

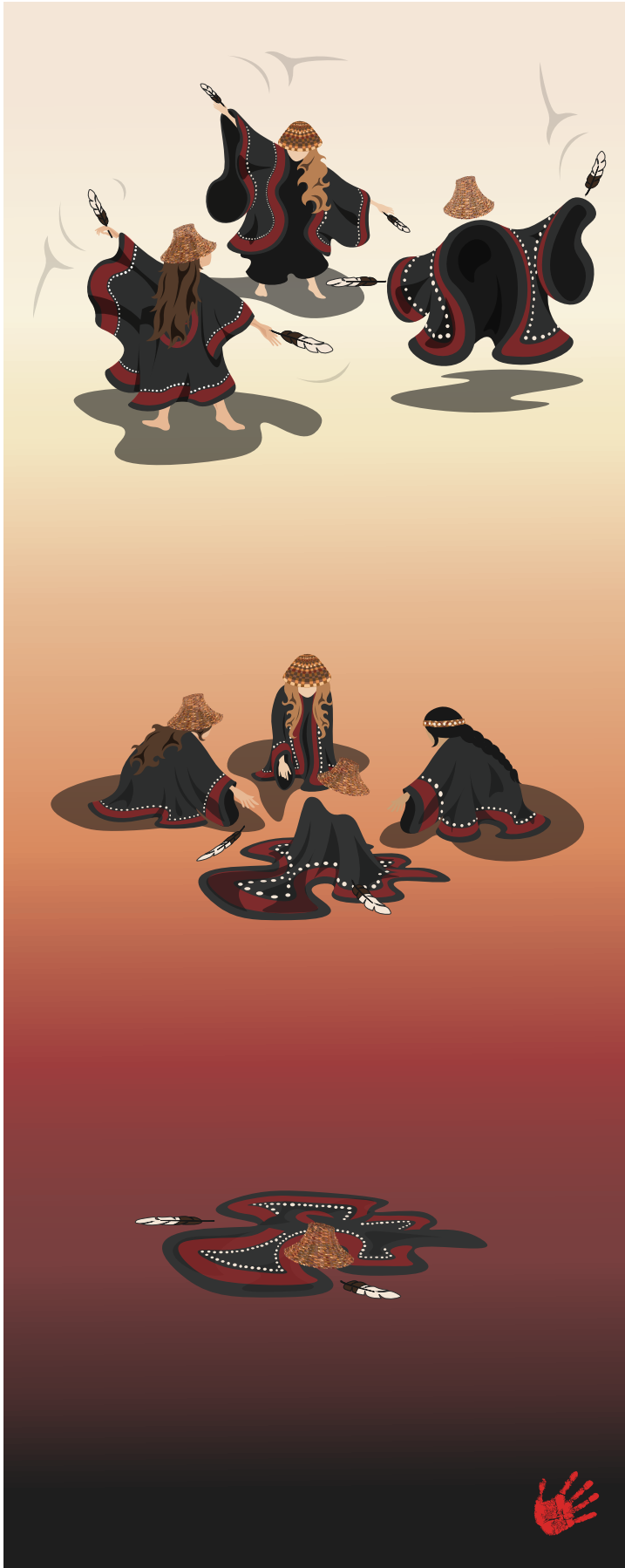


2025 Report of the Washington State Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and People Task Force

**Washington State
Attorney General's Office**



About the Artist



Madison Judkins is a multidisciplinary artist based in Olympia, Washington. At 26, she brings a rich cultural heritage and deep personal passion into every piece she creates as it tells stories and helps her work through her emotions and thoughts. An enrolled member of the Shoalwater Bay Indian Tribe, Madison also descends from the Chinook Indian Nation, the Lower Chehalis Band of Indians and the Nisqually Indian Nation. Her work is grounded in this lineage and inspired by the stories, teachings and traditional knowledge of art forms passed down by her ancestors and community leaders.

This piece is titled "What Dances Without a Form," designed to respond to an art piece created by the late artist Tavi Mae Byrd and the emotions invoked by the question "what can we do to honor those who are missing or have passed on?" Most often we attempt to capture the sorrow and destruction in MMIWP... but how can we heal from it? This piece is a visual prayer for return, revival and remembrance. The regalia pictured on the dancers are some of the traditional pieces that many Coast Salish people wear; button blankets and woven cedar hats. Through the repetition of multiple Coast Salish women in a few Chinookan traditional dance poses, Madison aims to depict how we can celebrate and honor those affected by MMIWP by raising each other up to keep traditions and memories alive.

Letter from Attorney General Nick Brown

June 2, 2025

Dear Washingtonians:

This report is the result of much work, dedication, and commitment from the members of the Washington State Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and People (MMIWP) Task Force. Washington state does not claim to have all the answers about this tragic situation, yet nationally our work leads the way to addressing the MMIWP crisis.

The MMIWP Task Force was established in 2021, and since then, several of the Task Force's 13 unanimous recommendations have been implemented by a variety of elected offices and agencies in Washington state, including:

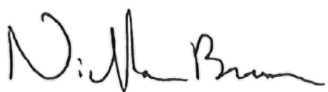
- The MMIWP [Cold Case Unit](#) in the Attorney General's Office;
- An updated [Missing Persons Toolkit](#) specifically designed for Indigenous families and communities whose loved ones are missing, developed with guidance from the MMIWP Task Force's Families Subcommittee
- The Missing Indigenous Person (MIP) Alert, administered by the Washington State Patrol (WSP). Implementation of the MIP alerts by WSP and local law enforcement has led to the recovery of over 80 percent of the more than 150 Indigenous individuals reported missing since July 2022.

The Task Force's impact is not limited to Washington state. Following our lead, Idaho, and California created Missing Indigenous Person Alert systems, and Arizona created a MMIWP task force.

I want to thank the members of the Task Force as well as family and community members who have contributed their time, experience, and care. Their continued leadership and dedication make this critical work possible. We have made tremendous progress and are promoting healing, justice, and accountability for victims, survivors and families.

There is more work to be done. The Attorney General's Office is committed to working towards ending and finding justice for all of those impacted by this generational crisis.

In Solidarity,



Nick Brown

Washington State Attorney General

The two previous MMIWP Task Force reports are available here: [August 2022](#) Report and [December 2023](#) Report.



Letter from the MMIWP Task Force Executive Committee

Dear Community,

As we continue our journey toward justice for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and People (MMIWP), we are honored to share the third interim report from the Washington State MMIWP Task Force. This report builds on the foundations set by the first and second reports and reflects the ongoing efforts, voices, and collective strength of families, survivors, and advocates who continue to fight for justice in the face of deep, historical trauma.

We recognize that the violence experienced by Indigenous communities is not an isolated incident but part of a painful history that dates back centuries. From the forced relocation of tribes to the violence that has persisted since the arrival of settlers, Indigenous people have faced systemic violence that continues today. The MMIWP crisis is the result of these injustices, compounded by historical and institutional barriers that deny us justice and further perpetuate harm.

Over the past year, we have deepened our engagement with families, survivors, professionals, and communities to better understand the unique challenges that Indigenous people face in their fight for justice. Through over 300 meetings, including Subcommittee meetings, family and survivor interviews, surveys, talking circles, and site visits, we have learned more about the lived experiences of those most impacted by the MMIWP crisis. We have heard powerful stories that continue to guide our work, and we are deeply committed to amplifying these voices at every stage of our efforts.

This interim report includes several critical updates and suggestions to move forward in addressing the crisis. This acknowledges the trust and treaty responsibilities the federal government holds toward Indigenous peoples, and we call on them to take action to address this crisis.

A significant milestone we are proud to highlight is the activation of the nation's first MMIWP Cold Case Unit. This unit has been actively reaching out to tribal nations and law enforcement agencies alike to help in investigating and resolving cold cases of MMIWP. Their work represents a critical step toward accountability and justice for the families who have waited far too long for answers.

We also recognize the vital need for continued education and awareness around Indigenous communities, their history, and the systemic issues that have fueled the MMIWP crisis. Through this report, we aim to tell the truth about our communities' history and to bring about a deeper understanding of how we got here and the steps we can all take to create a better future.

We continue to emphasize the importance of collective action, and we remain committed to working alongside all of you—families, survivors, tribal nations, advocates, and community members—to ensure that the voices of those most affected by MMIWP are heard and that justice is finally achieved. Over the coming year, our focus will be to work with law enforcement agencies, county coroners, and medical examiners on collecting Indigenous demographic data and developing best practices.

Looking further ahead, we are committed to researching the benefits of establishing a permanent commission dedicated to the MMIWP crisis. Such a commission would ensure the sustainability of our efforts and provide a long-term framework for addressing the ongoing challenges faced by Indigenous communities in this fight. We believe that a permanent structure would help us maintain momentum and support the critical work of providing justice and healing to our communities for years to come.

Together, we will continue to fight for justice, accountability, and healing. This journey is long, but it is one that will ultimately lead us to justice for all Indigenous people in Washington State. We honor the dreams of our ancestors and are guided by the belief that radical healing and transformation are possible when we stand united in our pursuit of justice.

Thank you for your continued support, your resilience, and your unwavering commitment to this cause.

In solidarity,

Patricia Whitefoot

Sister of Daisy Mae Heath (Yakama Nation/Warm Springs Tribe)
Executive Committee Co-Chair, Washington State MMIWP Task Force

Debra Lekanoff

Representative, 40th Legislative District
Executive Committee Co-Chair, Washington State MMIWP Task Force

Anna Bean

Councilmember, Puyallup Tribe of Indians
Executive Committee Member, Washington State MMIWP Task Force

Abigail Echo-Hawk

Executive Vice President, Seattle Indian Health Board
Director, Urban Indian Health Institute
Executive Committee Member, Washington State MMIWP Task Force

Sam White

Chief of Police, Lower Elwha Police Department
Executive Committee Member, Washington State MMIWP Task Force



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Task Force Members

- **Senator Manka Dhingra**, Data and Research Committee Co-Chair
- **Senator Nikki Torres**
- **Representative Debra Lekanoff**, Executive Committee Co-Chair
- **Vacant**, House of Representatives Republican Caucus Appointee
- **Councilmember Anna Bean**, Puyallup Tribe, Executive Committee Member, Tribes Subcommittee Chair
- **Executive Secretary Charlene Tillequots**, Yakama Nation
- **Councilmember Anita Mitchell**, Muckleshoot Tribe
- **Councilmember Yvonne Cagey**, Lummi Nation
- **Afton Servas**, Kalispel Tribe
- **Abigail Echo-Hawk**, Seattle Indian Health Board, Executive Committee Member and Data and Research Subcommittee Co-Chair
- **Maureen Rosette**, NATIVE Project, Families Subcommittee Co-Chair
- **Laura Platero**, Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board, Community Services and Resources Subcommittee Chair
- **Vicki Lowe**, American Indian Health Commission
- **Patricia Whitefoot**, Community Member, Yakama Nation, Executive Committee Co-Chair
- **Carolyn DeFord**, Community Member, Puyallup Tribe, Families Subcommittee Co-Chair
- **Tim Reynon**, Governor's Office of Indian Affairs
- **Anna Olson**, Washington State Patrol
- **Lucy Smartlowit**, Washington State Attorney General's Office
- **Sam White**, Chief of Police, Lower Elwha Klallam Police Department, Executive Committee Member and Criminal Justice and Public Safety Co-Chair
- **Councilmember Jani Hitchen**, Pierce County Council
- **Councilmember LaTrisha Suggs**, City of Port Angeles
- **Aubony Burns**, Senior Deputy Prosecuting Attorney, King County Prosecutor's Office, Criminal Justice and Public Safety Subcommittee Chair
- **Steven Merrival**, Washington Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers



Executive Summary

This is the third report of the Washington State Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and People (MMIWP) Task Force and provides an update on the progress of the Task Force. This report builds on the foundational work in the first and second Task Force reports, published on August 1, 2022, and December 1, 2023, respectively.

