: Thank you for your questions. I want to turn the data questions over to the Department of Justice, either Jessica Hart, (Shannon) or Jay or (Laura).

Jay Greenberg: Hi, this is Jay. So I guess the – I'm tracking back to your question about there being missing Yakama members in NCIC. And, you know, I can certainly look into that data. You know, what immediately occurs to me -- I'm not familiar off the top of my head, obviously – is that we never sort of

independently put people in NCIC. There always has to be an underlying reason, which normally starts with a report from the community.

So, you know, I'll be happy to look into what names we have in here that come back there, and how they got in and why there would be names in NCIC that – where the community doesn't know who those people are. So I'll be happy to look into that and get back through the Task Force with you on that.

Tara Sweeney: Emily, can you please submit your questions to the – operationladyjustice@usdoj.gov. You had some very pointed questions that I don't believe we can answer during this session here, but would like to get you answers to those questions.

So I'm requesting that you submit them to the Operation Lady Justice email address and (Marcia) will begin to work with the Task Force on pulling together the information that you're asking for. Operator, next participant, please.

Operator: OK. Next we have Carolyn DeFord. Carolyn, your line is now open. You can go ahead.

Carolyn DeFord: Can you hear me?

Operator: Yes, we can.

Carolyn DeFord: My name is Carolyn DeFord, I'm a Puyallup tribal member. My mother, Leona LeClair Kinsey went missing in La Grande, Oregon in October 1999. She was over the age of 18 so she had the right to go missing and there was no investigation done, it wasn't taken seriously for over two weeks.

At that point, she was evicted from her home for not paying rent and we had to go in and move her things, so we completely disrupted any possibility of getting evidence out of there.

Her case is still – it's a – it's a cold case and the department doesn't have the resources to do any further investigation in her case. So she just sits there

with all of these urban legends about her being in a hole at the top of a mountain in my home town.

The man who is supposedly responsible has confessed several times, but yet law enforcement can't do anything based on hearsay and there is no – there was no investigation. It's just really frustrating that everybody in town seems to know where my mum is and what happened, but nothing is being done about that. It's been 20 years.

My cousin was also murdered responding to a friend's call for help in relation to a domestic violence crisis. I just want to highlight the fact that Federal legislation is needed, because of these institutional and systemic failures, the lack of resources to investigate cases and the lack of acknowledging that our endangered people are truly endangered and receiving the services and the investigations that they – that they warrant for being endangered.

Tribes need to receive notification when our citizens are reported missing so that we can wrap around the family and look within our communities, whether somebody is in our jurisdiction, in our community, and provide services to the loved ones that are left behind. Services to families who are coping and struggling and grieving and dealing with the trauma of ambiguous loss.

Grandmothers taking on new familial roles and aunties taking on new familial roles of children who are left behind and having to pick up the pieces immediately and care for grieving children while they're still grieving themselves and not having the financial resources to take on the extra household members. We need healing and we need prevention and we need the resources to be able to do that for ourselves.

Every case deserves a Federal investigation so that our people who travel from urban areas to tribal reservations are not left invisible due to the jurisdictional limitations. PL280 undermines our tribal sovereignty.

We need – we need an (inaudible) we need to be able to have jurisdiction over anybody who commits a crime in our community. We need to address the secondary causes of death. Just because somebody is deemed that they died of hypothermia, or that hypothermia is the cause of death or drowning, or

heart failure, what is the underlying cause that needs to be investigated and thoroughly documented?

There's a reason why a young girl was out in the middle of a field with minimal clothing on and died of hypothermia or broken bones. Hypothermia is not the cause, that drowning isn't drowning, it's that they were drowned, that they weren't beaten to a bloody pulp and put in water on their own.

Tara Sweeney: Carolyn, thank you for sharing your story and the experiences that you have encountered and the background that you've shared. I would like to have Charles Addington with BIAOJS talk about the Cold Case Working Group.

