

Highway of Tears: Honoring our stolen sister's voices



BY: Karen Severns, PsyD, MSW, LCSW, ACADC, LADAC, ICAADC, C.C.M,
Behavioral Health Consultant for California Area Office
Indian Health Services

DISCLAIMER

- Please note that this presentation contains sensitive content related to abuse, domestic violence, PTSD, sexual abuse, sexual assault, missing and murder women or those who have simply vanished. This list is not inclusive.
- The content is intended for educational and informational purposes only and is not a substitute for professional advice, therapy or counseling.
- The creator does not intend to harm, offend, or distress any participant of this presentation.
- Content can not be taken as professional advice.
- Participating, viewing and listening to this presentation does not indicate a professional-client relationship.
- Please proceed with discretion and caution. If you are feeling suicidal or need immediate help, please call
 - 911
 - [StrongHearts Native Helpline: 1-844-762-8483](tel:1-844-762-8483)
 - [National Indigenous Women's Resource Center: 1-855-649-7299](tel:1-855-649-7299)
 - [Coalition to Stop Violence Against Native Women: 1-505-243-9199](tel:1-505-243-9199)

INTRODUCTION:

Karen Severns: Mixed race; my mother side is Irish and my father side is native, Little Shell Band of Chippewa Indians (grandfather) and Gros Ventre (grandmother).



LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Today, we gather on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the **Luiseno and Kumeyaah Nations**, who have stewarded this land for generations. We recognize their enduring connection ancestry and honor their ongoing presence and sovereignty.

We give them thanks and stand by those 400 plus Tribes who continue to fight for their sovereign lands here in California and across Turtle Island (North America).

“Miigwich” Thank you!





OPENING PRAYER

- Adele Yuth, enrolled member of the Navajo Nation. Adele has worked with native populations for 20 plus years.
- Substance Abuse Counselor for the Desert Sage Substance Abuse Treatment Center.
- Conclude with a Song of returning our sister's home.
- Her clan is To'aheedliinii "Water Flows Together." Born for Honághááhnii "one who walks around." Maternal grandparents are Áshijhí "salt extends out." Paternal grandparents are [Ma'ii Deeshgiizhinii](#) "Coyote Pass People" (Also known as jemez pueblo).



INDIAN HEALTH SERVICES CALIFORNIA AREA OFFICE

OBJECTIVES:

- 1. Review the historical time-line of the Highway of Tears.**
- 2. Raise awareness to end violence against woman and our indigenous relatives.**
- 3. Promote community education, advocacy and prevention strategies at the micro and macro level for missing and murdered indigenous relatives.**
- 4. To educate and support native families with culturally appropriate prevention and healing services.**

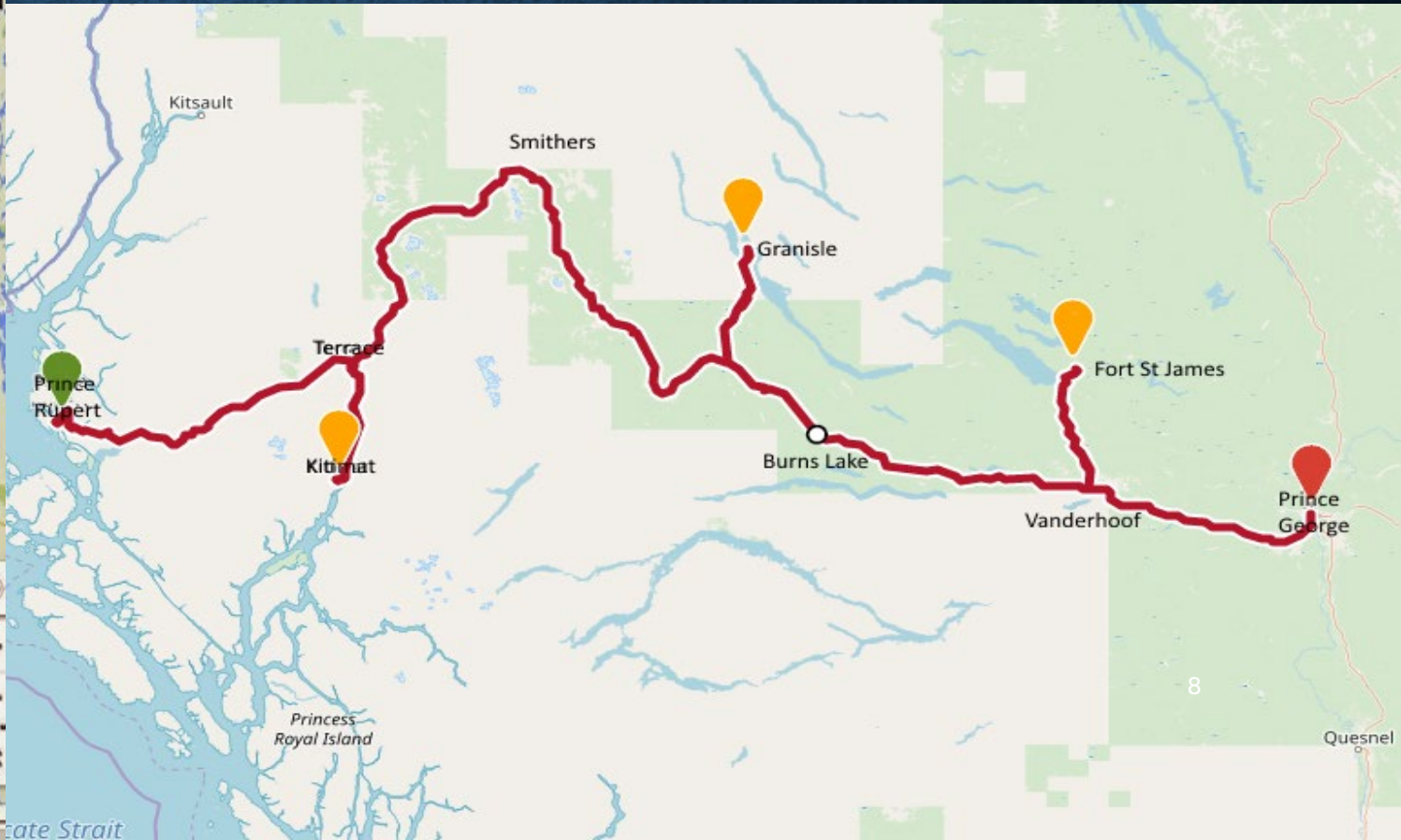
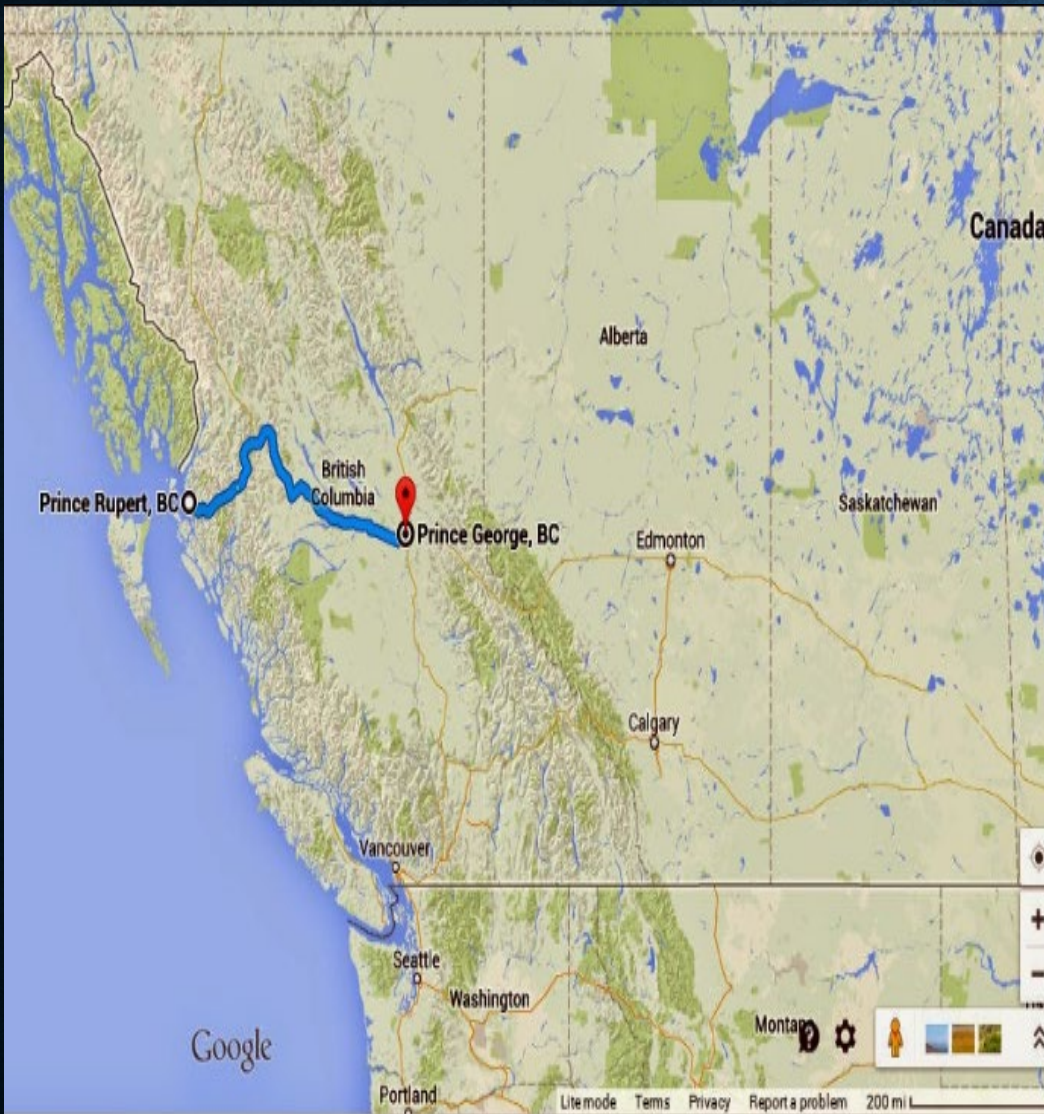
HIGHWAY OF TEARS