The MMIWP crisis is a result of generations of violence, broken promises and treaties, and assimilationist policy. Existing institutional structures and systems do not sufficiently reflect or honor the experiences or needs of Indigenous people, and therefore cannot promote healing, justice, and accountability.

Since the first meeting in late 2021, the Task Force has forged ahead with conversations about how state, local, and federal governments can protect and support Indigenous people. The Task Force holds the experience of families and survivors at the center of its work, while also holding the truth that systems and governments have never met their needs.

This report, and the accompanying research reports, provide additional data confirming the need for institutional change. The two accompanying reports, prepared by the Wyoming Survey & Analysis Center (WYSAC) at the University of Wyoming, detail the significant research and data analysis completed for the Task Force over the past two years, to better understand the extent of the MMIWP crisis, and the experiences of individuals and families personally impacted by this crisis.

The Legislature continues to invest in the work of the MMIWP Task Force, administered by the AGO. Measurable steps forward are outlined in this report, but they are only the beginning of a much longer journey. Systemic change requires continued accountability, investment, and collaboration across agencies and governments, led by Indigenous families and communities. Centering the voices of families, survivors and Indigenous communities remains critical to this work, as does the Task Force's commitment to long-term healing, justice, and accountability administered by the Attorney General's Office (AGO).

Task Force Approach to the Work

Throughout this reporting period, the Task Force continued to seek solutions to this crisis and honor the experiences, recommendations, and suggestions directly from MMIWP families and survivors and community members who have offered actionable recommendations.

Task Force members and AGO staff are deeply committed to centering these voices and grounding the work in efforts towards accountability, healing, and justice. The Task Force will continue to hold public meetings, Talking Circles, and Subcommittee meetings to ensure that Indigenous people have meaningful and varied opportunities to share their truths, build collective strength, and guide this work. This report offers progress updates and a renewed call to action—urging governments, services providers and communities to work collectively to dismantle the root causes of the MMIWP crisis.



Appreciation

First and foremost, the AGO recognizes the community members who courageously shared their experiences in talking circles, public comment sessions, and Subcommittee meetings. While for reasons of safety and privacy their names are not listed here, their voices, experiences, and insights have undeniably shaped these reports and guided the direction of this important work. Their bravery and their contributions are deeply appreciated.

This report, and the ongoing work detailed within its pages and accompanying reports, is a direct reflection of the collective commitment of survivors, families, and community members whose lives have been touched by this crisis, as well as members of the Task Force, AGO leadership and staff, and the team at the University of Wyoming Survey and Analysis Center (WYSAC). Each person who offered their expertise, shared their story, or stood in solidarity in the pursuit of justice deserves our utmost respect and gratitude. The insights, wisdom, and resilience shared by these individuals advance meaningful change.

As we continue this crucial journey toward systemic change and justice, we must recognize the immense collective strength in Indigenous people, families, and communities. The voices raised in support of this work represent hope, healing, and the promise of a better future for all Indigenous women, girls, men, boys and Two-Spirit/LGBTQ+ people.

To all who contributed to this work, your dedication, care, and commitment will continue to inspire and guide us in our efforts to ensure that the stories and struggles of those impacted by this crisis are heard, honored, and acted upon.

Thank you again for your invaluable contributions. Together, we are making progress and we will continue to demand justice and change to end this crisis.



Terminology

Indigenous, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Native, and Tribal:

The terms “Indigenous,” “American Indian/Alaskan Native” and “Native” are used interchangeably. This is to be respectful of the various ways Native people identify and how various institutions and systems identify them. The term “tribal” refers specifically to members of federally recognized tribes who live on reservations. While tribal membership is a question of political identity, these terms are used throughout criminal legal systems as racial identities, causing undercounting and underreporting of community members.

Family:

This report uses the terms “family” and “family member.” These terms reflect traditional Indigenous kinship systems that also include immediate family members. For Native communities, family crosses both relational and biological boundaries. Each community, and each family, defines themselves on their own terms, in the context of their own cultural beliefs and based on their own experiences and circumstances. We use the terms broadly here to encapsulate how diverse Indigenous communities practice kinship.

MMIW, MMIWP, MMIP, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives (MMIR):

The terms and acronyms used to identify the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous people are often community specific and the subject of extensive discussion. The Task Force utilizes the terminology of missing and murdered Indigenous women and people (MMIWP) to be inclusive of the experiences of violence across the gender spectrum, while also honoring that people who identify as women have been at the forefront of this crisis for centuries. This term honors the matriarchal systems that are traditional to many tribes and communities while highlighting the need to understand the impact of the crisis more broadly.



Summary of Work Assigned to the Task Force

The Task Force is charged with reviewing laws and policies related to MMIWP, including:³

- Assessing the systemic causes of violence against Indigenous people, including historical, social, economic, and institutional factors;
- Identifying ways to improve coordination between federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement and tribes;
- Assessing data tracking and reporting practices related to violence against Indigenous people;
- Recommending improvements for collection and reporting of data by tribal, local, and state law enforcement to more effectively understand and reduce violence against Indigenous people;
- Establishing best practices for improving jurisdictional and data sharing issues on tribal land and urban areas that impact violence against Indigenous people;
- Reviewing prosecutorial trends and practices related to violence against Indigenous people in Washington;
- Identifying barriers to providing more state resources to tracking cases of violence against Indigenous people;
- Identifying barriers to reducing the incidence of violence against Indigenous people;
- Assessing and identifying state resources to support programs and services for people impacted by MMIWP and tribal and urban Indian service providers working with Indigenous people who have experienced violence; and
- Identifying and recommending increased state resources for trainings for law enforcement agencies on culturally attuned best practices for working with Indigenous people and communities.

Task Force Structure and Subcommittees

The Task Force is composed of 23 members, each bringing vital perspectives from tribal government, health, justice and tribal communities. To focus its efforts, the MMIWP Task Force operates through several Subcommittees. Each Subcommittee is guided by community priorities and subject-matter expertise.

Subcommittee meetings allow the Task Force to engage with critical issues, ensure sustained collaboration with impacted communities, and develop actionable, informed recommendations to improve safety for Indigenous people across the Pacific Northwest. These smaller groups meet twice a month and are responsible for the following work of the Task Force.

Families Subcommittee

Co-Chairs: Carolyn DeFord and Maureen Rosette

The Families Subcommittee is the heart of the Task Force's work. Their role is to:

- Provide guidance to the Task Force as a whole;
- Provide for the needs of families and survivors;
- Guide trauma-informed approaches; and
- Provide testimony and lived experience to influence Task Force priorities.

Executive Committee

Co-Chairs: Patricia Whitefoot and Representative Deborah Lekanoff

The Executive Committee is the leadership body of the Task Force. Their role is to:

- Steer and support the overall direction and strategy of the Task Force;
- Ensure accountability to the Task Force's legislative charge and mission; and
- Review deliverables of the Task Force work.

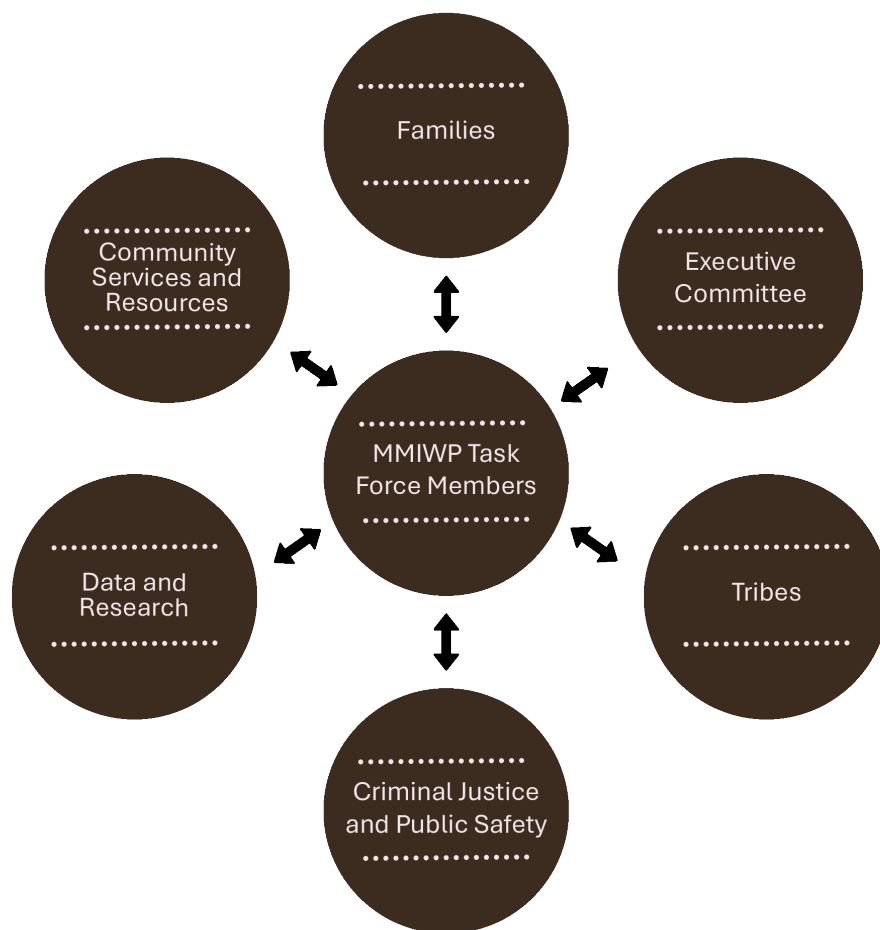


Figure 1. Task Force and Subcommittee Relationship

Tribes Subcommittee

Chair: Councilmember Anna Bean

The Tribes Subcommittee continually seeks to expand engagement with tribal leaders and provides a forum for tribal consultation on the Task Force's work. *Meetings of this Subcommittee are reserved for tribal leaders to honor tribal sovereignty.* Their role is to:

- Ensure that tribal sovereignty is honored and respected consistent with the [Centennial Accord agreement](#);⁴ and the [AGO's Tribal Consent & Consultation Policy](#)
- Guide respectful engagement with tribal nations and culturally responsive protocols; and
- Ensure coordination aligns with tribal priorities and values.