Charles Addington: All right. Thank you, Assistant Secretary Sweeney, and thank you, Carolyn, for the question.

Just to kind of give you all some background on what we're doing right now to address some of these issues that everyone is bringing up with these cases that are considered either cold cases or cases that's not been looked at and resolved where we have some closure for families, we're actually going to establish, and in the process of doing it right now, seven different cold case Task Force teams throughout the United States that will do nothing but look into cold cases, missing cases and homicide cases involving Native Americans.

So those cold case Task Force teams will actually be stood up. We've already got three people hired to new positions that's going to be focused specifically on these type of issues, as well as doing a full analysis of the missing person cases and cold cases that out there in Indian Country right now.

So our teams already working to get those Task Forces set up, which will be multi-disciplinary teams where we will be working with our other Federal partners at the (FBI) all the other DOJ components, as well as our tribal law enforcement and our city and county partners in areas where -- for instance a public law 280 state. We would be working with those folks, since they're probably the ones that responded to the initial call and had those reports.

So these teams are going to be real crucial to addressing some of the problems that you're bringing up right now. So we are in the process of doing those and we look to have all those teams stood up by the end of the year and hopefully we're going to begin reviewing cases very soon and start working on getting some of these cold cases solved.

Tara Sweeney: Thank you, Director Addington. I also want to go back to the human trafficking questions that were raised earlier and I know Jessica Hart about DOJ, so either Jessica or if Katie Sullivan has joined us, let me know.

Operator: Katie, are you on the line?

Tara Sweeney: Do you want to just (inaudible)

Katie Sullivan: I am on the line, but Jessica, go ahead. Hi, everybody, it's Katie Sullivan, the co-chair of the Task Force. I apologize for calling late. Hello especially to my friends from Alaska. But, Jessica, go ahead, you're the perfect person to answer these questions. Thanks.

Jessica Hart: Oh, perfect. Just going back a little, we assessed human trafficking, and (OJTS) has the largest amount of anti-trafficking funding across the Federal government.

I know you were specifically about the law enforcement interactions, and we actually had a new grant that went out last year, and again this year, establishing a Task Force where law enforcement works jointly hand-in-hand with (distant) service providers.

So this is a new Task Force that started last time. We reissued it this time, but I think that this new Task Force will go to address some of the issues that the caller had brought up. So I just wanted to bring that up, too. But thank you, Tara.

Tara Sweeney: Thank you so much. Operator, next participant.

Operator: OK. We have a couple of people in the queue. The first just – we have Samantha Thornsberry. I do want to remind everyone that there is a three-

minute time on this and the line's are automatically muted at three minutes.
Samantha, you're on the line. Go ahead.

Samantha Thornsberry: OK. (Inaudible). My name is Samantha Thornsberry, I'm a citizen of the Cahuilla band of Indians. I live on the Cahuilla reservation in southern California, Riverside County. I'm also the program director for our victim advocacy program, and I've been doing the work for about 10 years now.

I just want to say – and I apologize ahead. I'm just going to be brave and say this, because – and I don't know how it gets addressed. It's appropriate from what we see happening across our nation right now, just the level of racism that exists.

And I know we actually feel what's happening across our nation again. It's really hard to talk about and admit to that there's a level of racism. I know that being an Indigenous woman, living on my tribal land, if I'm assaulted or hurt in any manner and I call for help, it's a real gamble whether my – the law enforcement (inaudible) PL280 state in California is going to respond to my cry for help.

If I'm at a local municipality or town closest to me, I can call 911 and the chances of someone responding is much greater. So I think that there's just this overall sense of my life is not as valued or is not equal to somebody else and – and, you know, I see that a lot.

I see that there's a real jurisdictional issue and at – I think somewhere in that quagmire, there's a level of racism, and again I apologize if I didn't say something right or – but I just think that has to be brought up. And I would hope to see in some report – I want to know the data, as well.

I know what we know, but I – you know, I don't mean to be sarcastic when I say, I don't know what I don't know. I want to see what the data is in some of these reports. How many cold cases are there? You know?