CAUTION GIRLS DON'T HITCHHIKE
on the
Highway of Tears
16
Killer on the Loose!
Victims

The sign features a graphic of blue teardrops with the number 16 in the center. Below the teardrops are three small, square photographs of young women, each with a name written underneath: *Trishelle*, *Christina*, and *Christy*.

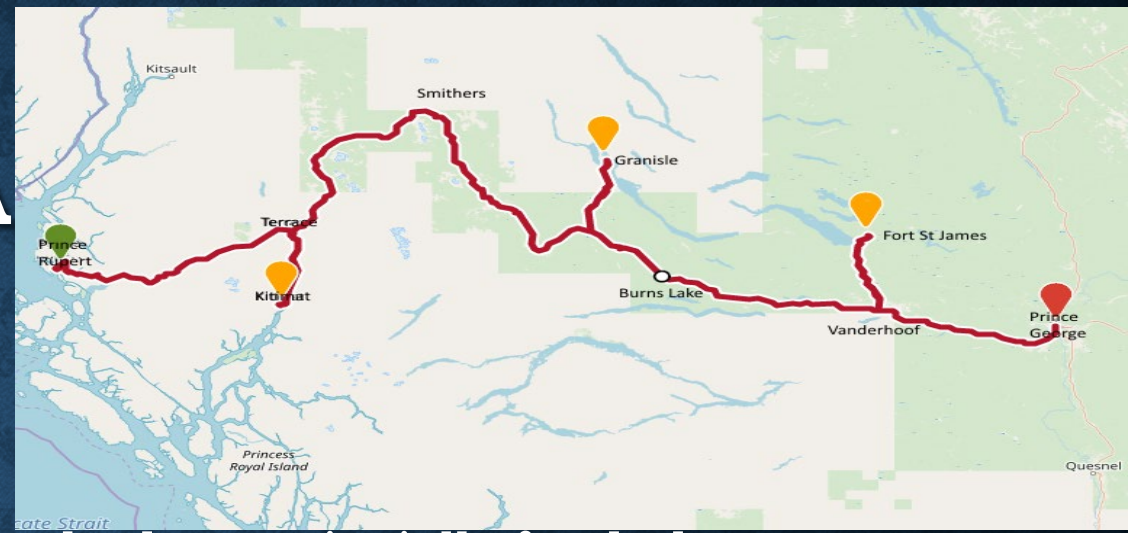
HISTORY

- Canada- A highway called the highway of tears of 450 miles from prince George to prince Rupert. There were 50 women murdered on this highway mostly Native women)





PROJECT E-PANA



- In 2005, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) launched a provincially funded project, E-Pana, which started with a focus on some of the unsolved murders and disappearances of female children and young women along Highway 16.
- They were tasked to investigate whether there was a single serial killer at work or a multitude of killers operating along the highway.
- E stands for E Division
- Pana is from the Inuit language. Pana is the Inuit spirit that guides souls to the afterlife.





HIGHWAY OF TEARS PROFILE “KNOWN AS HOT CASES”

- **Female** includes confirmed murders and where women have just vanished in that area.
- **High-Risk Lifestyle.**
- **Known to Hitchhike.**
- **Found or last seen near Highways 16, 97 & 5;** known



As the Highway of Tears.

- Victims are believed to have a stranger-to-stranger relationship.
- Many came from indigenous communities, 23 indigenous communities that stretch along the Highway of Tears.



Tamara CHIPMAN
Prince Rupert
2006



Nicole HOAR
Prince George
2002



Lena DERICK
Thornhill
1995



Aletah SAND-AUGER
Prince George
2006



Roxanne THARA
Burns Lake
1994



Alberta WILLIAMS
Prince Rupert
1989



Ramona WILSON
Smithers
1995



Delphine MICAL
Smithers
1990



Morica KADAKS
Terrace
1974



Maureen MOORE
Kamloops
1981



Monica JACK
Merrill
1998



Leah-Anne GERMAINE
Prince George
1994



Michelle PARE
Hudson Hope
1970



Shelley-Anne BASCU
Hinton, AB
1980



Gloria MOODY
Williams Lake
1960



Pamela DARLINGTON
Kamloops
1973



Colleen MACMILLEN
100 Mile House
1974



Gail WEYS
Clearwater
1973



Project E-PANA

MURDERED AND MISSING

The Highway of Tears victims disappeared along B.C. and Alberta highways between 1970 and 2006

1 Gloria Levina Moody, 27

Last seen: Oct. 25, 1969 in Williams Lake



Body found: Oct. 26, 1969 in the bush

2 Micheline Pare, 18

Last seen: July 1970 along Fort St. John/Hudson's Hope highway



Body found: Aug. 8, 1970 near Hudson's Hope

3 Gale Ann Weys, 19

Last seen: Oct. 19, 1973 in Clearwater



Body found: April 6, 1974 off Yellowhead Highway

4 Pamela Darlington, 19

Last seen: Nov. 6, 1973 in Kamloops



Body found: Nov. 7, 1973 in city park

5 Colleen MacMillen, 16

Last seen: Aug. 9, 1974 in Lac La Hache



Body found: Sept. 5, 1974 near 100 Mile House

6 Monica Ignas, 14

Last seen: Dec. 13, 1974 in Thornhill



Body found: Apr. 6, 1975 east of Terrace

7 Monica Jack, 12

Last seen: May 6, 1978 near Nicola Lake



Body found: June 1995 north of Merritt

8 Maureen Mosie, 33

Last seen: May 8, 1981 in Salmon Arm



Body found: May 9, 1981 near Kamloops

9 Shelly-Ann Bacsu, 16

Last seen: May 3, 1983 near Hinton, Alta.