Criminal Justice and Public Safety Subcommittee

Co-Chairs: Aubony Burns and Chief Sam White

The Criminal Justice and Public Safety Subcommittee focuses on three consistent and often overlapping themes through robust discussion in regular meetings: 1) Need for improved communication; 2) Need to strengthen and broaden networks; and 3) Need for additional education.

In these discussions, the Subcommittee:

- Continues to identify barriers and systemic issues that prevent justice for families and communities;
- Look for opportunities for action for investigators and families while developing long-term recommendations; and
- Prioritize listening to family members who generously share their experiences to recognize issues in criminal legal systems to investigate in our meetings.

Community Services and Resources

Chair: Laura Platero

The Community Services and Resources Subcommittee focuses on different regions of Washington State to learn about available resources and current needs. Their role is to:

- Assess community services available to families and survivors;
- Identify gaps in services including victim advocacy, crisis response, and housing; and
- Recommend culturally grounded, community-based programs.

Data and Research Subcommittee

Co-Chairs: Abigail Echo-Hawk and Senator Manka Dhingra

The AGO contracted with the WYSAC at the University of Wyoming to provide data and research support to the Task Force. The Subcommittee, the WYSAC team and AGO staff meet regularly to make decisions about the research collaboratively and to engage the expertise of Task Force members. WYSAC's work is critical to the Task Force. The Data and Research Subcommittee's role is to:

- Assess data sharing, retention, and collection;
- Oversee the Data Team and review work product;
- Identify gaps in data collection including racial misclassification; and
- Provide an overall understanding of the scope of MMIWP in the region.

Overview of WYSAC's Role within the Data and Research Subcommittee

WYSAC plays a foundational role in supporting the Task Force by conducting critical research under the direction of the Data and Research Subcommittee. WYSAC provides comprehensive research and analytical support needed to meet legislative requirements identified in the authorizing proviso, included in the "Summary of Work Assigned to the Task Force" section. Additional information about WYSAC's findings is available in the Findings section on p. 25.

Subcommittee Meetings

The Executive Committee and each Subcommittee meet biweekly. The MMIWP Families, Data and Research, Criminal Justice and Public Safety, and Community Services and Resources Subcommittee meetings are open to the public. As set forth in the bylaws, each member of the Task Force is required to serve on at least one Subcommittee.

For more information about Task Force meetings, Subcommittee meetings or Family Talking Circles, including links to join virtually, please email tribalpolicy@atg.wa.gov or visit: <https://www.atg.wa.gov/washington-state-missing-and-murdered-indigenous-women-and-people-task-force>.



Outreach and Engagement

Community Engagement Highlights

Activity	Total
Total Task Force and Subcommittee Meetings	Over 200
Subcommittee Meetings	88
Total Community Outreach meetings	390
Site Visits	5 (Seattle, Spokane, Sequim, Vancouver/Portland, Olympia)
MMIWP Family Interviews	54 families and survivors interviewed in 5 locations
2024 MMIWP Summit hosted by Lummi Nation	177 people registered 128 people attended in person

Table 1. Community Engagement Activities

Task Force members and AGO staff strive to be community centered in all aspects of this work, and grounded in Indigenous values and practices. The staff at the AGO continually engages with families, survivors, and community-based programs to fully understand how to center the needs of impacted communities in our work and maintain accountability.

The [AGO Tribal Consent and Consultation Policy](#) ensures that tribal consultation occurs at every step of the process when engaging in work that impacts tribes, tribal rights, and tribal land. The AGO Tribal Liaison continually engages with tribes and tribal leaders to ensure the Task Force and the AGO uphold Tribal sovereignty and build stronger government-to-government relationships.

Community centered outreach and engagement involves creating and prioritizing opportunities for consistent community input and engagement. Task Force meetings are subject to the Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA). They include opportunities for public comment, and meetings of the MMIWP Families, Criminal Justice and Public Safety, Community Services and Resources, and Data and Research Subcommittees are open to the public and held virtually to facilitate public participation.

Site Visits

In the 2023 MMIWP Task Force proviso, the Task Force and AGO were directed to: “conduct four site visits in different locations across the state in collaboration with Tribes and Native-led organizations.”

To accomplish this directive, the Task Force and AGO staff partnered with tribes and Native-led organizations to organize and facilitate five regional site visits across Washington State in 2024. These outreach efforts were a key component of the AGO’s broader strategy to ensure community-centered engagement and accountability.

The site visits were designed to create intentional spaces for listening and learning. AGO staff and Task Force members met directly with families impacted by MMIWP, service providers, and tribal and community leaders. The purpose was twofold: to better understand the services currently available in each region and to identify the needs of service providers working to support Indigenous communities.

Between June and September 2024, the Task Force and AGO staff traveled to five locations selected in partnership with Native organizations to maximize accessibility and impact: Spokane, Seattle, Lacey, Vancouver/Portland, and Sequim. During each site visit, AGO staff asked participants a series of guiding questions to better understand the landscape of services and systemic needs related to the MMIWP crisis:

- What services do you provide?
- How is your work related to MMIWP?
- What are the demographics of the people you serve?

- How many people do you serve?
- What are you doing to keep your organization sustainable?
- What do you want policy makers to know about what is needed to do your work?
- What do you want policy makers to know about the MMIWP crisis?

The goal of the questions was to center the expertise of local providers and the lived experiences of families. MMIWP families were also invited to share their experience with the attending service providers, if they felt safe and comfortable doing so.

The AGO staff is currently reviewing and analyzing the information shared at the site visits and annual Summit. This feedback will be instrumental in shaping recommendations and guiding next steps for the AGO's MMIWP initiatives. More information on these forthcoming recommendations will be shared as the work continues.

The Task Force and the AGO are grateful to the Native-led grassroots and organization partners who made these Site Visits possible. Their leadership was essential in co-hosting the events but also in recruiting local service providers, location and meeting space logistics and most importantly, bringing MMIWP families to share their experiences and hear about available resources. The AGO recognizes that this work would not have been possible without their commitment and care.

Key Partners and Collaborators

AGO staff worked with representatives of the following agencies, organizations, service providers, and programs to understand the root causes and scope of the MMIWP crisis, and to understand the landscape of resources and efforts to address the crisis. Note that links below are current as of May 2025, and will not be updated here if they change in the future.

- [Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians \(ATNI\)](#)
- [National Congress of American Indians \(NCAI\)](#)
- [National Indigenous Women's Resource Center \(NIWRC\)](#)
- [Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition \(MIWSAC\)](#)
- [Bureau of Indian Affairs \(BIA\)](#)
- [Washington State Department of Children, Youth & Families \(DCYF\)](#)
- [Washington State Department of Social and Health Services \(DSHS\)](#)
- [Washington State Patrol \(WSP\)](#)
- [Seattle Indian Health Board \(SIHB\)](#)
- [Urban Indian Health Institute \(UIHI\)](#)
- [MMIWP Families](#)
- [The NATIVE Project](#)
- [Innovations Human Trafficking Collaborative \(Innovations HTC\)](#)
- [American Indian Health Commission \(AIHC\)](#)
- [WomenSpirit Coalition](#)
- [Mother Nation](#)
- [Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board \(NPAIHB\)](#)
- [Lummi Nation Victims of Crime](#)
- [Puyallup Tribe Community Domestic Violence Advocacy Program](#)
- [Coeur d'Alene Tribe STOP Violence Program](#)
- [Indigenous Idaho Alliance \(IIA\)](#)
- [Governor's of Indian Affairs \(GOIA\)](#)
- [Bureau of Indian Affairs](#)
- U.S. Attorney's Offices for the Eastern and Western Districts of Washington
- [Washington State Office of Crime Victims Advocacy](#)
- [Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife](#)
- [Washington State Patrol](#)
- [Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission \(WSJTC\)](#)
- [King County Medical Examiner's Office](#)
- [King County Prosecutor's Office](#)

Annual Task Force Summits

The inaugural Task Force Summit was held on December 15-16, 2022, hosted by the Puyallup Tribe at the Emerald Queen Casino in Tacoma, WA.

The 2023 Task Force summit was held on November 1-2, hosted by the Kalispel, Colville, Spokane, and Coeur d'Alene Tribes at the Northern Quest Casino in Airway Heights, WA.

The third annual summit was held September 9-11, 2024, hosted by the Lummi Nation at the Silver Reef Casino Resort in Ferndale, WA.

Video recordings from each summit are available on the Task Force's website at: www.atg.wa.gov/washington-state-missing-and-murdered-indigenous-women-and-people-task-force.

Due to state budget constraints and an ongoing travel freeze for state employees, the MMIWP Task Force does not plan to hold an in-person annual summit in 2025. We will provide a timely update should circumstances change.



Washington State Resources

AGO Homicide Investigation Tracking System (HITS)

Mission/History

HITS' mission is to collect information on violent crime such as homicides and sexual assaults, analyze the data, identify links or connections, and provide information to state, local, tribal and federal law enforcement.

The goal is to facilitate the resolution of violent crimes and speed the apprehension and prosecution of violent criminals. Law enforcement agencies can submit case data directly to the HITS database, or HITS investigators collect the data for entry. Upon entry, new cases are compared against cases in the database to identify potential links. Any potential links are shared with the investigating jurisdictions.

Support of the MMIWP Task Force

HITS actively supports the MMIWP Task Force, particularly through regular participation in the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Subcommittee. Key contributions include:

- Assistance in the formation and staffing of the AGO's MMIWP Cold Case Unit and ongoing collaboration with the Unit;
- Support disseminating Missing Indigenous Person Alerts (MIPA) from the Washington State Patrol Missing and Unidentified Persons Unit (MUPU)—a critical tool in the rapid location and safety of missing Indigenous persons;
- Ongoing investigative support and case strategy consultation; and
- Sharing of relevant HITS data to enhance case development and victim identification.

HITS provided case data to the Task Force and WYSAC Data and Research Team, which they analyzed to identify trends and disparities in MMIWP cases. Additional information about this analysis and results is available in the Findings section on p. 24.

MMIWP Cold Case Unit

As a response to the Task Force’s unanimous recommendation in 2022, Task Force members Representative Debra Lekanoff (D-Anacortes) and Senator Manka Dhingra (D-Redmond) introduced legislation in the 2023 session to create a Cold Case Investigations Unit within the AGO dedicated to MMIWP cases. Their legislation received unanimous support from both chambers of the Legislature and was signed into law by Governor Jay Inslee. The Unit’s work began in late 2022 after staff joined the AGO.

Mission

The MMIWP Cold Case Unit is dedicated to using a culturally attuned, trauma-informed and family and victim centered approach to address the violence experienced by Indigenous people, particularly women. The team is committed to supporting victims, survivors and their families while collaborating with federal, municipal, county and tribal law enforcement agencies to solve cold cases of missing and murdered Indigenous individuals. In doing so, the Unit seeks to expand resources and improve the response to these tragic cases, while ensuring a comprehensive and culturally sensitive approach.