What are the main factors in investigations leading into -- or being dropped or some reasoning, a rationale for this amount of cold cases? That said, I thank

you very much, and I hope I didn't step on anybody's toes or hurt any feelings by saying what I did. Thank you.

Tara Sweeney: Thank you for your comments. You know, as Native Americans, we have encountered racism at some point in our life, or lives, and it has an impact on the communities that we live in.

It has an impact on how we interact with each other, and I appreciate the comments that you made. I don't think anybody's feelings are hurt, but it's why these listening sessions are so important, because you're raising these issues, again, so that we can consider all facets when deliberating the recommendations that we make to the President.

And as we've learned through experience, or personal experiences, that there is a need for trauma-informed training for the first responders, and that is something that the executive order does call out as a focus area for the Task Force. And you talk about data and the -- what we are continuing to find is that the data related to the Indian country and Alaskan Native communities is not complete.

It doesn't paint the full picture. And so, doing an analysis of how we can strengthen the capturing of the data, the sharing of the data and raising the awareness within the administration within our communities to ensure that we are looking at this issue in a very holistic manner.

I know that HHS has also developed toolkits to help guide community leaders. And so, Commissioner Hovland, would you like to talk about that?

Jeannie Hovland: I'm sorry, could you repeat that? What specifically?

Tara Sweeney: Your -- the toolkits that you're developing at HHS or ANA.

Jeannie Hovland: Thank you, yes. So the Administration for Native Americans and the Office of Trafficking in Persons developed a few years ago a free online resource that you can download and print out by PDF form. It is the Combating Human Trafficking Native Youth Toolkit, and again, at no cost.

We developed it with our ANA grants that include Native youth in the grants in leadership and we reviewed it again just last summer with our Native youth to make sure it was age appropriate, something they could relate to and, hopefully, appropriate.

And it talks about what is human trafficking. There's still a perception of the Liam Neeson movies where somebody comes in, a stranger, grabs you, takes you to a foreign country. Does that happen? Yes. But there is also, as we know, more local human trafficking. What is it? When it's within your community within people you know. How you recognize it, how do you respond to it.

So we have that resource available. We have trained the Bureau of Indian Education, several of their facilitators, so that they can take it into the schools. And we just want to get that information out. It's available to you. Go to Administration for Native Americans, to our website, and you can download that toolkit.

Tara Sweeney: Thank you. And understanding that healing is an important component to this epidemic. As advocates, tribal leaders, if you contemplate the types of comments that you will be sending in, help us understand what trauma-informed training looks like in your community.

We heard earlier that it could be better approached. Does that work for Indian country? I couldn't agree more. So what does that look like for you? With that, operator, next participant.

Operator: Next, we have Patricia Whitefoot. Patricia, your line is open, go ahead.

Patricia Whitefoot: Good afternoon. Yes, my name is Patricia Whitefoot, I come from the Yakama Indian Reservation and from the community of White Swan. With regard to the community, we are a rural, isolated and unincorporated community, and today, I am pleased to be a great grandmother with several family members that live here on the reservation.

What I want to point out though, is that in our community daily crime is committed. I mean, it's not a safe place to live, and there have been numerous

leavings in White Swan where several of our women have also gone missing as well.

As you heard, there are over 40 cases. And many of the women have gone missing from our community, and some of them were even located in the mountainous area of the Cascade Mountains that are for tribal members only.

And so, when you think about -- for instance, in my sister's case, she went missing, and it was reported some of her personal items were found in a closed area of the reservation.

So I asked myself then, "Who has access to the closed area of the reservation? Is it law enforcement, is it the loggers, is it -- who has this access?" And so that's a major issue that we have when we're talking about closed areas of our reservations.

And in addition to that, I had relatives that -- women who've also been murdered, who -- you know, one about 20 years ago in our housing project, and one who lived -- who was from Warm Springs that lived for a period of time on our reservation.