Body found: No

10 Alberta Williams, 24

Last seen: Aug. 26, 1989 in Prince Rupert



Body found: Sept. 6, 1989 on Hwy. 16

11 Delphine Nikal, 16

Last seen: June 14, 1990 along Hwy. 16 in Smithers



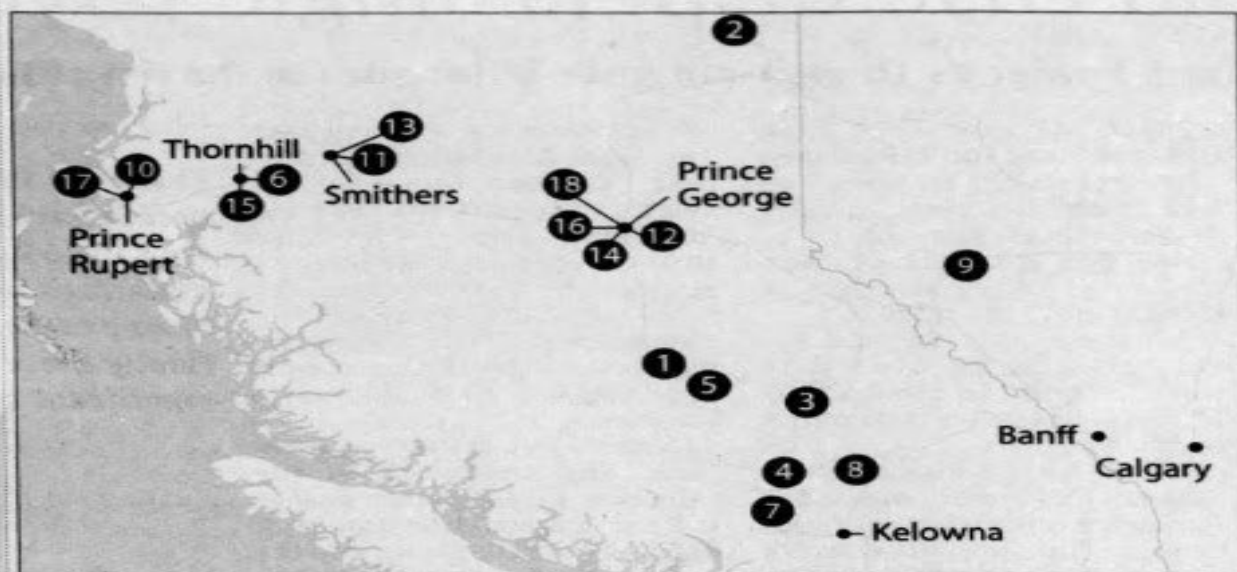
Body found: No

12 Leah Alishia Germaine, 15

Last seen: Dec. 9, 1994 in Prince George



Body found: Dec. 9, 1994 near Hwy. 16



13 Ramona Wilson, 16

Last seen: June 11, 1994 in Smithers



Body found: April 1995 on outskirts of town

14 Roxanne Thiara, 15

Last seen: July 1, 2 or 3, 1994 in Prince George



Body found: Aug. 17, 1994 in Burns Lake

15 Lana Derrick, 19

Last seen: Oct. 7, 1995 in Thornhill



Body found: No

16 Nicole Hoar, 25

Last seen: June 21, 2002 in Prince George



Body found: No

17 Tamara Chipman, 22

Last seen: Sept. 21, 2005 in Prince Rupert



Body found: No

18 Aielah Saric Auger, 14

Last seen: Feb. 2, 2006 in Prince George



Body found: Feb. 10, 2006 on Hwy. 16

EARLY VICTIMS OF THE HIGHWAY OF TEARS



FIRST KILLER LINKED TO THE HIGHWAY OF TEARS DEATH

Jennifer Esson age 15 and Kara Leas age 16 decided to walk home from a friend's home. Hanging out watching movies.



Jennifer and Kara's bodies were discovered by loggers a few weeks later. Police in Lincoln County Oregon stopped Fowler at 4:14am on October 22, 1995 on the day the girls went missing.

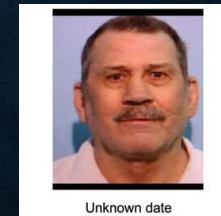
Bobby Jack Fowler was the lead suspect in the 1995 murders of Jennifer Esson age 15 and Kara Leas age 16.

Avoided detection by moving across the country as a construction worker.

Caught in June 1995.

Died of lung cancer in an Oregon State Penitentiary, Salem, OR in 2006.

Source:
<https://abcnews.go.com/TheLaw/story?id=7103702&page=1>



Unknown date

OLDEST DNA LINK IN INTERPOL HISTORY

Victim #3	Victim #4	Victim #5
<p data-bbox="264 511 754 568">Gale Weys</p>  <p data-bbox="364 963 754 1039">Gale Weys</p>	<p data-bbox="1026 511 1480 568">Pamela Darlington</p>  <p data-bbox="1026 963 1358 1039">Pamela Darlington</p>	 <p data-bbox="1786 963 2150 1039">Colleen MacMillen</p>
<p data-bbox="206 1058 835 1093">Source: https://coldcasepg.ca/?p=346</p>		



PROJECT E PANA INVESTIGATIONS AND SUSPECTS

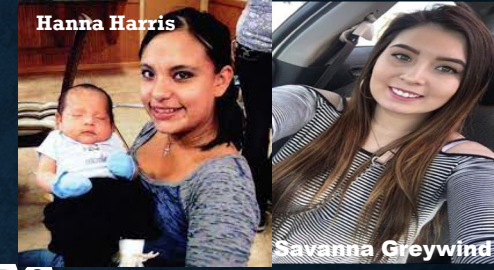
- Multiple killers include:
 - Larry Vu
 - Eric Charles Coss
 - Phillip Fraser
 - Gary Handlen
- Serial Killers suspected include:
 - Brian Peter Arp
 - Edward Isaac
 - Cody Legebokoff





CONTRIBUTING FACTORS TO THE HIGHWAY OF TEARS MURDERED AND MISSING

- Poverty
- Expansive Geography
- Lack of Public Transportation



WHAT SPARKED THE MMI MOVEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES

- Historical and Systemic Roots
 - Colonialism, legal jurisdictional gaps, systemic neglect (Media, law enforcement, poor data collection).
- Twitter hash tag #MMIW by Sheila North Wilson in 2012, a Cree journalist and former Grand Chief of MKO (Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak).
- Red Dress project started by Canadian Artist Jaime Black in 2010.
- Murder of Hanna Harris (2013)
- Murder of Savanna Greywind (2017)
- Grassroots organizing such as the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center & MMIW USA (host marches, vigils and awareness campaigns).
- 2024 Miss Universe Canada, Ashley Callingbull.

HANNA HARRIS



- Hanna left her home reservation of Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation To attend nearby fireworks show in Lame Deer, MT.
- Her body was found 4 days later; she was raped and murdered.
- Hanna's Act, which passed April 21, 2019 and took effect on July 1, 2019.
- Created a missing persons specialist employed by the Department of Justice to help investigate all missing persons cases, no matter the age of the missing person.
- Specialist provides support and resources for the family of a missing person, updates and oversees the database, provides awareness and public outreach, and conducts trainings for law enforcement.



SAVANNA GREYWIND



- In 2017 Savanna Fontaine Greywind- Fargo North Dakota Spirit lake Sioux Tribe was 22 years old when her unborn baby was taken from her body.
- She was murdered and her body was found in the Red River.
- Kayakers found her body in a plastic bag.
- Savanna's mother called the police, however she wasn't taken seriously.
- This loss of our sister brought an outcry in not only her own community but in Native communities across the country.
- The tragic crime inspired Savanna's Act, 10-10-2020 a law designed to provide greater protections and justice for missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

PROCLAMATION BY FORMER PRESIDENT BIDEN

- Former President Joe Biden, [signed a proclamation](#) recognizing Missing or Murdered Indigenous Awareness Day on 5 May 2023.
- Former President Biden stated "My administration understands that Native people, particularly survivors of violence, know best what their communities need to feel safe. That is why we must work hand in hand with Tribal partners through each phase of the justice system to create solutions that are victim-centered, trauma-informed and culturally appropriate,"

FORMER INTERIOR SECRETARY DEB HAALAND

- In Washington, on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons Awareness Day, wearing a red business suit, Interior Secretary Deb Haaland (Laguna Pueblo) draped a red cloth over a chair at the U.S. Department of the Interior, to signify the representation of a lost Indigenous person.
- “People who have had an empty chair at their kitchen tables, loved ones who tirelessly searched for their relatives, service providers who hear the heartbreaking stories of family members of the missing, I want you to know that I see you and I stand with you,” Haaland said.

What sparked the movement: Findings of official inquiries

23

Canada's National Inquiry into MMIWG: In its 2019 final report, the inquiry found "substantial evidence" linking resource extraction projects and associated man camps to higher rates of sexual assault, violence, and sex industry activities against Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people.