Goals and Objectives

The primary goal of the MMIWP Cold Case Unit is to address the significant gap in resources and attention to cases involving missing and murdered Indigenous people. The Unit will:

- Assist law enforcement agencies, tribes and medical examiners in solving cold cases of missing and murdered Indigenous individuals.
- Use a culturally attuned and trauma-informed approach to ensure that victims, families and communities are treated with dignity, respect, and sensitivity.
- Expand the availability of resources, training, and support for agencies handling these cases.
- Collaborate with federal, municipal, county and tribal law enforcement to improve communication and coordination in solving these cases.

Additional information about the Cold Case Unit staff and operations is available in the Appendix.



The Cold Case Unit aims to support law enforcement agencies in solving missing person and cold homicide cases involving individuals of Indigenous ancestry. The Cold Case Unit investigates a range of serious crimes, including unsolved homicides, sexual and sexually motivated offenses, missing persons cases, and instances involving unidentified remains.



Community members, families or concerned citizens can reach the Cold Case Unit at atg.wa.gov/mmiwp-cold-case-unit or by calling (844) 770-7900 (toll free).

MMIWP Missing Persons Toolkit

In 2022, the Task Force unanimously approved a recommendation directing the AGO to update and re-issue a Missing Persons Toolkit document to include culturally relevant information specific to Indigenous communities and MMIWP. This recommendation was a direct response to the calls from families, Tribal leaders, and community advocates for tools that are trauma-informed, culturally grounded, and responsive to the lived realities of Indigenous communities.

The following year, the Legislature passed [House Bill 1512](#) which directed the AGO to publish and maintain the *Missing Persons Toolkit*. While the legislation specified a dedicated section for Indigenous communities, the AGO, in close collaboration with the Task Force, recognized the need for a standalone Indigenous Persons Toolkit.

In October 2024, the AGO released an updated [Missing Persons Toolkit](#). Simultaneously, the Task Force's Families Subcommittee continued its partnership with the AGO, focusing exclusively on the development of the Indigenous-specific version. Centered on a family-first approach, the Families Subcommittee works to engage, uplift, and support families of missing persons, ensuring that their voices and lived experiences guide the Task Force's efforts.

Over the course of the project, the Families Subcommittee and AGO held four full-day work sessions and numerous focused Subcommittee meetings to shape the content of the toolkit. The Subcommittee acknowledges the unique nature of each missing person case and recognizes that the toolkit may not address every situation. Continued feedback from people who use the toolkit will ensure the resource remains responsive, respectful, and effective.

The [MMIWP Missing Persons Toolkit](#), launched May 10, 2025, stands as a testament to the strength and advocacy of families who have long demanded change. It is a living document developed by community voices to support those navigating some of the most difficult moments of their lives.

Please visit the <https://www.atg.wa.gov/washington-state-missing-and-murdered-indigenous-women-and-people-task-force> for a printable version of the MMIWP Missing Persons Toolkit. Please email the AGO staff at tribalpolicy@atg.wa.gov if you have feedback on the Toolkit.



For more information on the cover art and artist, visit <https://www.atg.wa.gov/washington-state-missing-and-murdered-indigenous-women-and-people-task-force>

Forensic Genetic Genealogy (FGG) Proviso

In 2024, the Washington State Legislature approved a one-time budget proviso (FGG Proviso in Appendix X) to provide funding for the identification of unidentified human remains through enhanced DNA testing. This funding notably included provisions for Forensic Genetic Genealogy (FGG), a method that has been instrumental in solving previously intractable unidentified person cases.

Background

FGG is a vital advancement in efforts to address the MMIWP crisis in Washington State. FGG combines advanced DNA analysis with genealogical research to help identify unknown individuals by locating distant relatives through public DNA databases.

For decades, cold cases involving Indigenous individuals remained unsolved due to jurisdictional complexity, limited resources, or lack of leads. FGG offers a renewed opportunity to resolve these cases by applying modern science to old evidence. Even unidentified remains recovered decades ago may now be linked to families using Single Nucleotide Polymorphism (SNP) testing and genealogical tools.

Across Washington State, many Indigenous families are still waiting for answers about the fate of missing loved ones. In some cases, remains have been recovered but not yet identified. FGG can make connections even when traditional DNA testing—such as Short Tandem Repeat (STR) profiling—has not produced a match. By leveraging shared DNA with distant relatives, FGG enables identification where no close familial DNA samples exist in law enforcement databases.

Forensic Genetic Genealogy (FGG) is a powerful tool that helps investigators identify unknown people—like missing persons or unidentified remains—by using DNA and family trees.

Trained experts can build family trees, working backward from known relatives, to figure out who the unidentified person might be.

Forensic Genetic Genealogy (FGG) and **Investigative Genetic Genealogy (IGG)** are used interchangeably across the nation to describe the process of using SNP DNA testing and public genealogical databases to identify unknown individuals.

While FGG is used throughout this report, readers may see IGG in other publications or contexts.

For many families, identification of a missing loved one offers more than closure, it is a step toward justice. Identifying victims through FGG may also assist in uncovering the circumstances surrounding their deaths, including identifying potential suspects. This can lead to renewed investigations and accountability for crimes long unresolved.

When Indigenous families participate by voluntarily providing DNA samples, they become critical partners in the identification process. These contributions can make the difference in finding a match, especially when remains do not match any existing law enforcement profiles. It is critical that law enforcement include families and tribal communities in outreach and awareness, so that the identification process becomes more inclusive, effective, and community led.

Above all, FGG helps restore dignity to the missing. Identifying someone who has been listed as “unidentified remains” ensures they are not forgotten, and families and communities can perform ceremonies, conduct burials, and honor their loved ones with the respect they deserve.

Proviso Update

The FGG proviso provided funding for expanded DNA testing, enabling the use of both traditional STR analysis and Single Nucleotide Polymorphism (SNP) testing, the latter of which is crucial to the FGG process. In October 2024, the Washington State Patrol (WSP) entered into a contract with Othram, Inc., a nationally recognized forensic laboratory, to conduct FGG testing on unidentified remains across the state. This milestone marked the beginning of a coordinated, state-level effort to resolve cold cases involving Indigenous decedents.

To oversee and guide this initiative, a working group—informally referred to as the DNA Advisory Council—was convened. The council includes representation from multiple agencies and stakeholders from the King County Medical Examiner’s Office, Washington State Patrol Missing and Unidentified Persons Unit and the AGO’s MMIWP Cold Case Unit.

Additional details about the DNA Advisory Council’s work and results are available in the Findings section of this report on p. 26.



Washington State Patrol Coordination on MMIWP

Tribal Liaisons

The Legislature established the Washington State Patrol (WSP) Tribal Liaison Program in 2019 in direct response to the MMIWP crisis in Washington State. The program is supported by two Tribal Liaisons, one serving Eastern Washington and the other serving Western Washington. The Tribal Liaisons foster essential connections between Tribal communities, law enforcement agencies, government partners, and advocacy organizations. Their mission is to strengthen relationships, enhance communication, and ensure that Indigenous perspectives are embedded in public safety responses and investigative processes, to improve case outcomes for Indigenous individuals impacted by violence and disappearance.



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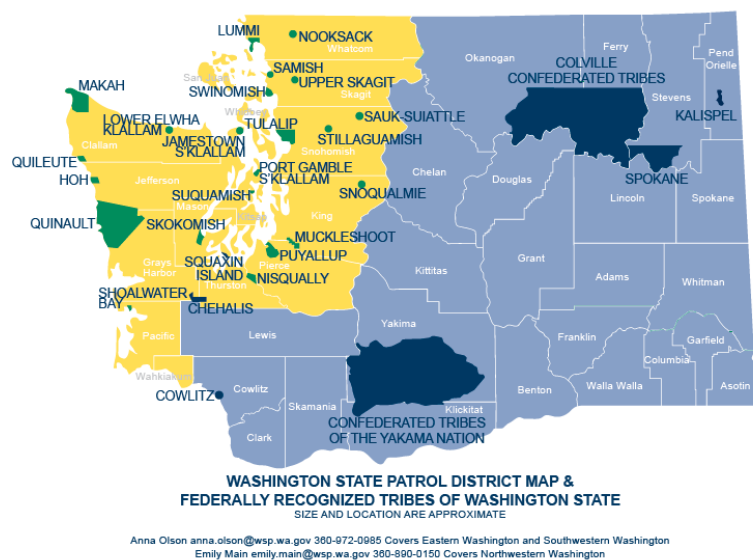


Figure 2. Washington State Patrol Tribal Liaison District Map

Missing and Unidentified Persons Unit

WSP's Missing and Unidentified Persons Unit (MUPU) provides critical assistance in the recovery of missing persons and the identification of human remains. The MUPU staff work with public safety partners and with Washingtonians whose loved ones are missing.

Missing Indigenous Persons List

MUPU publishes a bi-weekly Missing Indigenous Persons (MIP) list, which includes all Indigenous individuals reported missing in Washington and entered into NCIC by a law enforcement agency. Only those with active the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) entries are eligible to appear on the list. Note: racial misclassification in NCIC means that people who should be on the list because they are Native are not included. If someone is not on the list, please contact MUPU or the WA State Tribal Liaison for more assistance.

🔗 Access the list at: <https://wsp.wa.gov/crime/alerts-missing-persons/missing-indigenous-persons/>

Missing Indigenous Persons Alert

In 2022, the state Legislature enacted a MIP Alert (MIPA) law, modeled on the existing silver alert system. The law defines missing Indigenous people as endangered, so that when an Indigenous person is reported missing in Washington, law enforcement can activate a public alert. WSP began to administer the MIPA in July 2022.

The following requirements must be met in order to activate a MIPA:

- The missing person is identified as Indigenous (any age).
- Sufficient information is available to aid in recovery.
(Note: For activation of Department of Transportation Variable Message Signs, vehicle information is required.)
- The case must be reported to law enforcement and include an active NCIC entry.

Families can support a MIPA by advocating consistently for loved ones with law enforcement agencies (LEAs) to ensure their case receives attention and distributing flyers through community networks and social media to expand awareness.