All of those have not been solved. My sister's case has not been solved. And so, I agree with the statements that were made with regard to developing protocol -- protocols on investigations, particularly when women go missing or disappear.

We have to keep in -- we have to remember that Native women have been targeted in many ways, directly and indirectly. When Native women are not considered human, you know, we see these characters and stereotypes, and all you have to do is look at films like "Pocahontas", et cetera, that we are dehumanized.

So that is a major issue. So how do we address the issue of just our girls are human as well? With regard to the Task Force, I agree there's a need for accountability. How are we going to be inclusive about inviting, you know, other people into the training of law enforcement. I think women need to be a

part of that training, and that training should not only include our tribal police, but FBI, Attorney General, BIA and, again, women need to be a part of that.

With regard to law enforcement, I think there's a need for outreach to law enforcement. So just again, I want to emphasize a need for protocols for communication with families and family members over the long term. Not just a one-time situation, but over the long term. So again, look forward to hearing more from you. Thank you.

Tara Sweeney: Thank you for your comments, and I would like to just acknowledge -- I believe that we had an opportunity to meet when I had visited your reservation. So it's nice to hear your voice again. At this time, I'd like to call on Jay Greenberg with the FBI to address some of the points that you raised in your comments.

Jay Greenberg: Yes, hi, good morning. Thank you for your comments and I'm sorry to hear about the community where you live and the difficulties that you face every day.

In terms of training, we do a great deal of law enforcement training and we do a great deal of community outreach in the areas where we have jurisdiction. But we normally don't do training with law enforcement at the same time that we do community outreach.

So that's certainly an interesting idea for us to take back and think about in terms of, you know, how we can -- how we can maybe put those two things together, so that you know what law enforcement is hearing when we conduct our training, and we can -- we can use that as an opportunity to hear your perspective as well.

Additionally, I know that -- so I speak from a national perspective for our organization, but all of our local officers who have jurisdiction over Indian country do meet with tribal leadership on a very regular basis to listen to the concerns that are out there.

And I highly encourage you to, you know, make sure that you're expressing the same views to our local officers who definitely would like to hear that to

know how to engage with you better in your community, so that you make sure that we're hearing your voice the right way from the people who are deployed out there to help you.

Tara Sweeney: Yes, thank you. Operator, next participant.

Operator: Next, we have Debbie Hassler. Debbie, your line is open, you can go ahead.

Debbie Hassler: Thank you. Can you hear me OK?

Operator: Yes, we can.

Debbie Hassler: Perfect, thank you so much. My name is Debbie Hassler, I am a member of the Cowlitz Indian Tribe here in Washington State, and currently serving as the vice chair of the Cowlitz Tribal Council.

I want to just say a couple of really brief comments. It wasn't my intention to have any comments today, I was just going to listen. But I just wanted to say thank you to (Anita) and (Caroline) for sharing their stories. And I appreciate these women, and every time we have a listening session or -- at a tribal meeting, any time someone shares their story, their family story.

And my question to the Task Force is, what are we doing to be inclusive of survivor voice? How are we bringing families of our missing and murdered loved ones in to provide their experience.

The people who are going to know the best way for us to move forward are folks who have lived experiences. And I don't know that the -- I have not heard, I should say, that the Task Force is doing anything to be inclusive of that.

So that's one thing I would like to ask. And then the other question I have, or a statement, is around data collections.

The Cowlitz Indian Tribe just in October of last year created a coordinated community response team to start looking at what murdered and missing Indigenous Cowlitz tribal members look like for us. And we have three women who are on our list and two have been murdered, one is missing.

And the interesting fact of all of that is none of them have been listed either as a Native person or as a Cowlitz tribal member. So my hope with the Task Force, is we can look at ways that data collection and data sharing can be done in ways that are meaningful and really giving some voice in members, to Native women and Native people who have been missing.