U.S. Department of State: A 2015 report detailed how service providers in areas with large-scale oil extraction, such as the Bakken oil fields, have seen sex traffickers exploit women, including Native American women.

Academic research: Multiple academic and advocacy reports have documented the correlation between Man camps, increased violence and sex trafficking in both the U.S. and Canada.

MEANING OF RED HAND ON FACE/ MEANING OF RED DRESS

- Red is the Missing and Murdered Indigenous women movement campaign color.
- Red symbolizes the bloodshed and the life force of missing and murdered indigenous women.
- The Red Handprint is a direct symbol of silenced victims, representing the voices that are not heard and the silence surrounding the crises from law enforcement and the media
- The meaning of the Red Hand is a symbol of violence that affects indigenous women across Canada, the U.S. and beyond.
- By wearing Red we are able to call back the murdered spirit of our indigenous relatives so we are able to lay them to rest.
- Red is known to be the color spirits see. The color red transcends the physical world and calls our ancestors in the spirit world.



MEANING BEHIND THE SYMBOL CONTINUED

Call to Action: Signifies that Native women are rising up to demand justice and awareness for the ongoing crisis.

Symbol of Resistance: Wearing the Red handprint is an act of remembrance, resistance and a demand for justice, highlighting the crisis of violence against our indigenous relatives which include women, girls and two-spirit people (MMIWG2S).

Empty red dresses and empty red ribbon skirts are hung in public places as a memorial and visual remembrance of our missing relatives.



Red Dress

26



SOME OF THE REASONS RELATED TO WHY OUR SISTERS VOICES ARE SILENCED

- **Racism**
- **Institutional racism**
- **Media coverage has been limited**
- **Disappearances date back to late 69/early 70's, task force was not created until 2005**
- **In 2002 Nicole Hoar who was Caucasian received a disproportionate amount of media attention compared to our native sisters.**





STATISTICS

- In 2025 there were 61,657 reported Missing/murdered Indigenous Women. NamUs- National Missing and Unidentified Persons System logged 47 in the Department of Justice Data base. (National Crime Information Center)
- Murder is the 3rd leading cause of death for American Indian/Alaska Native Women. (The Center for Disease Control and Prevention).and they are murdered 10x higher than the national average. (Department of Justice)
- More than 4 in 5 American Indian/Alaska Native women will experience sexual violence in their lifetime. (National Institute of Justice)

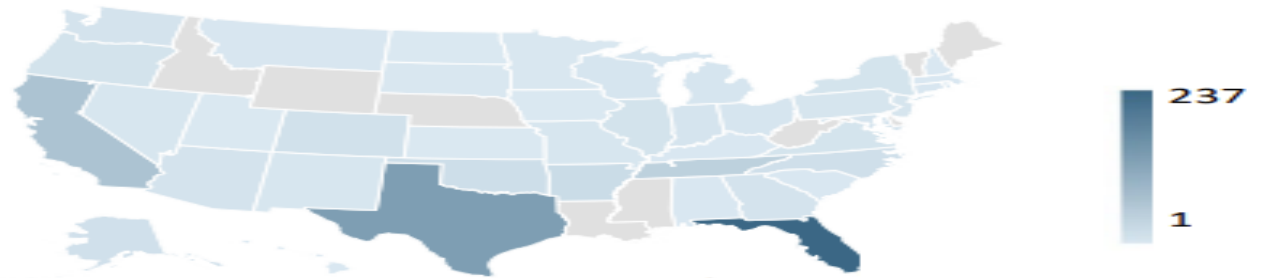


STATISTICS (CONTINUED)

MISSING PERSONS

Florida	237
Texas	135
California	68
Tennessee	44
Arkansas	24
Oklahoma	19
North Carolina	17
Alaska	15
Colorado	14
Oregon	11

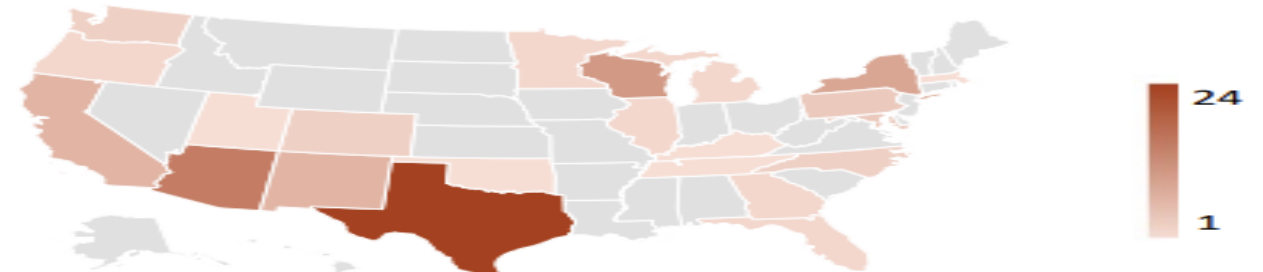
745 Missing Cases from 42 States and Territories



UNIDENTIFIED PERSONS

Texas	24
Arizona	15
Wisconsin	11
New York	9
New Mexico	7
California	7
Maryland	4
Pennsylvania	4
Washington	3
Colorado	3

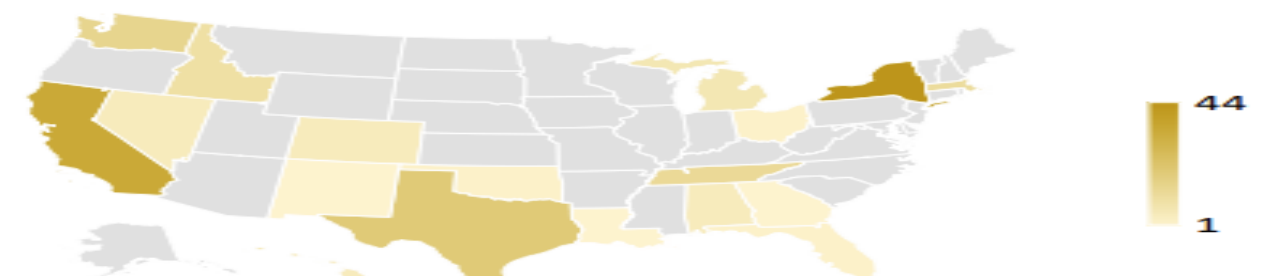
115 Unidentified Cases from 28 States and Territories