Year	Total MIPAs	Recovered	Still Missing	Deceased
2022	32	29	1	2
2023	52	45	5	2
2024	52	39	12	1
2025 (as of 04/22/2025)	16	11	5	0
Total	152	124	23	5

Table 2. MIPA Summary Report (Source: Washington State Patrol)



Findings

WYSAC Findings

WYSAC provided critical research support for the Task Force and AGO staff, in close collaboration with the Data and Research Subcommittee. Through their work, WYSAC identified key findings and deliverables. A complete accounting of WYSAC's work and conclusions can be found in their separate reports. Their conclusions include:

- Persistent data gaps and misclassification
 - WYSAC identified significant inconsistencies and limitations in available data on MMIWP cases across local, state and federal agencies.
 - Racial misclassification remains a major barrier, often resulting in Indigenous people being recorded as an inaccurate race or “unknown,” which skews public records and hinders identification efforts.
- Underreporting of missing Indigenous people
 - Indigenous individuals are often underrepresented in official databases like the National Crime Information Center (NCIC).
 - Cultural, jurisdictional, and historical factors contribute to why some families may not report missing loved ones to law enforcement, or why reports are not properly recorded.
- Jurisdictional complexity impedes accountability
 - Overlapping jurisdictions between tribal, state and federal law enforcement agencies create confusion, delay and inaction on MMIWP cases.
 - Tribal law enforcement agencies frequently face challenges accessing state and federal data systems, creating additional barriers to coordination and investigation.
- Inadequate case tracking systems
 - Current systems lack mechanisms for centralized and culturally responsive tracking of missing Indigenous persons.
 - Many local jurisdictions do not consistently update missing persons databases, which leads to outdated or incomplete records.
- Disparities in Case Outcomes
 - Indigenous victims are less likely to have their cases resolved, and in many instances, less likely to have their cases fully investigated.
 - Data shows disparities in how quickly missing persons reports are filed and followed up on when the victim is Indigenous compared to other racial groups.

The findings reinforce the Task Force's call for improved data collection methods, strengthened interaction and cooperation, and systemic reforms to ensure Indigenous communities are visible, protected and supported.

HITS Data: Examining Disparities in Homicide Rates

The WYSAC Data and Research Team received and analyzed case information from the HITS database to identify relevant trends, disparities, and outcomes related to MMIWP cases.

Methodology

According to HITS data provided to the Data and Research Team, 11,580 homicides and missing person cases occurred in Washington between approximately 1980 and April 2025. HITS indicated that 470 of the 11,580 cases involved Indigenous victims. Researchers used calculated rates and disproportionality indices to compare cases with Indigenous victims to all other homicide cases.

Researchers calculated homicide rates per 100,000 people for each group using the HITS data alongside population estimates.¹

¹ Researchers used 2024 population estimates from the Washington Office of Financial Management because they are the official figures Washington uses for resource allocation, growth management, and policy planning.

This method accounts for population size differences, making the data directly comparable. To calculate rates, researchers divided the number of victims in each group by their state population, then multiplied by 100,000 to find the homicide rate.

Results

Although American Indian/Alaska Native people make up less than two percent of Washington's population, according to HITS data, they account for about four percent of the state's homicide victims. During the period covered by HITS data, the homicide rate for American Indian/Alaska Native people was 324 per 100,000, **more than two times higher** than the 140.8 per 100,000 rate for non-Native people.

Unsolved Homicide Rates

HITS shared records of unsolved homicide cases. Of all homicide cases in HITS, 22% were classified as unsolved-open cases, while 24% of homicide cases involving Indigenous victims were classified as unsolved-open cases.

During the period covered by HITS data, the unsolved-open homicide rate for American Indian/Alaska Native people was 79.3 per 100,000, **more than two and a half times higher** than the 30.9 per 100,000 rate for non-Native people.

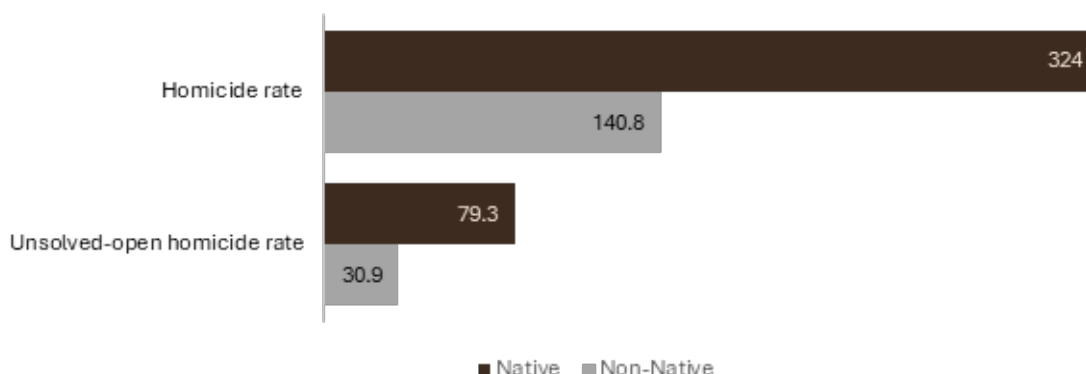


Figure 3. Homicide and Unsolved-Open Homicide Rates per 100,000
(Source: Homicide Investigation Tracking System)

Disproportionality Index

The Data and Research Team also calculated a Disproportionality Index (DI) score for Native and non-Native homicide victims by dividing the percentage of homicide victims from each group by that group's percentage of the state population.

The analysis found that Native homicide victims had a DI score of 2.25, meaning **Native people were over two times more likely to be homicide victims**² compared to their share of the population. In contrast, the DI of 0.98 for all other races suggests their homicide risk was nearly proportional to their population share (2% lower than expected, but very close to parity).

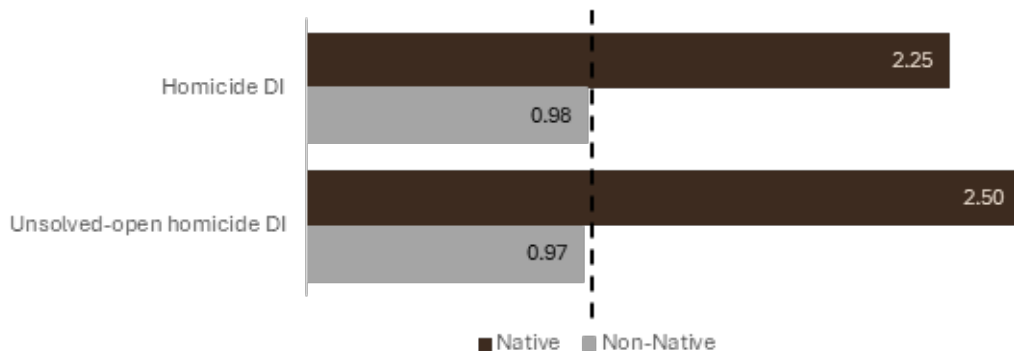
For unsolved-open homicide cases in HITS, Native homicide victims with unsolved-open cases had a DI score of 2.5, meaning **Native people were two and a half times more likely to have unsolved-open homicide cases compared to their share of the population.**³ In contrast, the DI of 0.97 for all other races suggests their risk of unsolved-open homicide cases was nearly proportional to their population share (3% lower than expected, but very close to parity).

² A DI score of 1.00 represents parity, meaning a group's share of missing persons matches its share of the state population. Scores above 1.00 indicate overrepresentation, while scores below 1.00 indicate underrepresentation.

³ A DI score of 1.00 represents parity, meaning a group's share of missing persons matches its share of the state population. Scores above 1.00 indicate overrepresentation, while scores below 1.00 indicate underrepresentation.

Native people are 2 times more likely to be homicide victims

Native people are 2.5 times more likely to have unresolved-open homicide cases



*Figure 4. Homicide DI, All Homicide and Unsolved Homicide.
Note: The dotted line represents a DI score of 1, or parity.
(Source: Homicide Investigation Tracking System)*

The HITS data confirms that AIAN people in Washington State face disproportionately high rates of homicide and unsolved cases compared to other populations. The insights gained from this analysis are not only statistical—they represent lives, families, and communities deeply impacted by violence and systemic gaps. These disparities underscore the urgent need to address this crisis across all levels of government, including with law enforcement partners.

Findings from Implementation of the FGG Proviso

In order to implement the FGG proviso discussed on p. 20, the DNA Advisory Council compiled a master list of 165 unidentified cases statewide. From this, the Council developed a priority list of 38 cases, focusing on decedents who are potentially Indigenous and/or whose deaths may have been homicides.

Testing and Case Progress

From the priority list:

- 3 individuals were identified due to efforts that began prior to disbursement of the state funding.
- 1 case was determined to be archaeological and transferred to the Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation to begin the repatriation process.
- 16 cases were submitted to Othram for SNP testing using the funding proviso (an additional case was submitted using another funding opportunity).
- 15 cases were submitted for STR testing and upload to CODIS* using alternative funding opportunities. Results are pending.

In sum, of the 34 cases from the priority list that remain unidentified, 24 cases now have both STR and SNP profiles. The remaining 10 cases have STR profiles pending.

In addition to the priority cases, proviso funding enabled the testing of 29 additional cases from the master list, for a total of 45 cases. While results are pending for the majority of these submissions, one case (notably not included on the original priority list) yielded a probable identification, and is thought to be a member of an Indigenous community.

• • • • •

CODIS is the acronym for the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS) and is the generic term used to describe the FBI's program of support for criminal justice DNA databases as well as the software used to run these databases.
Source: [CODIS and NDIS Fact Sheet — FBI](#)

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Category	Case Count	Status
Cases Identified (pre-funding)	3	Identified prior to state FGG funding
SNP Testing (Othram, proviso-funded)	16	Including 1 additional case submitted with separate funding
STR Testing (CODIS, alternate funding)	15	Results pending
Archaeological/Transferred	1	Transferred to Dept. of Archaeology for repatriation
Remaining Unidentified (priority list)	34	Of these, 24 have both STR and SNP profiles; 10 have STR pending
Additional Cases Submitted (reallocated funds)	29	Submitted from master list under proviso
Total Cases Submitted under FGG Proviso	45	Includes 16 from priority list and 29 from master list
Probable Identification (not on the original priority list)	1	Believed to be a member of an Indigenous community

Table 3. Summary of Case Progress – FGG Proviso and Priority List

Challenges and Opportunities

Indigenous communities are significantly underrepresented in national DNA databases. This disparity limits the effectiveness of forensic identification efforts and contributes to ongoing gaps in case resolution. The routine collection and submission of family DNA reference samples in all investigations involving missing and murdered individuals is an important step toward addressing this inequity. Greater collaboration with investigators and families is essential to improving Indigenous representation in DNA databases and increasing the likelihood of successful matches.

The initiative faced notable delays due to lengthy contracting processes and the logistical complexity of coordinating sample collection from multiple jurisdictions. These systemic barriers lack simple resolutions.

Unidentified Remains Update

The 2022 Interim Task Force Report featured two unidentified remains case studies to highlight the challenges faced in identifying human remains, particularly those believed to be Indigenous. Parker Doe and Helen Doe's cases underscore the complex challenges in identifying missing individuals, particularly those from Indigenous communities. As noted in the report, systemic issues resulting from colonization, such as limited DNA records and jurisdictional gaps, continue to hinder identification efforts.



Parker Doe (Discovered February 16, 1988 – Yakima County, WA)

Parker Doe's remains were discovered near the town of Parker, Washington, in a remote area near the Yakima River. Though the cause of death was undetermined, law enforcement suspected homicide. Parker Doe is believed to have been a Native American woman in her 20s or 30s, approximately 5 feet tall and 120 pounds, with brown hair bleached lighter in front. She was found wearing a lavender-colored blouse, pants, and "bowling-style" shoes that no local alley could identify.