So I would like to -- any way our tribal law enforcement or our tribal council and through resolutions or codes can help support those would like to, but there isn't, to my knowledge, a way to currently be able to do that, for everyone to see everything. So the data collection is important.

Assuming people are white in a police report, are not asking the question, because law enforcement are uncomfortable if they are murdered or go missing from urban areas, is a true problem.

And I think that when we talk about training law enforcement, I mean, my hope is that we're not talking just about tribal law enforcement, because I don't know that that is the only place that we're having problems.

So anyway, those are my comments and questions and I appreciate everyone's time today. Thank you so much.

Tara Sweeney: Thank you for providing that input. I know that Marcia has been working on some sessions that are targeted. And so, Marcia, can you provide some additional information?

Marcia Good: Certainly. This is Marcia. We are working on putting together sessions that will be specifically targeted. Some for the grassroots organizations who are working in tribal communities now, and then others specifically for families who have been involved in this system.

Of course, our current situation with lack of ability to travel is requiring these things to be done, kind of, you know, this routine way of being, you know, on the computer, and we're trying to figure out some good ways to be able to do that, but we'd like your, you know, input on how to do that.

Those will be upcoming, hopefully, within the next couple of months. And if you have any suggestions on how we might, you know, very carefully and sensitively do that for families, we'd be happy to hear that. If you could either get a hold of me or submit comments to operationladyjustice@usdoj.gov, but those sessions are definitely coming.

Tara Sweeney: Thank you, Marcia. And Director Addington, did you have anything to add as well?

Charlie Addington: Yes, just real quick. Just to the data out there. You know, I don't know if all of you are familiar with the NamUs system that's out there that's ran, and we actually teamed up with that group, and they've been just absolutely fabulous to work with Indian Affairs, and Indian country, and they developed some tribal affiliation (inaudible) name of the system, so we could collect information on whether we have someone that has went missing that lived in Indian Country become missing outside of Indian country.

Did they live in Indian country? Did they live outside? So we can actually start collecting some of that specific data that we haven't had in the past. And I just want to let everybody know that we have worked within those data fields, are alive in their system, and they've just been an absolute great partner trying to help us collect the missing person data and working with us.

And they've got some great tools and (inaudible) self-reporting system. So we have to encourage everyone to -- in the tribal law enforcement programs and the other agencies to input that data, so we have it. So I just want to make sure that everybody's aware that that's out there.

Tara Sweeney: Thank you. And it looks as if we are running short on time and there are no additional hands in the queue. So, at this time, I'd like to call on Katie Sullivan for any final remarks.

Katie Sullivan: Thank you so much, and thank you, Tara. And I just want to tell everyone that I loved hearing the stories that I did get to hear. I know that Marcia is going to tell me about the rest of the listening session, but such a tremendous privilege and honor to be on -- co-chair on this Task Force.

Attorney General Barr feels extremely deeply, has made every indication that he prioritizes Indian country, making sure that there is fair and just public safety that works effectively and efficiently.

I love working with the Department of Interior and Assistant Secretary Sweeney and Director Addington. I think we're making great strides here. President Trump has made his priority clear with this Task Force, along with many other actions that he has taken.

I'd like to also thank Jessica Hart, who stood in for me today for most of the phone call, running the Office of Victims of Crime, and she's an excellent director and, as all of you know, we are really getting money into Indian country for victim services, with the set-aside funding that is a formula grant this year. We're very proud of that, Jessica has done a great job. So, thank you, Jessica and thank you everyone.

Tara Sweeney: And thank you, Katie. Just for all of those on the call today, you know, I certainly appreciate your willingness to keep the work of this Task Force moving forward by engaging on this issue, and especially for being the community support for those who may be suffering. And as a community advocate, we hear your voices and we want to hear more.

The only way that we're going to make progress is by working together, and so I do appreciate the partnership with HHS and with DOJ, on behalf of the Department of the Interior, and I appreciate the partnership and willingness for engagement by Indian country and Alaskan Native communities. And with that, I wish you be safe and be well. Thank you.

END