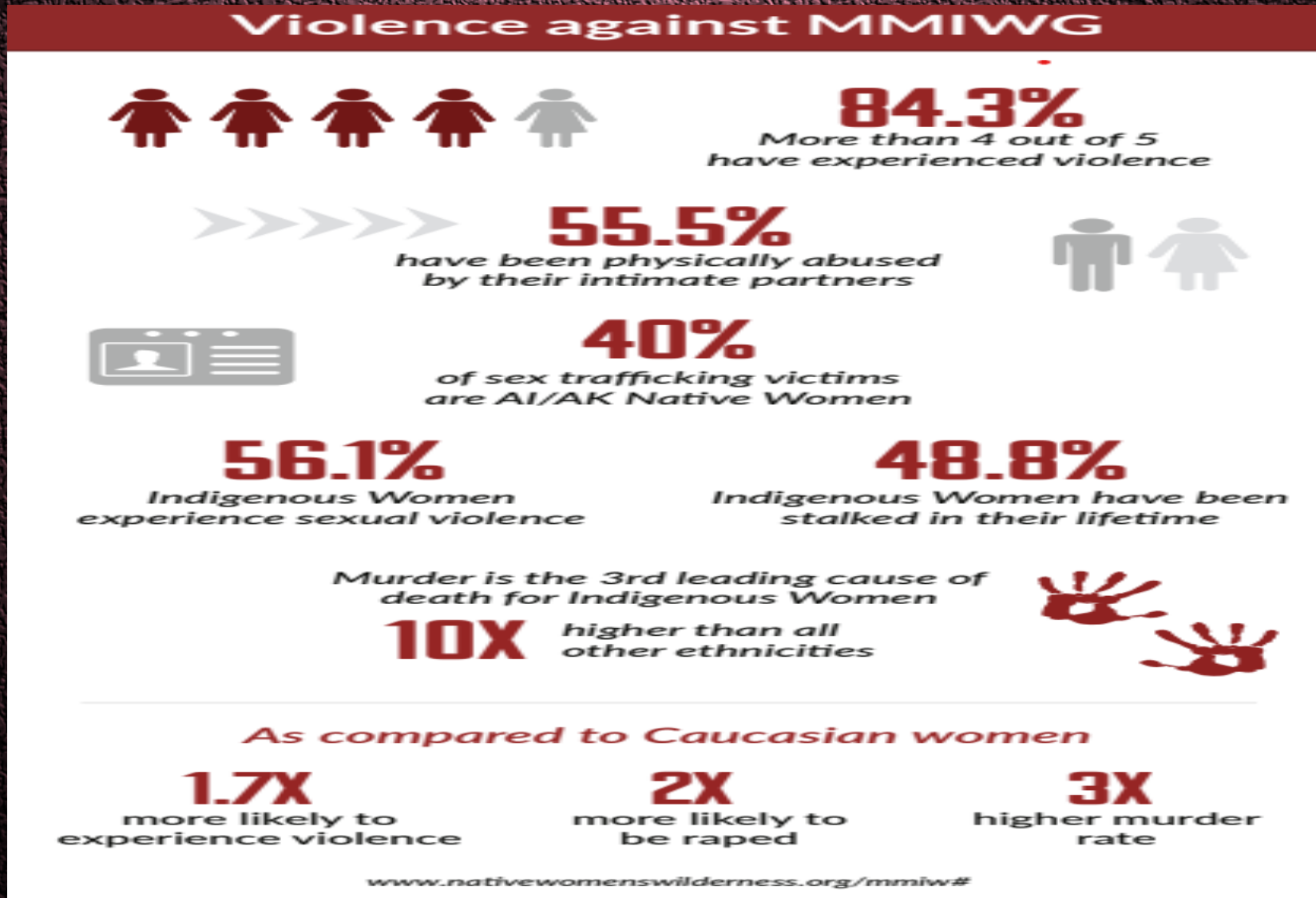
UNCLAIMED PERSONS

New York	44
California	35
Texas	20
Puerto Rico	17
Washington	15
Tennessee	13
Massachusetts	12
Washington, DC	10
Idaho	10
Michigan	7

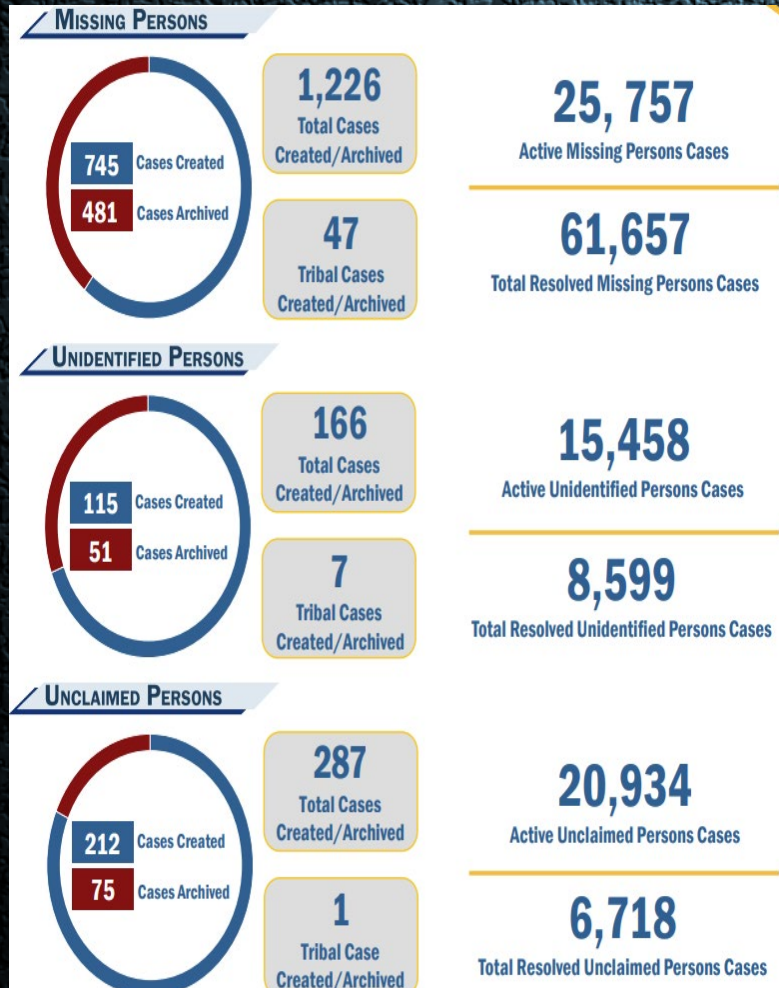
212 Unclaimed Cases from 20 States and Territories



STATISTICS CONTINUED



STATISTICS (CONTINUED)



- It's estimated that 4 out of 5 Native women experience some form of violence in their lifetime.
- Native women also face murder rates more than 10 times the national average.

STATISTICS BY THE URBAN INDIAN HEALTH INSTITUTE

- 506 MMIP cases identified by the Urban Indian Health Institute:
- Number of cases were in the Southwest (157),
- Northern Plains cases (101),
- Pacific Northwest cases (84),
- Alaska cases (52)
- Washington cases (71)
- & California (40)

SOME OF THE REASONS WHY INDIGENOUS WOMEN ARE MISSING AND MURDERED

- Domestic Violence
- Trafficked
- Historical trauma leading to the abuses
- Runaways
- Foster care
- Man camps
- Stalking
- Jurisdiction issues

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

- Through interviews with survivors in the Garden of Truth Study:
- **79%** of the women had been sexually abused as children, by an average of four perpetrators.
- **46%** of the women had been in foster care, with an average of five different foster homes.

According to the Department of Justice – 70% of the violence committed against our Native sisters is perpetrated by non-native individuals.

One in three Native American Women will be raped in their life-time.

Four in five Native American women will experience violence in some form in their lifetime. This tragic normalization of brutality contributes to the ongoing prevalence of Native women going missing or being murdered. Often, due to the fact that tribal leaders have lacked jurisdiction to prosecute non-Natives, these cases never see justice.

- Source: <https://theexodusroad.com/human-trafficking-in-native-american-communities/>

TRAFFICKING



Source: <https://theexodusroad.com/human-trafficking-in-native-american-communities/>

- Trafficking is defined as the use of force, fraud or coercion to obtain some type of labor or commercial sex act, or in which the person performing the Commercial sex act is under 18 years of age.
- Tribes are fractured due to colonization: sent to boarding schools, first generation to be removed from the loving care and support from their families and tribes.
- Disconnection from our native culture, language combined with extreme poverty left native children vulnerable.
- Use tactics such as Romeo, false job offers, vulnerable (homeless, hungry), online, abduction and force, use other individuals who have already been trafficked, healthcare fraud schemes.
- 2023. Native 14-year-old reported missing by grandmother in June 2023. Found in a Marine Barracks on June 28, 2023 at Camp Pendleton.

EFFECTS OF SEX TRAFFICKING ON NATIVE WOMEN



Source: <https://theexodusroad.com/human-trafficking-in-native-american-communities/>

- Trauma: In the 2011 Garden of Truth study, 98% experienced homelessness, which can compound trauma (40% in this study were Native or First Nations).
 - As a result, 65% had been diagnosed with a mental illness, including PTSD. **In fact, the rates of PTSD in this group of women was similar to that of combat veterans.**
 - In the absence of [trauma-informed care](#), those mental wounds can make it deeply difficult for survivors to engage in supportive relationships, rediscover a sense of autonomy and meaning, or hold down safe and stable employment.
- Addiction: Used drugs and/or alcohol to numb themselves; disrupts their support system.
- Health Problems: Over 84% were physically assaulted.
- 72% had suffered a TBI. Other health issues include severe scarring, dental problems, neurological impairment and sexually transmitted infections.