In 2021, her remains were exhumed for advanced DNA testing, but she remains unidentified. The case illustrates the barriers faced in solving cases involving Native women, especially when familial DNA is unavailable or incomplete.¹⁷

Anyone with information is urged to contact the **Yakima County Coroner's Office at (509) 574-1610 or Cold Case Investigator Mark Keller at (509) 574-2546.**



Helen Doe (Died May 14, 1991 – Interstate 90 Collision)

Helen Doe died in a semi-truck collision near Interstate 90 and remains unidentified. Early descriptions suggested she may have been of Native American descent. Helen Doe had distinguishing features including a possible tattoo, an "S" on her chest, extensive dental work and severe scoliosis that likely caused her to walk with a limp. An updated sketch of Helen Doe was released in 2022.

Anyone with relevant information about Helen Doe is encouraged to contact **Detective Sergeant Stacey Moate directly at Stacey.moate@wsp.wa.gov or (425) 401-7745.** For more information please visit: <https://wsp.wa.gov/2022/01/27/new-sketch-for-an-old-case>.

Next Steps

The MMIWP Task Force moves forward with an enduring commitment to justice, healing and accountability. While these reports outline significant progress since the Task Force first convened in late 2021, fully addressing this crisis requires continued dedication to systemic change and lived experiences of Indigenous communities.

Support from the Washington State Legislature, including continued funding for the Task Force through June 30, 2027, enables ongoing action and implementation of critical recommendations. Legislative recognition, including Senator Claudia Kauffman's [Senate Resolution 8648](#)¹⁸ and U.S. Representative [Dan Newhouse's resolution](#) designating May 5th as National MMIWP Awareness Day,¹⁹ underscores the urgent need for continued attention.

Moving forward, the Task Force will prioritize:

- Considering the compiled recommendations from site visits, family and survivor interviews and WYSAC's work for future legislative session.
- Examining the considerable research products compiled by the WYSAC data and research team, including findings and recommendations to improve data where it is poor quality or simply does not exist, while simultaneously identifying opportunities for better collaboration between and among agencies and service providers.
- Advocating for increased resources to address the conditions that place Indigenous people at heightened risk—including poverty, domestic violence, housing instability and lack of culturally responsive and trauma-informed support services. This will include additional research on Two-Spirit/LGBTQ+, men and boys, and human trafficking data.
- Increasing transparency and community with families and tribal communities and enhancing communication pathways to ensure that families have access to information, support, and are treated with respect, dignity and care throughout investigations.
- Seeking opportunities to collaborate with neighboring states and regional partners for coordination and collaboration, especially where federal engagement is limited or lacking.
- Support the Cold Case Unit in addressing unsolved MMIWP cases while encouraging sustained investment in their efforts towards justice and healing.
- Supporting policies and funding initiatives that ensure tribal law enforcement agencies have resources equivalent to non-Tribal agencies, including training, staffing and technology.

The work ahead is complex and ongoing. The MMIWP Task Force remains resolute in its mission to transform systems to ensure safety, accountability and healing for all Indigenous people in Washington State.

The AGO recognizes that the current lack of accurate, disaggregated data on American Indian and Alaska Native people represents a crisis of accountability—what many Tribal leaders and researchers identify as *data genocide*. The exclusion or misclassification of Indigenous individuals in federal and state data systems undermines our collective ability to fully understand and address the MMIWP crisis. Without complete data, policymakers cannot craft informed legislation, allocate resources effectively, or measure the true scope of violence impacting Native communities.

Compounding this issue are recent reductions in federal funding to tribal governments and Native-led service providers. These cuts significantly limit the ability of tribal nations to deliver core programs—such as victim services, housing, health care, and legal advocacy—that are critical to both preventing and responding to MMIWP cases. These services are not supplemental—they are essential, life-saving systems of support.

Considering these challenges, it is imperative that policy makers act with urgency and in partnership with tribal governments. This includes ensuring accurate data practices, restoring and increasing federal and state funding for tribal programs, and centering Indigenous leadership in all MMIWP-related initiatives. We have both a legal and moral obligation to uphold Tribal sovereignty, invest in Tribal capacity, and ensure that Indigenous communities are no longer rendered invisible in data or in public policy.

Appendix

- MMIWP Cold Case Unit Staff and Processes
- Updates on Task Force Recommendations
- MMIWP Updates from Other States

MMIWP Cold Case Unit Staff and Processes

Community members, families or concerned citizens can reach the Cold Case Unit at atg.wa.gov/mmiwp-cold-case-unit or by calling (844) 770-7900 (toll free).

Cold Case Unit Staff

The Cold Case Unit (CCU) is part of the Attorney General's Office Criminal Justice Division. The Cold Case Unit staff consists of four MMIWP Senior Investigators/Analysts⁽²⁾ and one MMIWP Victim Advocate/Case Navigator⁽³⁾, who are overseen by the MMIWP Chief Investigator/Analyst Supervisor⁽¹⁾ (See Organizational Chart below).²⁰ Each Cold Case Investigator has been assigned a region to be the designated contact for that area.

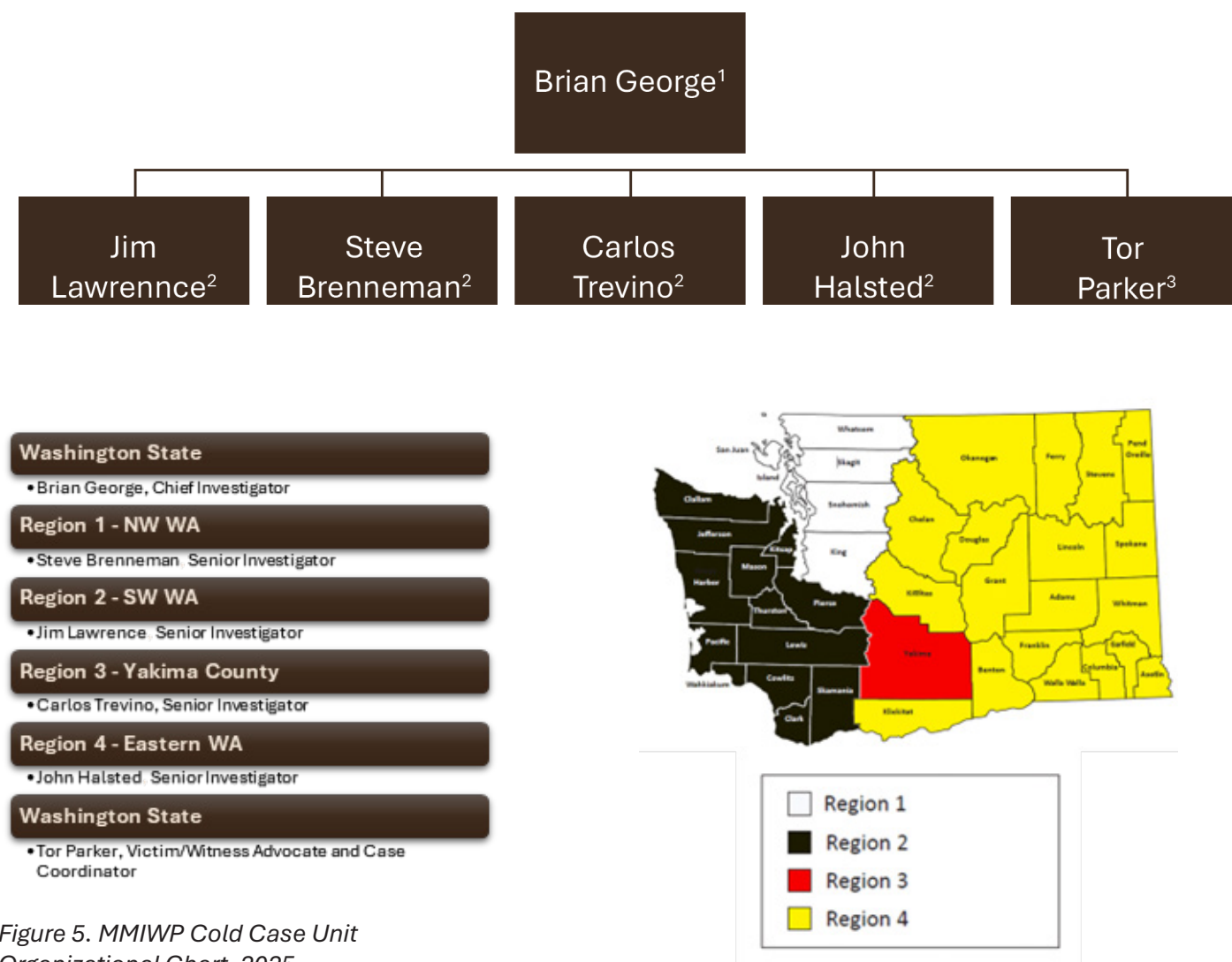


Figure 5. MMIWP Cold Case Unit Organizational Chart, 2025.

The Role of Family Case Navigator

The Family Case Navigator serves as a case coordinator and advocate for victims, victim families, and witnesses impacted by cases under investigation by the Cold Case Unit. This role provides critical support through information sharing, case status updates, referrals, short-term advocacy, and coordination of social services.

As a representative of the AGO, the Family Case Navigator explains the function and scope of the MMIWP Cold Case Unit and the Criminal Justice Division. In individual cases, the Navigator uses culturally compassionate approaches to offer emotional support and advocacy to victims and their non-offending family members. This includes working with a wide range of individuals—children, elders, refugees, those with disabilities or addictions, and individuals who are unhoused or underhoused.

The role requires a trauma-informed and intersectional approach, especially when supporting victims who may be hesitant to engage with law enforcement and the investigative process. Building trust through supportive, human-centered relationships, the Navigator helps resolve concerns and ensures families and survivors feel heard and supported throughout each stage of the investigation.

Cold Case Unit Intake Process

The Cold Case Unit established a formal intake process to ensure effective collaboration with families, communities, and law enforcement agencies. This process prioritizes transparency, coordination, and culturally responsive engagement in support of unresolved cases involving Indigenous persons.