INDICATORS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

- Does the person appear disconnected from family, friends, community organizations, or houses of worship?
- Has a child stopped attending school?
- Has the person had a sudden or dramatic change in behavior?
- Is a juvenile engaged in commercial sex acts?
- Is the person disoriented or confused, or showing signs of mental or physical abuse?
- Does the person have bruises in various stages of healing?
- Is the person fearful, timid, or submissive?
- Does the person show signs of having been denied food, water, sleep, or medical care?
- Is the person often in the company of someone to whom he or she defers?

Or someone who seems to be in control of the situation, e.g., where they go or who they talk to?

- Does the person appear to be coached on what to say?
- Is the person living in unsuitable conditions?
- Does the person lack personal possessions and appear not to have a stable living situation?
- Does the person have freedom of movement? Can the person freely leave where they live? Are there unreasonable security measures?



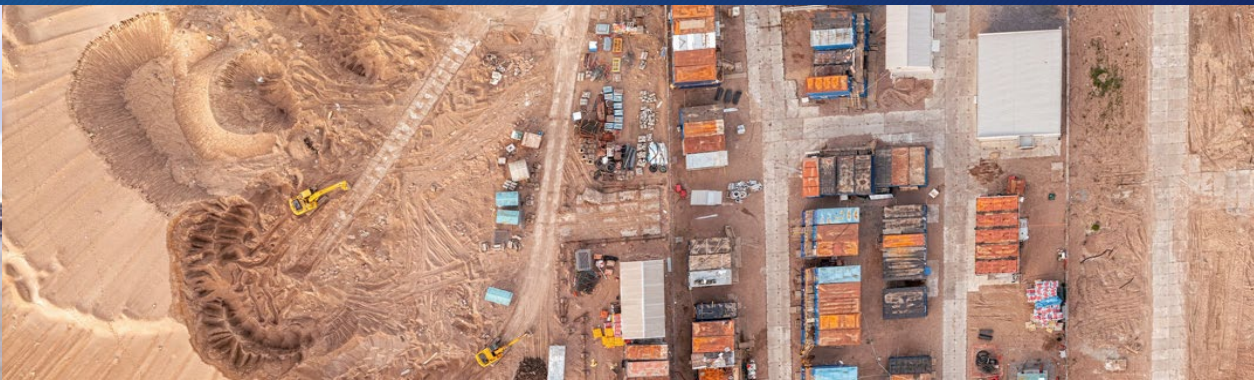
Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/dec/18/native-american-women-trafficked-searchlight-new-mexico>

How man camps increase trafficking risks

38



- **Rapid population increase:** Man camps are often built on or near Indigenous lands. Their large population of transient workers overwhelms the existing infrastructure, including local law enforcement and social services, which are already under-resourced.
- **Social isolation:** Resource extraction sites are often in remote, rural areas, isolating both the workers and nearby Indigenous communities. For workers, this creates an environment with high salaries and little to do after work, which fuels demand for sex trafficking.
- **Perception of impunity:** The crisis is aggravated by legal systems that fail Indigenous communities. A key factor is the historical inability of tribal authorities to prosecute non-Indigenous offenders for crimes committed on tribal lands. This creates a perception that perpetrators will not face justice for violence against Indigenous people.
- **Environmental violence:** The resource extraction that requires man camps is itself a form of "environmental violence". It disrupts Indigenous peoples' connection to their land, which is a life-giving and ancestral bond. The destruction of land and cultural ties is linked to violence against Indigenous people and their communities.



Man Camps

39

- **Influx of transient male workers:** Man camps bring a large, predominantly non-Indigenous, male workforce into rural areas that are often close to or on Indigenous territories. This sudden population surge can overwhelm local law enforcement and social services that are already under-resourced.
- **"Hyper-masculine" culture:** The culture in many work camps can promote violence, isolation, and misogyny. Workers may have little investment in the well-being of the local community, which increases the likelihood of them preying on Indigenous women and girls. **Increased crime rates:**
- An influx of workers, high wages, and easy access to drugs and alcohol can lead to a documented surge in violent crime, including aggravated assault, rape, and sex trafficking.
- **Perception of impunity:** Indigenous women are targeted partly due to a belief among perpetrators that crimes committed against them will not be prosecuted. This is based on historical legal failures and the complex jurisdictional issues in Indian Country



Systemic vulnerabilities exploited by traffickers:

The dangers posed by man camps are compounded by pre-existing conditions that make Indigenous women and girls more vulnerable to exploitation.

40

- **Intergenerational trauma:** The legacy of colonization, forced removal from ancestral lands, and assimilation policies like residential schools has led to intergenerational trauma that increases the likelihood of substance abuse, poverty, and other vulnerabilities.
- **High poverty rates:** Indigenous communities, especially those on remote reservations, experience poverty rates significantly higher than the national average, with limited educational and economic opportunities. This vulnerability is exploited by traffickers who often offer false promises of jobs.
- **History of abuse:** Indigenous women and girls are disproportionately victims of violence, with studies showing they are murdered at rates more than ten times the national average. A high number of sex trafficking victims have histories of sexual abuse, homelessness, or involvement with child welfare services—all risk factors that are tragically overrepresented in Indigenous communities.



Legal and Systemic Factors

41


Jurisdictional gaps: For decades, Indigenous tribes in the United States could not prosecute non-Native offenders for major crimes committed on tribal lands.

While the 2013 reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) expanded tribal authority to prosecute non-Native offenders for some crimes, significant jurisdictional gaps remain.

Erosion of tribal sovereignty: The historical, legal, and social disenfranchisement of Indigenous peoples weakens community bonds and makes Indigenous women and children more vulnerable to exploitation.

Misconduct by workers: Background checks on workers are often not conducted, and convicted sex offenders have been hired for projects near Indigenous communities.

Environmental destruction: Many see a direct link between the exploitation of the land for resource extraction and the exploitation of Indigenous women. This connection is highlighted by land defenders and water protectors who raise awareness of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) crisis at resource development sites.





CALIFORNIA LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES

42

- California has enacted several key pieces of legislation.
- The Feather Alert (AB 1314), signed into law in 2022, created a statewide alert system for missing Indigenous people under suspicious circumstances.
- In 2020, AB 3099 directed the California Department of Justice (DOJ) to enhance collaboration among law enforcement on MMIP cases and provide outreach to victims' families and advocates.
- AB 44, enacted in 2023, provides tribal law enforcement with direct access to the California Law Enforcement Telecommunications System for entering and updating missing persons information.
- AB 2695 (2024) requires law enforcement to report data on crimes on Indian lands to the Attorney General to inform strategies for addressing the MMIP crisis.
- A proposed bill for 2025, SB 4, would establish an MMIP Justice Program within the DOJ to act as a liaison between families, tribes, and law enforcement.





CALIFORNIA INITIATIVES

- California is taking significant legislative, financial, and collaborative actions to address the Missing and Murdered Indigenous People (MMIP) movement.
- The state has funded grants for tribal-led initiatives, enacted laws to improve data collection and reporting, and created specialized alert systems to aid in searching for missing Indigenous individual
- The state has dedicated financial resources through the MMIP Grant Program, established by the 2022 state budget. This program provides grants to federally recognized tribes in California for MMIP-related efforts, administered by the California Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC).
- In July 2024, nearly \$20 million in grants were announced for 18 tribes, supporting prevention, human trafficking response, and communication. An additional \$13.25 million was allocated to the grant program in the state's 2024-2025 budget.



TRIBAL MMIW ADVOCACY In CALIFORNIA

Yurok Tribe:

- Declared a state of emergency to raise awareness about the crisis.
- Hired an MMIP investigator in 2023
- Created a database in partnership with the Sovereign Bodies Institute.

Hoopa Valley Tribe:

- Has an office of Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault/MMIW Prevention Program.

Karuk Tribe:

- Established a Tribal Victim Services Access Center.

Round Valley Indian Tribes:

- State grant to fund their MMIP Awareness and Response Program.



TRIBAL MMIW ADVOCACY In CALIFORNIA (continued)

- **San Manuel Band of Mission Indians:** Partnered with the Sovereign Bodies Institute to create a regional report on MMIP in Central and Southern California.
- **Pala Band of Mission Indians:** Received MMIP grant funding to expand its awareness and prevention programs.
- **Pechanga Band of Indians:** Received grant funding to hire a law enforcement investigator, a human trafficking coordinator, and a social worker to respond to missing persons and human trafficking.
- **Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians:** Utilized funds to create a culturally sensitive village for vulnerable and unhoused tribal members.
- **La Jolla Band of Luiseño Indians:** Utilized grant funding to support their MMIP advocacy efforts.