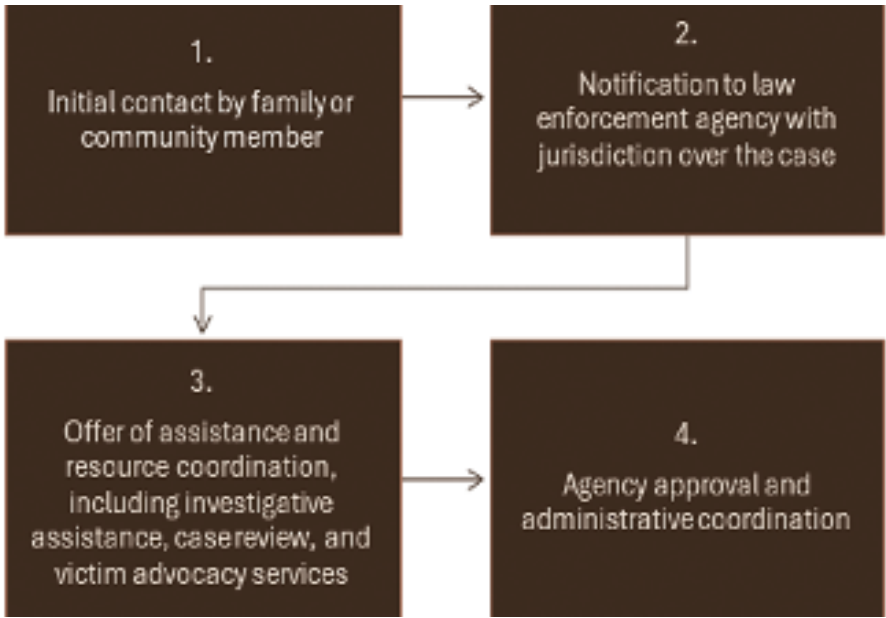


Figure 5. Flowchart of the MMIWP Cold Case Unit Intake Process



Administrative Coordination and Case Work

In accordance with the Revised Code of Washington ([RCW 43.10.320](#)), the Cold Case Unit may provide investigative support upon the request and approval of the primary law enforcement agency with jurisdiction over the case. The Cold Case Unit works closely with the primary law enforcement agency to facilitate this process and ensure alignment with statewide law enforcement protocols.

Case Intake and Review Process

Once a case is formally accepted, the following administrative and investigative workflow is initiated:

1. Approval by Primary Law Enforcement Agency

The intake process begins when the law enforcement agency with primary jurisdiction submits a formal request and receives internal leadership approval to engage Cold Case Unit services. This process is aligned with intergovernmental cooperation standards, consistent with the Tribal Law and Order Act of 2010.²¹

Engagement with Tribal authorities and law enforcement ensures compliance with Executive Order 14053, which emphasizes government-to-government consultation with Tribal Nations.²² The signed authorization process to proceed with case review, reflects federal recommendations for interagency collaboration outlined in the U.S. Department of Justice's National Strategy to Address MMIW.²³

2. Transfer and Organization of Case File

The Cold Case Unit receives a digital copy of the full case file from the primary law enforcement agency. The materials are reviewed for completeness and organized into the standardized MMIWP file system to ensure consistency and ease of analysis.

All files are managed following the evidence and information-sharing standards laid out by the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Violent Criminal Apprehension Program (ViCAP)²⁴ and the Washington State Patrol Missing and Unidentified Persons Unit guidelines.²⁵

The Unit incorporates respectful handling of sensitive materials, guided by cultural best practices from Urban Indian Health Institute (UIHI)²⁶ and Sovereign Bodies Institute (SBI).²⁷

3. Independent Case Review

A comprehensive and independent case review is conducted by the Cold Case Unit Team, including examination of investigative actions taken to date, evaluation of evidentiary materials, witness statements, jurisdictional records and victim-related information.

Reviews are also conducted using a trauma-informed lens, consistent with guidance from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) on trauma-informed approaches in law enforcement.²⁸ Victimology assessments incorporate cultural, familial, and historical contexts, following frameworks outlined in Operation Lady Justice Task Force reports.²⁹ Case reviews are intentionally independent from prior conclusions, following cold case best practices outlined by the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP).³⁰

4. Lead Investigator Report Development

Following the review, the assigned Lead Investigator compiles a structured report which includes:

- A case summary
- A detailed timeline of events
- A narrative of investigative actions, gaps, and findings
- Suggested family and tribal engagement strategies

The report is prepared with sensitivity to privacy and cultural considerations and shared internally for peer review.

5. Team Strategy Session

The Cold Case Unit convenes to assess the case. The Strategy session includes a multidisciplinary team model as recommended by the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) and the Not Invisible Act Commission:³¹

- Discussion of investigative viability;
- Prioritization of actionable leads;
- Resource and jurisdictional considerations; and
- Recommendations for community engagement, including updates to families and Tribal partners.

The team develops a culturally responsive investigative strategy balancing justice goals with victim advocacy. Cultural responsiveness and inclusion of community and family advocates is guided by models developed in Tribal-Federal partnerships.³²

6. Delivery of Final Report and Recommendations

Final reports are developed and delivered with cultural, legal, and jurisdictional sensitivity. The Final Case Review Report includes:

- Case summary and findings.
- Investigative recommendations.
- Forensic testing proposals.
- Coordination strategies with Tribal and local law enforcement.

The Cold Case Unit offers continued technical assistance and investigative support upon request.

Field Investigations and Interagency Collaboration

In addition to comprehensive case reviews and coordination with law enforcement, the MMIWP Cold Case Unit actively supports ongoing investigations through direct field engagement. This includes working alongside partner agencies and communities to develop leads, gather evidence, and support families impacted by unresolved cases.

These field activities are essential to solving cases and strengthening community trust. However, this work demands consistent funding and logistical resources. Travel to remote or rural areas—often far from cities—is frequently required to meet with families, conduct in-person interviews, and build meaningful relationships within tribal and local communities. Each investigative trip typically requires at least two investigators for safety, thoroughness, and cultural sensitivity.

Sustained investment is necessary to support these travel-intensive operations, which are central to the Unit's mission of delivering justice for Indigenous victims and their families. Without adequate funding, the ability to follow up on leads, maintain direct community engagement, and conduct trauma-informed investigations may be significantly constrained.

Commitment to Accountability and Healing

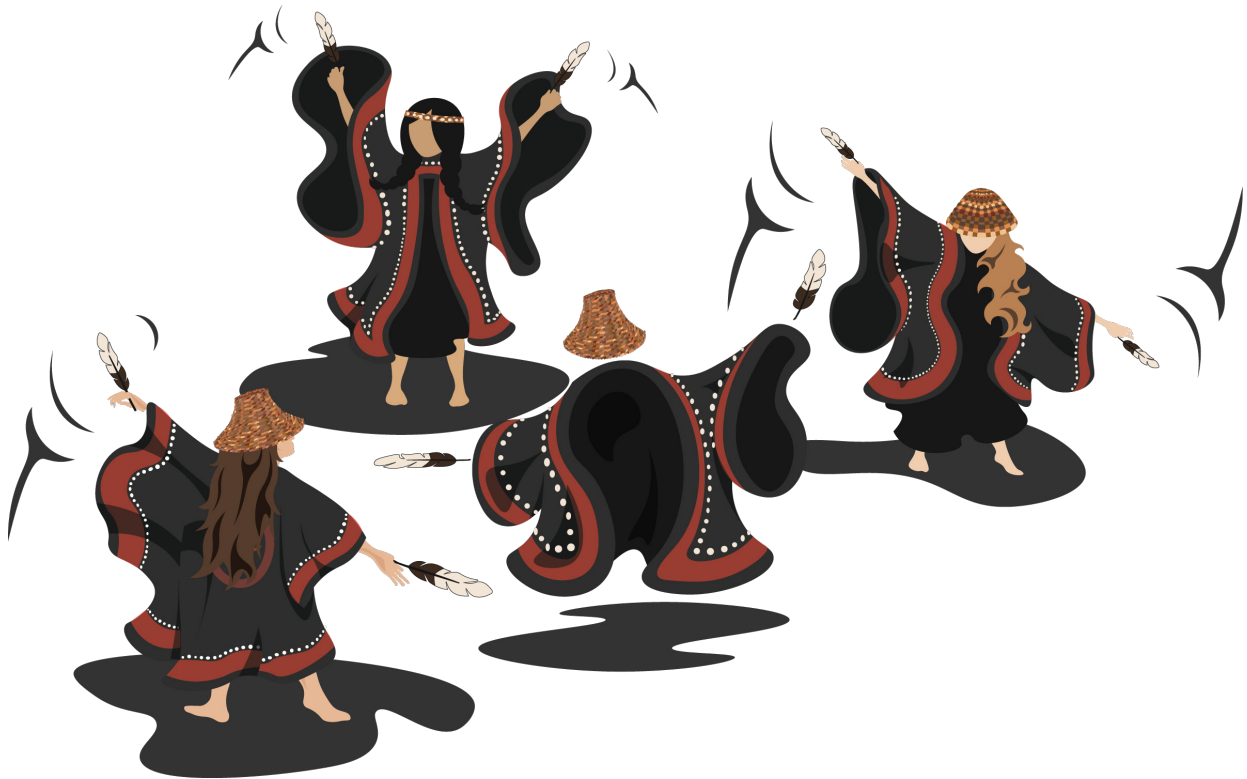
At all stages, the MMIWP Cold Case Unit works with the understanding that each case impacts not only an individual but an entire community. By partnering with Tribal Nations, centering the voices of families, and applying trauma-informed principles, the Unit aims to restore trust and pursue justice with dignity and care building on frameworks like the MMIW Family and Survivor Input Toolkit³³ and Department of Interior MMIWP Community Engagement Strategies.³⁴

Case Status	Number of Cases
Active Investigations	23
Closed – Misidentification / Missing Located	1
Missing Persons Located	17

Table 4. Cold Case Unit Case Statuses

Agency Type	Number of Cases
State Police (Alaska)	1
County Sheriff's Offices	5
City Police Departments	12
Tribal Police Departments	1

Table 5. Cold Case Unit Case Load by Agency Type



Updates on Task Force Recommendations

2022 Recommendations

1. *Extend the MMIWP Task Force timeline through June 30, 2025.*

In the 2023 session, the Legislature passed an updated proviso for the Task Force in the FY 2023-2025 Operating Budget. In the 2025 legislative session, the enacted FY 2025-2017 Operating Budget includes funding so that the AGO can continue to support the Task Force through FY 2026 and FY 2027.

2. *The Task Force data and research team will pay special attention to the link between gender and violence.*

Dr. Emily Grant and Laurel Wimbish, researchers at the Wyoming Survey and Analysis Center (WYSAC), the AGO's contracted data and research team, incorporated this consideration into their work from the beginning. Their final reports include analysis and discussion of the link between gender and violence.

3. *All law enforcement agencies should expand their collaboration and coordination with federal, state, county, local, and tribal social and health services. The Task Force shall develop best practices for law enforcement agencies and for social and health services to improve this collaboration and coordination.*

This work is ongoing, and more work is needed to develop best practices. The Criminal Justice and Public Safety Subcommittee continues to identify opportunities for improved communication and collaboration between law enforcement agencies and service providers.

4. *Community service and resource programs should utilize inclusive language that reflects the experiences of MMIWP families and survivors.*

This work is ongoing. The Community Services and Resources Subcommittee continues to assess services and resources for families and survivors to identify gaps and opportunities.

5. *The Legislature should establish and fully fund a Cold Case Investigation Unit within the Attorney General's Office with focus on MMIWP cold cases.*

The Legislature acted upon this recommendation in the 2023 session, and the MMIWP Cold Case Unit launched in late 2023.