CALIFORNIA STATEWIDE TRIBAL & NATIVE AMERICAN MMIP EFFORTS

- **California Tribal Families Coalition:** Advocates and protects tribal children and families by advocating for policy initiatives and Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) issues.
- **Strong Hearted Native Women's Coalition Inc.:** A California-based organization that addresses violence against Native women.
- **"Missing in California Indian Country" events:** The California Department of Justice, in partnership with tribal governments, holds regional events to help families report missing persons, get updates on cases, and submit DNA samples through their missing persons DNA program.
- **Annual MMIP Day of Action:** The Yurok Tribe led California's first official Missing and Murdered Indigenous People Day of Action in 2023, a day now commemorated by many tribes across the state.
- **California MMIP Grant Program:** The state established a grant program to fund efforts by federally recognized tribes to identify and solve MMIP cases. Many tribes, including the Coyote Valley Band of Pomo Indians, Greenville Rancheria, and others, have received awards through this program.



Efforts to combat MMIW crises

47

- 2016 Canadian Prime Minister allocated 30 million to help with the investigation into the murders and disappearances in an effort to prevent future crimes
 - Lack of public transport
 - Poverty in indigenous communities
- Between 2019 and 2023 seven more women have gone missing or been murdered along the Highway of Tears.
- Billboard campaign: Honored the missing and murdered indigenous women & raising awareness of traveling alone on the Highway.
- Highway improvements include webcams, bus shelters, highway pullouts, cell phone towers and emergency call access for travelers



MMIW EFFORTS CONTINUED

48

- Understand and hear their stories.
- Do not judge but understand where they came from.
- Appreciate native heritage and native values.
- Support funding initiatives and programs that help to combat this epidemic against our MMI relatives.



Counseling and Support Service Recommendations from the Highway of Tears Symposium

49

- Education and prevention efforts.
- Important to develop crisis response programs and advocates within their own tribal communities.
- Develop communication protocols between law enforcement and victim's families that is culturally sensitive.
- Develop crisis response procedures and crisis/trauma counseling support services. Should no qualified and culturally-sensitive counseling service exist within the family's area, then these services should be funded and developed to avoid the use of fly-in experts.

What Medical providers can do to support the MMI/MMP movement

50

1. Recognize risk factors.
2. Build awareness.
3. Provide trauma-centered care.
4. Boost community trust in local healthcare resources.
5. Develop healthcare content and resources.
6. Create documentation standards.
7. Practice accurate data collection and management.
8. Create clear reporting pathways and policies.

PRACTICAL RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS

- Reconnection with Native traditions
- Homeless shelters
- Domestic abuse shelters
- Trauma-informed mental health counseling and support
- Legal aid
- Equitable job programs
- Increased education and training for law enforcement
- Appropriate collaboration between tribal governments and the U.S. federal government to protect the vulnerable

Resources for when loved ones go missing

52

- Brochure: [When a Loved One Goes Missing - A Quick Reference Guide for What to Do in the First 72 Hours](https://www.niwrc.org/resources/brochure/when-loved-one-goes-missing-quick-reference-guide-what-do-first-72-hours)

<https://www.niwrc.org/resources/brochure/when-loved-one-goes-missing-quick-reference-guide-what-do-first-72-hours>

- Pocket Guide: [When a Loved One Goes Missing - Understanding and Responding to the Crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women](#)
- Workbook: [Missing Indigenous Sisters Tools Initiative](#)

Native American/Resource List

Population	Resource	Contact information
Alaska Native Women	Alaska native Women's Resource Center	Alaska Native Women's Resource Center https://www.facebook.com/aknwrc 1-907-328-3990
Native American/ Alaska Native	United States (U.S.) Department of the Interior U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs	U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Indian Affairs https://www.bia.gov 1-833-560-2065
Native American/ Alaska Native Women	Coalition to Stop Violence Against Native Women	Coalition to Stop Violence Against Native Women https://www.csvanw.org 1-505-243-9199
Native American/Alaska Native	Indian Health Service	https://www.ihs.gov

Resources Continued

POPULATION	RESOURCE	CONTACT INFORMATION
Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-spirited (MMIWG2)	Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) United States of America (USA)	MMIW USA https://mmiwusa.org
Native American Women	National Indigenous Women's Resource Center	National Indigenous Women's Resource Center https://www.niwrc.org 1-406-477-3896
Native Americans	Native Hope	Native Hope https://www.nativehope.org 1-888-999-2108
Native Americans	Victims Services Directory for Trafficking Victims	Victim Services Directory for Trafficking Victims https://www.tribaltrafficking.org/victim-services

RESOURCES CONTINUE

Population	Resource	Contact information
Native Americans	Strong Hearts Native Helpline	Strong Hearts Native Helpline https://strongheartshelpline.org 1-844-7NATIVE (762-8483)
Anyone	National Domestic Violence Hotline	National Domestic Violence Hotline https://www.thehotline.org 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)
Anyone	The Rape Abuse Incest National Network (RAINN)	RAINN https://www.rainn.org 1-800-656-HOPE (4673)
Anyone	The National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs)	(NamUs) NamUS https://namus.nij.ojp.gov

Billboards on the Highway of Tears

56





WE ARE HOPE.
WE ARE STRENGTH.

KEEP HIGHWAY 16 SAFE.



Join our Efforts-May 5th National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

58





SONG FOR MISSING & MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4KMYi-2BMsl>



These images are of 18 women and girls whose deaths and disappearances are part of the RCMP's investigation of the Highway of Tears in British Columbia. The women were either found or last seen near Highway 16 or near Highways 97 and 5. From left to right: (Top row) Aielah Saric Auger, Tamara Chipman, Nicole Hoar, Lana Derrick, Alishia Germaine, Roxanne Thiara; (Middle) Ramona Wilson, Delphine Nikal, Alb Williams, Shelley-Anne Bascu, Maureen Mosie, Monica Jack; (Bottom row) Monica Ignas, Colleen MacMillen Pamela Darlington, Gale Weys, Micheline Pare, Gloria Moody. (Individual photos from Highwayoftears.ca)