6. *All law enforcement agencies should identify and implement strategies and practices to improve communication and transparency with family members in MMIWP cases.*

The Criminal Justice and Public Safety Subcommittee continues to have productive discussions about measures to improve responses to MMIWP cases and coordinate. This work is ongoing.

7. *Require all law enforcement agencies to use the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs).*

In Washington State, [RCW 68.50.320](#) requires law enforcement and county coroners and medical examiners to input missing person's cases into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) within 30 days or anytime foul play is suspected. The Urban Indian Health Institute (UIHI) recommended expanding this requirement to include NamUs.³⁹ Furthermore, community members and advocates repeatedly requested in Subcommittee meetings that law enforcement consistently use national databases such as NCIC and NamUs because this can aid in the immediate sharing of information across jurisdictions. By utilizing existing systems, taking complete reports, and sharing information effectively, law enforcement increases their effectiveness, and signals to the community that these cases are a priority.

Currently, 12 states⁴⁰ have legislation that supports the mandatory use of NamUs by law enforcement, medical examiners or both.

State	Law enforcement required to use	Coroner or medical examiner required to use
Arizona	X	X
Arkansas	X	
Illinois	X	X
Michigan	X	
New Mexico	X	
New York	X	X
North Carolina	X	
Oklahoma	X	X
Pennsylvania	X	X
Tennessee	X	X
Texas	X	X
West Virginia	X	X

Table 7. Required NamUs use by law enforcement/coroner/medical examiner by State.

During the 2023 legislative session, [SB 5477](#), sponsored by Task Force member Senator Nikki Torres, included language to amend RCW 68.50.320 to require the use of NamUs in addition to NCIC.⁴¹ This legislation did not pass.

However, in December 2022, President Biden signed the Help Find the Missing Act, also known as “Billy’s Law.”⁴² This law requires all data entered into the NCIC database to be automatically electronically transmitted to NamUs for case validation and data reconciliation, so the public can access information about cases. Billy’s Law effectively completes this recommendation.

8. *The Attorney General’s Office shall update and re-issue the Missing Person’s Resource.*

The AGO released a broad update of the Missing Person’s Toolkit in 2024 for a general audience.⁴³ In May 2025, the AGO released an [updated version of the Toolkit](#) specifically for Indigenous families and communities.⁴⁴

9. *Public agencies should consider adopting policies to waive or reduce fees for parks, permitting fees, and other costs, and reduce administrative burdens associated with hosting large events such as MMIWP marches, rallies, vigils, and memorials.*

More work needs to be done to implement this recommendation. The Task Force will explore opportunities to support community searches and awareness events and will seek opportunities to elevate this recommendation.

10. *The Task Force will continue to provide consultation to federally-recognized tribes in support of sovereignty and self-determination.*

The Task Force, including AGO staff, continues to operate in accordance with the [AGO’s Tribal Consent and Consultation Policy](#).

2023 Recommendations

1. *Increase state funding for DNA testing and forensic genetic genealogy of unidentified remains through the Death Investigations Account administered by the Forensic Investigation Council.*

The Washington State Legislature included \$500,000 in the 2023-2025 Supplemental Operating Budget “solely for financial assistance to local jurisdictions to conduct DNA testing for unidentified remains, and for those remains that failed to yield a CODIS match, for forensic genetic genealogy DNA testing to be conducted.” Additional information about the cases in which this funding was utilized in the FGG Proviso Update section on page 20.

2. *Establish a work group co-led by the AGO, Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs, and two Tribal Epidemiology Centers to develop best practices for Indigenous demographic data collection by law enforcement, coroners and medical examiners.*

Although the Washington State Legislature provided additional funding to the AGO in FY 2025 specifically for this purpose, the AGO did not have capacity to complete this body of work and did not utilize the funding. The Urban Indian Health Institute (UIHI) produced similar best practices, and the AGO staff will work with UIHI and law enforcement partners to produce these best practices.

3. *The U.S. Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs should establish a nationwide Missing Indigenous Persons Alert.*

In August 2024, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) launched a missing endangered person alert code, similar to the nationwide Amber Alert system. While the alert code is not exclusively for missing Indigenous people, the FCC noted that the alert code could be particularly beneficial to Tribal communities.⁴⁵ The FCC's Office of Native Affairs and Policy held virtual and in-person Tribal consultations to gather input from Tribal communities before voting to establish the new alert code.⁴⁶



MMIWP Updates From Other States

2024 State Updates to Address the MMIWP Crisis

Multi-faceted efforts are underway in many states to understand and address the nature, extent, and causes of the pervasive epidemic of violence against Indigenous communities. Some states, like Washington, have a task force to understand the problem and put forth recommendations for change. Other states established permanent structures to determine the systemic and institutional changes needed to address this crisis.

The following section details efforts and updates in other states since the publication of the Task Force's 2023 Interim Report. Previous state updates are available in the [2022 Interim Report](#)⁴⁷ and [2023 Interim Report](#).⁴⁸

Alaska

In September 2024, Governor Mike Dunleavy signed Senate Bill 151.⁴⁹ The law took effect in January 2025. The law makes the following changes to improve responses to MMIWP cases:

- Creates the nine member MMIP Review Commission to review unsolved cases and submit a report to the legislature every three years with its recommendations and findings;
- Requires Indigenous cultural training for new police officers;
- The Alaska Department of Public Safety must conduct a one-time assessment of its protective and investigative resources for identifying and reporting MMIP cases; and
- Requires the Department of Public Safety to file missing persons reports in the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) database within 60 days after the first report is filed with state and local law enforcement.

Arizona

In 2025, the Legislature is close to enacting a bill to establish a missing Indigenous or endangered person alert system.⁵⁰ According to 2022 data from the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System, Arizona ranks third in the country for the highest number of missing Indigenous person cases.⁵¹

California

In December 2023, the Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) issued the first report to the Legislature for the Missing and Murdered Indigenous People (MMIP) Grant Program.⁵² The program made funding available to federally recognized Tribes to support efforts to identify, collect case-level data, publicize, investigate, and solve MMIWP cases. The report provides information about early grant awards.

In July 2024, Governor Gavin Newsom announced a second round of grant awards, totaling nearly \$20 million to 18 Native American Tribes across the state.⁵³ A final report detailing all grant awardees, projects, and outcomes is due by December 1, 2025.⁵⁴

Hawaii

In 2025, legislators introduced HB610, to establish and provide funding for a Cold Case Investigations Unit within the Department of the Attorney General.⁵⁵ If passed, the bill will require the unit to “prioritize the investigation of cases having a Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, Native American, Native Alaskan, or other Indigenous victim.”⁵⁶

Michigan

In November 2024, Attorney General Dana Nessel announced the formation of the Missing and Murdered People (MMIP) Task Force.⁵⁷ This Task Force is an interagency effort to bring together Tribal, federal, state, and local prosecutors, law enforcement officials, victim advocates, and human services specialists to identify, develop, and implement solutions to the MMIP crisis.⁵⁸

Minnesota

During the 2022-2023 legislative session, legislators established the Gaagige-Mikwendaagoziwag Reward Fund to offer rewards for information on missing and murdered Indigenous relatives and support additional efforts to raise awareness.⁵⁹ The fund's Advisory Group works in consultation with the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives (MMIR) Office within the Department of Public Safety to determine eligibility criteria for reward funds and procedures for granting rewards related to cases formally referred to the MMIR Office.⁶⁰

In 2024, the Advisory Group developed and approved its charter. In consultation with experts from Crime Stoppers, the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs Missing and Murdered Unit and the Bemidji Police Department, they also established a foundational set of guidelines for the reward fund's operation. These guidelines include:⁶¹

- Policies and practices for paying rewards in conjunction with law enforcement partners and Crime Stoppers.
- A maximum reward of \$10,000 per case will apply, with law enforcement input consideration required to define the impact of the tip on the case in order to determine the payout amount.
- Identified barriers to access for prospective tipsters including a payout process, the concern for anonymity, reporting concerns when paying anonymous tipsters and recognizing K-9 teams as a search tool.

Montana

In 2023, the Legislature extended the Missing Indigenous Persons Task Force, created in 2019, to 2033, and gave the Task Force authority to make recommendations to federal, state, and local agencies.⁶² The 2023 law also included funding for one person to staff the Task Force.⁶³ On July 1, 2024, the Task Force published its most recent report covering 2023-2024.⁶⁴

In 2025, both chambers of the Montana Legislature passed a Joint Resolution urging Congress to fully fund law enforcement in Indian Country.⁶⁵ The Montana Legislature also established the Missing Indigenous Persons task force account, administered by the state Department of Justice, to be used as approved by the Missing Indigenous Persons Task Force.⁶⁶ Finally, the Legislature passed HB 545, which expanded the scope of the Missing Indigenous Persons Task Force and renamed the group the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons Advisory Council.⁶⁷

New Mexico

In February 2024, the New Mexico Legislature enacted a joint memorial requesting the Attorney General to lead a new MMIP Task Force.⁶⁸ The Task Force first met in October 2024, and is focused on updating the 2022 State Response Plan to develop legislative recommendations that address the MMIP crisis.⁶⁹ The Task Force is comprised of up to 40 members, representing Tribal nations, state agencies, law enforcement, service providers, and Indigenous survivors and family members of victims.⁷⁰

In March 2024, the New Mexico Department of Justice launched the Portal for Missing and Murdered Indigenous People, which provides comprehensive and up-to-date information on MMIP cases in the state and surrounding regions, and allows users to submit tips and request updates.⁷¹

In April 2025, Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham signed into law a bill to create a "Turquoise Alert" system to inform the public of a missing person who is an enrolled member or eligible for enrollment in a federally recognized Tribe.⁷²

New York

In December 2023, Governor Kathy Hochul signed into law legislation to create a task force for missing women and girls who are Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) to develop policy changes to address the lack of care and concern for missing and murdered BIPOC women and girls with New York state governmental and increase community education.⁷³

Wyoming

In January 2023, Governor Mark Gordon signed a law that directs the state to help Tribal, local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies incorporate missing persons alerts for an "adult at risk" or other missing persons who are not covered by eligibility for existing alerts.⁷⁴

The Wyoming Missing and Murdered Indigenous People Task Force issued a 2023 Update, following its first report in 2021.⁷⁵ In addition, the Task Force issued reports detailing data on Indigenous victims of homicide and missing persons in Wyoming in 2024⁷⁶ and in 2025.⁷⁷

Two bills passed during the 2024 legislative session that give new tools to law enforcement in MMIWP cases. One bill creates a new cold case database administered by the Wyoming Division of Criminal Investigation, and the other establishes a pilot program for forensic genealogical DNA analyses and searches.⁷⁸

In February 2025, Governor Gordon signed S.F. 0114 into law, making changes to missing persons reporting requirements.⁷⁹ The law requires acceptance of credible missing persons reports and entering these reports into national, regional, and state databases. The law also establishes the procedure for identifying the primary jurisdiction for missing person cases.



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