THE HIGHWAY OF TEARS MMIW

**Gloria Moody — 27, Murdered near
Williams Lake, October 1969**

**Micheline Pare — 18, Murdered near
Hudson's Hope, July 1970**

**Helen Claire Frost — 15, Missing
from Prince George, October 1970**

**Jean Virginia Sampare — 18, Missing
from Hazelton, October 1971**

**Gayle Weys — 19, Murdered near
Clearwater, October 1973**

**Pamela Darlington — 19, Murdered
at Kamloops, November 1973**

**Coleen MacMillan — 16, Murdered
near Lac La Hache, August 1974**

**Monica Ignas — 15, Murdered near
Terrace, December 1974**

**Mary Jane Hill — 31, Murdered at
Prince Rupert, March 1978**

**Monica Jack — 12, Murdered near Merritt,
May 1978**

**Maureen Mosie — 33, Murdered near
Salmon Arm, May 1981**

**Jean May Kovacs — 36, Murdered at Prince
George, October 1981**

**Roswitha Fuchsbichler — 13, Murdered at
Prince George, November 1981**

**Roswitha Fuchsbichler — 13, Murdered at
Prince George, November 1981**

**Nina Marie Joseph — 15, Murdered at Prince
George, August 1982**

**Shelley-Anne Bascu — 16, Missing from
Hinton, May 1983**

**Alberta Gail Williams — 24, Murdered near
Prince Rupert, August 1989**

**Cecilia Anne Nikal — 15, Missing from
Smithers, October 1989**

**Delphine Anne Nikal — 15,
Missing from Smithers, June
1990**

**Theresa Umphrey — 38,
Murdered near Prince George,
February 1993**

**Marnie Blanchard — 18,
Murdered near Prince George,
March 1993**

**Ramona Lisa Wilson — 16,
Murdered near Smithers, June
1994**

**Roxanne Thiara — 15,
Murdered near Burns Lake,
November 1994**

**Alishia Leah Germaine — 15,
Murdered at Prince George,
November 1994**

THE HIGHWAY OF TEARS MISSING CONTINUED

**Lana Derrick — 19, Missing
from Terrace, October 1995**

**Deena Braem — 16, Murdered
near Quesnel, September 1999**

**Monica McKay — 18,
Murdered at Prince Rupert,
December 1999**

**Nicole Hoar — 24, Missing
from Prince George, June 2002**

**Mary Madeline George — 25,
Missing from Prince George,
July 2005**

**Tamara Lynn Chipman — 22,
Missing from Prince Rupert,
September 2005**

**Aielah Saric Auger — 14,
Murdered at Prince George,
February 2006**

**Beverly Warbick — 20, Missing from
Prince George, June 2007**

**Bonnie Marie Joseph — 32, Missing
from Vanderhoof, September 2007**

**Jill Stacey Stuchenko — 35, Murdered
near Prince George, October 2009**

**Emmalee Rose McLean — 16, Murdered
at Prince Rupert, April 2010**

**Natasha Lynn Montgomery — 23,
Murdered at Prince George, August 2010**

**Cynthia Frances Maas — 35, Murdered
near Prince George, September 2010**

**Loren Dawn Leslie — 15, Murdered near
Prince George, November 2010**

**Madison “Maddy” Scott — 20, Missing
near Vanderhoof, May 2011**

**Immaculate “Mackie” Basil — 26,
Missing near Fort St. James, June
2013**

**Anita Florence Thorne — 49, Missing
from Prince George, November 2014**

**Roberta Marie Sims — 55, Missing
from Prince George, May 2017**

**Frances Brown — 53, Missing near
Smithers, October 2017**

**Chantelle Catherine Simpson — 34,
Suspicious Death at Terrace, July
2018**

**Jessica Patrick — 18, Murdered near
Smithers, September 2018**

**Cynthia Martin — 50, Missing near
Hazelton, December 2018**

**Chelsey Heron Quaw — 29, Murdered
near Vanderhoof, BC, October 2023**



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

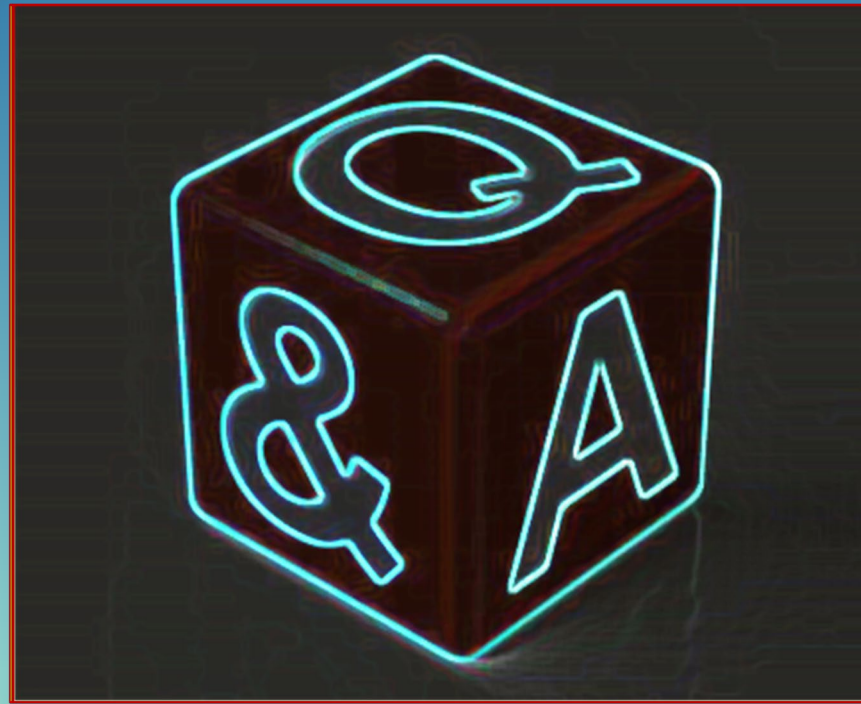
- **Would like to acknowledge and extend our deepest condolences to the victim's families for their loss, grief and sorrow.**
- **Would like to acknowledge that there are many other relatives who have gone missing.**
- **On behalf of all past Highway of Tears victims and in the interest of preventing future victims our MMIW advocacy and awareness campaigns must continue, so their voices may be forever heard.**



“CHI MIIGWECH” THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

Behavioral Health Consultant
California Area Office
Indian Health Services, Hemet, CA
karen.severns@ihs.gov
951-708-4054

ANY QUESTIONS??



REFERENCES

- Brant, Jennifer. "Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada." *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, 8 July 2020, www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/missing-and-murdered-indigenous-women-and-girls-in-canada. Accessed 17 Oct. 2025.
- Committee on Women in Psychology. "Cloak of Invisibility: Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women." Retrieved online from <https://www.apa.org/pi/women/committee/cloak-invisibility> Retrieved on 25 October 2025.
- Cordova, G. & Habegger, B. "It's at our door step, it's in our backyard': How California is addressing the MMIW crises." Retrieved online from <https://www.abc10.com/article/entertainment/television/programs/to-the-point/missing-and-murdered-indigenous-women-jessica-alva-yurok-tribe-native-american/103-6d20512f-0181-4ba7-8427-f075a0bb8630> on 27 October 2025.
- Crawford, Tiffany. "Another Woman Found Dead Near B.C.'s Highway of Tears: 8 Things to Know About the Notorious Stretch of Road." *Vancouver Sun*, 7 Nov. 2023, vancouver.sun.com/news/local-news/what-is-bc-highway-of-tears. Accessed 17 Oct 2025.
- Culbert, Lori. "Victim's Family Still Heartbroken After U.S. Sex Offender Linked to Highway of Tears Slaying." *Ottawa Citizens*, 26 Sept. 2012, ottawacitizen.com/news/Canada/rcmp-believe-there-is-more-than-one-highway-of-tears-killer. Accessed 17 Oct 2025.
- Hall, Neal. "[Police reveal details of E-Pana investigation into 18 female unsolved cases in northern B.C.](#)" *vancouver.sun.com*. Archived from [the original](#) on 1 October 2018. Retrieved online 18 October 2025.

REFERENCES

Leach, T. "Lost but not found: the horrific history of indigenous trafficking." *The Rider News*, 6 Sep 2023, <https://theridernews.com/lost-but-not-found-the-horrific-history-of-indigenous-trafficking/>. Accessed online 11.01.2025.

Levin, Dan. "Dozens of Women Vanish on Canada's Highway of Tears and Most Cases Are Unsolved." *The New York Times*, 24 May 2016, www.nytimes.com/2016/05/25/world/americas/canada-indigenous-women-highway-16.html. Accessed online 9 Oct 2025.

Michalko, Ray. *Obstruction of Justice: The Search for Truth on Canada's Highway of Tears*. Red Deer Press, 2016. Accessed online 18 October 2025.

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women in Canada." *Inter-American Commission on Human Rights*, 21 Dec. 2014, www.oas.org/en/iachr/reports/pdfs/indigenous-women-bc-canada-en.pdf. Accessed online 8 October 2025.

[Natasha Lynn Montgomery – Deceased – Still Missing](#). *unsolvedcanada.ca*. Retrieved 16 October 2025.

[Project E-PANA – Missing Women \(photos\)](#)". *bc.cb.rcmp-grc.gc.ca*. Archived from [the original](#) on 12 November 2020. Retrieved 10 October 2025.

REFERENCES

- Smiley, Matthew, director. Highway of Tears. *Human Rights Watch*, 2014.
www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/highway-of-tears. Accessed 17 Oct 2025.
- Soto, Don. "Highway of Tears." *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, 18 Jan. 2019, Accessed online 7 October 2025.
- Tallman, Rebecca A. (2014). [*Representations of security and insecurity in the Highway of Tears*](#) (MA thesis).
University of Northern British Columbia. [OCLC 1330564799](#)
- Tribal Health. *8 Ways Healthcare Can Support the Missing and Murdered Indigenous People Movement*.
Retrieved online from <https://tribalhealth.com/mmip/> on 27 October 2025.
- Van Sant, Peter. "Highway of Tears." *CBS News*, 28 May 2016, www.cbsnews.com/news/48-hours-explores-the-mysteries-and-murders-along-canadian-highway-of-tears/. Accessed 17 Oct 2025.